Evaluating the Impact of the Administrator and Administrative Structure of Online Programs at Nonprofit Private Colleges

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Abstract

Nonprofit private colleges lag behind their public and for-profit counterparts in offering online programs. Many nonprofit private colleges affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU) launched their first online programs within the past five years. As a result, administrative structures to manage online programs at those institutions may be underdeveloped. Unfortunately there is very little empirical research to guide institutions as they evaluate their administrative structure for online programs. This research examined the impact of the administrator and administrative structure on the outcomes of online student enrollment, number of online programs, and efficiency of online operations among member institutions of the CCCU. Findings suggest both have significant influence. Nonprofit private colleges must critically examine their administrative structures for online programs if they wish to gain a foothold in the competitive online market.

The number of colleges and universities that offer online programs continues to grow. Among higher education institutions, the number of private nonprofit institutions with online programs increased more than any other sector in the past decade, from 22.1% in 2002 to 48.4% in 2012 (Allen & Seaman, 2013). Despite that growth, private nonprofit institutions still lagged behind public and for-profit institutions, offering fewer online programs in 2012 than either public or for-profit institutions offered a decade ago. With research-based evidence, nonprofit private colleges may strategically position themselves to be more competitive with other sectors of higher education in the nontraditional adult education space. This study examined the influence of administrative structure on the growth of online education within one association of private nonprofit institutions, the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. For the purpose of this study, adult learners are those enrolled in an online program historically offered to students on a college campus.

Delivering cost-effective online education in a competitive marketplace where the for-profit and large universities dominate is a challenge for smaller private institutions. There is little

research to guide small private nonprofit institutions on how best to structure the administration of online programs to achieve successful outcomes. In this study successful outcomes are described as growth in enrollment, growth in the number of online programs offered by an institution, and efficient operation of online programs in the areas of new program proposals, new program development, curriculum and program revision, and student services.   Given the competitive nature of online learning, it is important to examine the institutional practices that contribute to the success of online learning programs within private nonprofit higher education institutions.

The following research questions are addressed in this study: What is the current state of online learning at CCCU institutions? What administrative structures are currently employed for online programs at CCCU institutions? Does administrative structure impact the success outcomes of online enrollment, number of online programs, and efficiency of online program operations?   Does having an administrator dedicated to leading online programs impact the success outcomes of online enrollment, number of online programs, and efficiency of online program operations? Does the launch date of online programs within an institution impact the online enrollment and number of online programs?

Literature Review

There is a significant lack of empirical research on effective governance and administrative structures for online programs (Dobbins, Knill & Vogtle, 2011; McFarlane, 2011). Where hard evidence is lacking, anecdotal evidence and perceptions can influence decision making. Although college faculty perceive institutions with a separate internal division for online learning to have higher enrollment and efficiency than institutions with an integrated administrative structure, they also perceive these same institutions to be lower in academic quality (Holtrop, 2012). Navigating the perceived tension between efficiency, enrollment and quality may explain the diverse manner in which each institution has developed its administrative structure for online programs over time.

Historically, online programs were operated by the academic departments in which the programs were housed. In that model the administration of online programs was fully integrated into the administration of all programs in the institution. As early as 2007, researchers noted a move away from the fully integrated model to a model where online programs were operated and administrated by an entirely separate academic division (Paolucci & Gambescia, 2007). In the transition between those poles, some institutions have adopted a hybrid approach of separation. Services including registration, financial aid, technology and billing are more commonly integrated into the administration of the entire institution. Advising, recruiting, program development, and curriculum development are more commonly administrated by the division for online learning (Holtrop, 2012).

While quantitative research is lacking, qualitative research is useful to frame the phenomenon. The 2012 publication *New Directions for Higher Education* showcased administrative structures of a number of private nonprofit institutions through comprehensive case studies. Though each academic structure varied, common themes arose. For institutions with a separate or somewhat separate division for online learning, the primary motivation to separate was to allow for more nimble and responsive growth to serve the needs of nontraditional adult learners, improve efficiency, and increase enrollment. Bethel University's College of Professional Studies and Graduate School credits its efficiency in academic program development and management to the authority it has over

academic program decisions (Jass, 2012). The School of Adult Learning at North Park University attributes its most critical development to the consolidation of academic and curriculum independence; the school has direct control of curriculum, instruction, faculty, academic policies, support services, enrollment and marketing (Curry, 2012). Without authority to act with a degree of autonomy, Abilene Christian University notes dependence on departments to develop or approve programs limits potential revenue (Williams, 2012). As well, program review by committees comprised of traditional college faculty without experience or knowledge of nontraditional adult learners is onerous (Jass, 2012). Innovation and entrepreneurship necessary for a successful online program are often discordant with the governance structures of more traditional institutions (Ellis, 2012).

The primary concern of institutions with a separate or somewhat separate division for online learning featured in *New Directions for Higher Education* was in losing the identity of the institution. Without integration, programs for adults may be disassociated from the institutional mission and vision (Curry, 2012). Distinctive characteristics of traditional programs like faith integration may be shallow or missing (Cockley, 2012). Of most concern, decision-making for potential financial gains may endanger the Christian mission of the entire institution (Ellis, 2012).

A hybrid structure that capitalizes on the strengths of the traditional institution while still allowing autonomy for online programs to be efficient and reflective of the unique needs of nontraditional adult learners may be the ideal solution (Ellis, 2012; Jass, 2012). Without more data, the most effective hybrid structure is unclear. Empirical research is needed to arm leaders of online programs at Christian colleges with the hard evidence required to effect change. There is a significant gap in the literature to link administrative structures of online programs with improved outcomes including enrollment, number of programs, and efficient operations. This research contributes to filling that gap.

Methodology Participants

The population of interest in this research was the 120 nonprofit private Christian colleges with membership in the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). All institutions with membership in the CCCU are regionally accredited, and most are four-year comprehensive colleges and universities. CCCU institutions are located in 32 states and serve more than 300,000 students annually (CCCU Profile, 2014).

Survey

Researchers developed a survey that consisted of 56 questions (Appendix A). The questions were intended to collect descriptive data regarding enrollment, number of programs, administrative structure, administrator, efficiency, oversight, governance, job duties, faculty involvement and professional development for online programs. Some data collected was not reported in this study, but will be used in subsequent research.

The survey was responsive in nature; participant responses determined subsequent questions. Those institutions who reported no online programs only received questions related to their current traditional enrollment and their intention to offer online programs in the future, while institutions that reported online programs were asked more extensive questions related to their operation. Not all respondents received the same questions, but were instead asked only questions relevant to their specific institution based on their

responses to previous questions.

The survey was digital in nature, and developed using the online survey program Qualtrics. Respondents were emailed a link to the survey; no paper copies were distributed. All responses were collected in Qualtrics and maintained by Northwestern College. Survey responses are confidential.

Procedures

Using information obtained from institutional websites, researchers identified the name and email address of the administrator responsible for online programs. When that information was not available, the email address of the provost or chief academic officer was used. Researchers were able to ascertain 110 email addresses; direct email addresses for administrators at ten of the CCCU institutions were not found.

The survey was opened on February 10th, 2014 and an email with a link to the survey was sent to the designated email addresses on that date. An announcement was placed on the CCCU listserv for chief academic officers, and an announcement regarding the research and survey was made to provosts and members of the Commission on Technology who attended the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities: Engaged Community conference in Los Angeles, California. Reminder emails were sent on three occasions before the survey closed 18 days after opening.

Multiple statistical tests were performed on data collected from the sample. Descriptive statistics were conducted using measures of central tendency including range, median and mean. Inferential statistics conducted include correlations to describe relationships between continuous variables, chi square tests of association to describe relationships between dichotomous variables and analyses of variance (ANOVA) to describe differences between the means of continuous variables. An alpha of $p = .05$ was used to determine significance for all statistical tests.

Results

Descriptive and inferential tests were conducted to address the following research questions: What is the current state of online learning at CCCU institutions? What administrative structures are currently employed for online programs at CCCU institutions? Does administrative structure impact the success outcomes of online enrollment, number of online programs, and efficiency of online program operations? Does having an administrator dedicated to leading online programs impact the success outcomes of online enrollment, number of online programs, and efficiency of online program operations? Do the launch dates of online programs within an institution impact the online enrollment and number of online programs?

Survey data was collected in Qualtrics, input to SPSS 20 and evaluated for errors. Missing values were expected, as not all survey questions were delivered to all respondents. Two responses were removed from inferential testing as both indicated their institutions offered online programs but did not indicate the number of programs offered. Two institutions were noticeable outliers for both online enrollment and total number of online and hybrid programs (hereafter referred to as programs). Institution A reported enrollment of 3367 online students and 115 programs, and Institution B reported enrollment of 3145 online

students and 74 programs. When compared to other responses, the next highest enrollment was 964 students, and the next highest number of programs was 55. The outliers caused standard deviations to be very large, which in turn masked the true relationship among variables. All statistical tests related to enrollment and number of programs were performed with and without outliers to determine their impact, and are reported below.

Of the 107 invitations successfully emailed to CCCU institutions, 59 respondents completed the survey for a response rate of 55.1 percent. More broadly, 49.2% of institutions affiliated with the CCCU participated in this research. Data obtained from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) was used to compare enrollment in online programs from respondents to enrollment in online programs from the population of institutions affiliated with the CCCU, to determine whether respondents were representative of the population. Only data from institutions that reported enrollment in online programs was compared. There was no significant difference between the number of students enrolled in online programs among respondents (M = 361.33, SD = 682.27) and the number of students enrolled in online programs in the population (M = 342.85, SD = 859. 07), F(1, 134) = 0.016, p = 0.90. Therefore, respondents were representative of the population with respect to online programs, and the findings of this research may be generalized to all institutions affiliated with the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities.

Survey Respondents

Researchers distributed the survey to administrators of online programs when possible, and the provost or chief academic officer when an online administrator could not be identified. Respondents included provosts/chief academic officers (n = 28), directors (n = 16), or deans (n = 14) from each institution. One respondent did not provide a title.

Institutional Enrollments

The CCCU institutions represented in this study had a total full-time student enrollment, regardless of delivery method, fewer than 6000 students (See Table 1). The mean full-time student population was 1841 students. Enrollment in online programs ranged from 0 to 3367 (See Table 2), though only two institutions had more than 3000 online students. All others who participated in this study had fewer than 1000 students in online programs, with the majority reporting fewer than 200 students.

Table 1
Total Institutional Full-time Student Enrollment

Number of students	Institutional Frequency
0 - 499	1
500 - 999	9
1000 - 1999	27
2000 - 2999	8
3000 - 3999	4
4000 - 4999	2
5000 - 5999	3

Table 2
Online Student Enrollment

Number of Students	Institutional Frequency

0	10
1 - 99	17
100 - 199	12
200 - 299	3
300 - 399	2
400 - 499	0
500 - 599	3
600 - 699	1
700 - 799	3
800 - 899	0
900 - 999	2
> 1000	2

Of 46 responses, 76% (n = 35) indicated enrollment in online programs increased from 2012-2014, and 22% (n = 10) indicated enrollment remained stable. Only 2% (n = 1) reported declining online enrollment in the past two years.

Number of Programs

At 91.5% (n = 54), most respondents reported their institution offered at least one fully online, hybrid, or low residency program in the 2013-14 academic year. Though one institution began offering online programs as early as 1994, that was certainly not the norm; only 27% (n = 16) of institutions offered an online program before 2009. In 2009 a noticeable shift occurred; eight institutions launched their first online program that year, and the remaining 30 of 54 respondents added their first online program between 2010 and 2014.

Only five of the institutions that participated in this survey reported no fully online, hybrid, or low residency programs. Of those, 4 indicated plans to begin their first online program within the next two years. Only one institution out of the 59 to participate in this study indicated they have no online, hybrid or low residency programs and no plan to offer any in the near future.

The number of undergraduate programs offered online by institutions in this sample ranged from 0 to 30, with an average of M = 4.48. Given that one institution reported 85 graduate programs, the average number of online graduate programs was M = 5. When that outlier was removed the average number of online graduate programs dropped to M = 3.35.

Data Analysis

Administrative Structure

Though varied structures are used to administrate online programs, this research classified administrative structures into three types: 1) those operated as an entirely separate division within an academic institution, 2) those operated as a somewhat separate division, and 3) those not separated at all from the administration of all academic programs. Of 45 respondents, 18 reported online programs were a separate division within their institution and 13 reported a somewhat separate division, accounting for roughly two-thirds of all responses. Separate and somewhat separate online divisions reported authority and oversight over a variety of functions (See Table 4).

Table 4
Areas of Responsibility in Separate or Somewhat Separate Online Divisions

Area of Responsibility	Frequency of Online Divisions*
Set procedures for online programs	26
Set policies for online programs	25
Supervise online faculty	23
New program proposal	21
New program development	21
Advise online students	20
Hire online faculty	20
Recruit new online students	17
Admissions functions	16
Market online programs	15
Control over the curriculum	14
Registrar functions	9
Financial aid functions	5
Other	2

*Of 36 respondents

No statistical test comparing entirely separate divisions with somewhat separate and not separate divisions related to enrollment, number of programs or efficiency resulted in a significant finding. However, comparing institutions with at least some or entirely separate divisions to institutions without any separation at all revealed interesting differences.

Respondents reported enrollment of 0 to 3367 students in online and hybrid programs. The effect of administrative structure was tested to determine whether institutions with a specific structure also had different enrollment in their programs. There was no significant difference on enrollment in programs between institutions with somewhat or entirely separate divisions (M = 314, SD = 589.44) and institutions with no separate division (M = 467.14, SD = 884.83), F(1, 42) = 0.464, p = 0.499. Of the two outliers identified from the data, one was categorized as 'somewhat or entirely separate' and the other 'not separate.' When the two outliers were removed the result was still not significant; institutions with somewhat or entirely separate divisions (M = 216.38, SD = 252.48) did not have different enrollment than those with no separation (M = 445.54, SD = 917.1), F(1, 40) = 1.587, p = 0.215.

Respondents reported between 0 and 115 online and hybrid programs. There was no significant difference in the number of programs offered by institutions with somewhat or entirely separate divisions (M = 9.77, SD = 12.64) and institutions with no separate division (M = 19.07, SD = 31.17), F(1, 42) = 2.058, p = 0.159. When outliers were removed the result was still not significant; institutions with somewhat or entirely separate divisions (M = 7.63, SD = 4.28) and those with no separate division (M = 11.69, SD = 15.047) did not offer a significantly different number of online or hybrid programs, F(1, 41) = 1.886, p = 0.177.

Regardless of administrative structure, there was a very strong positive correlation between number of programs and enrollment, r(52) = 0..911, p < 0.001. Though it is a logical assumption, this research quantifies that relationship. The more online programs offered to adult learners, the higher the enrollment in online programs.

Online programs may be governed by an institution's overarching policy-making body or by a separate body specific to online programs. Respondents in this survey who indicated their online programs were administrated by a separate or somewhat separate division were asked to report whether there was also a separate governance body for online programs. The variable of governance appeared to have a moderating effect on both enrollment and number of programs. Institutions with at least somewhat or an entirely separate division and a separate governance body for online programs had significantly higher enrollment ($M = 755$, $SD = 1009.64$) than institutions without a separate governance body ($M = 146.96$, $SD = 195.53$), $F(1, 28) = 7.468$, $p = 0.011$. Removing outliers did not change the outcome, $F(1, 27) = 6.793$, $p = 0.015$. Similarly, institutions with at least somewhat or an entirely separate division and a separate governance body for online programs had significantly more programs ($M = 17.88$, $SD = 22.91$) than institutions without a separate governance body ($M = 6.96$, $SD = 4.33$), $F(1, 29) = 5.022$, $p = 0.033$. However, after removing outliers the result lost its significance, $F(1, 28) = 2.602$, $p = 0.118$.

In addition to enrollment and number of programs, this research explored the impact of administrative structure on efficient operation of online programs. Efficient operation may be characterized by numerous variables. Though examining all variables was beyond the scope of this study, the following four were identified: new program proposals, new program development, curriculum and program revision, and student services. Respondents were asked to rate the efficiency of their institution on a scale of $0 – 4$, with 0 being not at all efficient and 4 being highly efficient. Institutions with a somewhat or entirely separate division for online programs reported significantly higher efficiency with new program proposals ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.39$) than institutions with no separate division ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.5$), $F(1, 41) = 5.453$, $p = 0.025$. Similarly, institutions with a somewhat or entirely separate division for online programs reported significantly higher efficiency with curriculum and program revision ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.946$) than institutions with no separate division ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 1.29$), $F(1, 41) = 4.402$, $= 0.042$. No differences in efficiency were noted for new program development, $F(1, 41) = 0.187$, $p = 0.667$, or student services, $F(1, 41) = 1.861$, $p = 0.18$. Unlike enrollment and number of programs, a separate governance body did not influence the efficiency of institutions with a somewhat or entirely separate division for online programs in any of the four efficiency variables examined.

Administrator of Online Programs

Of 46 respondents, 78% ($n = 36$) indicated their institution employed an administrator dedicated to online programs. Two-thirds of those administrators ($n = 24$) served in a full-time capacity. The remaining 22% ($n = 10$) without an administrator reported their online programs were managed by program directors, department chairs, deans, or as an additional responsibility added onto a faculty or staff position.

The title of the administrator for online programs varied among respondents. At academic institutions, authority and scope of influence may be implied by the title of an administrator. In this sample, administrative titles listed by implied authority from least to greatest were coordinator ($n = 2$), director ($n = 21$), dean ($n = 10$) and provost ($n = 3$). The exact title often contained the following phrases: online learning, extended learning, adult programs, or graduate school. Most of the online administrator positions in this study were not senior-level leadership positions within the institution. The online administrator reported to the president ($n = 1$), provost/VPAA/CAO ($n = 25$), dean ($n = 6$), or director ($n = 4$). Only five respondents indicated the administrator of online programs served on the president's cabinet.

Thirty-one percent (n = 31) oversaw other staff members (See Table 5). Thirty-nine percent (n = 23) held faculty status.

Table 5
Staff Overseen by the Online Administrator

Staff Position	Frequency of Oversight*
Instructional Designers	15
Advisors/Student Support	10
Assistant Dean/Director	8
Administrative Assistant	7
Enrollment/Recruitment Staff	5
Curriculum Staff	4
Graduate Assistants	4
Program Directors	3
Web/Digital Media Producers	3
Course Developers	2
Tech Support	2
Instructional Technologists	2
Marketing	1
Nontraditional Financial Aid Rep	1

Of 36 respondents

When examining the management of online programs, online administrators were most likely to have limited to full authority to set policies for online programs (n = 35), set procedures for online programs (n = 35), and supervise faculty teaching in online programs (n = 30). Conversely, online administrators were most likely to have limited to no authority to hire faculty (n = 27), propose new programs (n = 26), and approve and develop new programs before they are submitted to the faculty or a committee for approval (n = 28).

Of particular interest to this study was the impact of an administrator dedicated to online programs on the outcomes of enrollment, number of programs, and efficiency of operations. Both of the outlier institutions with high enrollment and numerous programs employed an administrator dedicated to online and hybrid programs. However, when the outliers were included in statistical tests to determine whether the presence of a dedicated administrator impacted enrollment, their high numbers created high variance which resulted in high standard deviations, masking the true effect of administrators.

With outliers included, institutions with a dedicated administrator (M = 433.4, SD = 746.75) had no different enrollment than institutions without a dedicated administrator (M = 73.11, SD = 60.95), $F(1, 43) = 2.056$, $p = 0.159$. Removing both outliers, though they both had administrators and high enrollment, revealed that institutions with a dedicated administrator have higher enrollment (M = 267.35, SD = 281.82) than institutions without a dedicated administrator (M = 73.11, SD = 60.95), $F(1, 41) = 4.153$, $p = 0.048$.

The impact of an administrator for online and hybrid programs was less apparent on the total number of programs, regardless of whether outliers were included in the statistical test. When all institutions were tested, those institutions with an administrator dedicated to online and hybrid programs had no statistically significant difference in the total number of programs offered (M = 14.47, SD = 22.39) than institutions without a dedicated

administrator (M = 5.2, SD = 3.85), F(1, 44) = 1.675, p = 0.202. Removing the outliers did not change the outcome; institutions with a dedicated administrator had no statistically significant difference in the total number of programs offered (M = 9.76, SD = 9.75) than institutions without a dedicated administrator M = 5.2, SD = 3.85), F(1, 42) = 2.086, p = 0.158.

Means testing was performed to determine whether the authority of an administrator, based on the administrator's title, influenced enrollment or number of programs. Of the two noted outliers, one employed an administrator with a title of director and the other a title of provost. When all data was tested, there was no significant difference in enrollment based on the title of the administrator, F(3, 32) = 1.084, p = 0.372. When outliers were removed there was still no significant difference, F(3, 30) = 0.535, p = 0.63. When all data was tested, there was no significant difference in number of programs based on the title of the administrator, F(3, 29) = 0.585, p = 0.63. When outliers were removed there was still no significant difference, F(3, 27) = 0.407, p = 0.75. Neither enrollment nor total number of programs was different among institutions in this sample based on the authority implied by the title of the administrator.

Efficiency ratings for the processes of new program proposals, new program development, curriculum and program revision, and student services were compared between institutions with a dedicated administrator for online programs and institutions without a dedicated administrator. For each operation, respondents ranked institutional efficiency on a scale of 0 to 4, with zero being not at all efficient and 4 being highly efficient. It was found that institutions with an administrator reported significantly higher efficiency with new program proposals (M = 3.62, SD = 1.42) than institutions without an administrator (M = 2.44, SD = 1.51), F(1, 41) = 4.767, p = 0.035. New program development was significantly more efficient at institutions with an administrator (M = 3.56, SD = 1.26) than without an administrator (M = 2.22, SD = 1.56), F(1, 41) = 7.246, p = 0.01. Curriculum and program revision was significantly more efficient at institutions with an administrator (M = 3.53, SD = 0.961) than without an administrator (M = 2.67, SD = 1.42), F(1, 41) = 4.673, p = 0.037. Of the four studied efficiencies, only student services was not rated more efficient at institutions with an administrator (M = 3.24, SD = 1.05) than without an administrator (M = 3.0, SD = 1.51), F(1, 41) = 0.275, p = 0.603.

Impact of Time

In evaluating the impact of administrative structures of online programs on success outcomes including enrollment and number of programs, it is important to evaluate the effect of time. Institutions participating in this study began offering fully online programs as early as 1994 and as recently as 2014. Two decades of experience, marketing and opportunity to build enrollment and programs must not be overlooked, particularly because time may have a mediating effect on outcomes.

Only institutions that reported both the first year they offered a fully online program and 2013-2014 enrollment of fully online students were included in the following statistical tests. Two institutions provided enrollment but not year, and therefore were not included. All tests on enrollment and number of programs were affected by the two outliers, and therefore data is reported both with and without the outliers included.

When all institutions were analyzed, there was a significant negative relationship between

launch date and enrollment, r(41) = -0.356, p = 0.019. The relationship was negative because the variable of year was used in the statistical test, not length of time from the first year of operation. Therefore, the earlier the year of first operation, the more students were enrolled in online programs. When the two outliers were removed, the relationship between time and enrollment was still significant, r(39) = -0.506, p = 0.001.

Similarly, when all institutions were analyzed, there was a significant negative relationship between launch date and number of programs, r(43) = -0.495, p = 0.001. The earlier the launch date, the higher the number of programs an institution offered online. When outliers were removed the relationship remained significant, r(41) = -0.669, p < 0.001. Unequivocally, institutions with a longer history of offering online programs tended to have higher enrollment in online programs, and more online programs available.

Discussion

Case studies reported in the 2012 publication *New Directions for Higher Education* suggested that the administrative structure of an online program develops organically, and is influenced by the unique needs, faculty, traditions, programs and culture of each institution. Nontraditional adult learners are outside of the demographic historically served by most private Christian colleges, and the online modality is outside of the lecture-style courses commonly offered by those institutions. Serving the vastly different needs of nontraditional adult students online undoubtedly contributes to the shift toward a somewhat or entirely separate administrative division for online programs. This research affirms that shift; institutions with somewhat or entirely separate administrative structures are more efficient in proposing and developing new programs and revising the curriculum and format of existing ones.

Though it may improve efficiency, separation of administration for online programs does not in and of itself directly contribute to increased enrollment or more programs. Institutions that strategically plan to grow must not only develop a somewhat or entirely separate administrative structure, but give that structure the authority to make policies and set procedures. Institutions that participated in this study who not only had a separate or somewhat separate administrative structure, but also a separate governing body, had significantly more enrollment (Table 6) and more programs (Table 7) than all others. A reluctance to give over authority may be interpreted by the small number (n = 8) of institutions that had both characteristics. Suspicion of online learning and lack of experience with nontraditional adult learners may contribute to that reluctance.

Time proved an influential factor in this research, but interestingly there was no relationship between separation of administrative structures, separate governing bodies and time. Institutions with the longest history of offering online programs were not more likely to have a separate structure or governing body than institutions newer to that market. The decision to develop a separate governing body may be the result of progressive faculty, leadership, or even lack of capacity from existing governing bodies to address the specific needs of adult learners in online programs. Additional research in this area may yield deeper understanding.

Marked relationships were uncovered between time, enrollment, and number of programs. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is a very strong negative correlation between time and enrollment; the earlier an institution launched its online programs the higher their enrollment

was. Similarly, there was a very strong negative correlation between time and number of programs; the earlier an institution launched its online programs, the more online programs they offered. As would seem logical, a strong relationship also exists between enrollment and number of programs. The more online programs an institution offers to adult learners, the more students an institution has enrolled in online programs.

The trifecta of a long history offering online programs to adults, a strong number of programs available, and solid enrollment may be difficult for emerging institutions to compete against, as all are so closely intertwined. Institutions late to offer online programs to adult learners cannot control the factor of time, and therefore cannot compete for enrollment on this factor. Two strategies that may combat that are increasing the number of online programs available to adult learners, and developing a separate or somewhat separate administrative structure with a separate governing body. Both may more rapidly diminish the gap between institutions with long-established online programs and institutions newer to that sphere.

In addition to administrative structure and time, a third factor that significantly influenced outcomes was that of administrator. More than 75% of responding institutions employed an administrator specifically dedicated to oversee online programs, and no one administrative structure was more likely than others to also have a dedicated administrator. Administrators largely held the title of director (n = 18) and dean (n = 10), though a small number were coordinators (n = 2) or provosts for adult programs (n = 3). No one administrative title was associated with different outcomes, though the small number of data points from two of the four titles may have influenced that finding.

Regardless of administrative structure, institutions that employed an administrator dedicated to online programs had significantly greater enrollment than institutions without a dedicated administrator. Even without the inclusion of the two outliers, both of whom employed an administrator and had enrollment of more than 3000 online students, the average enrollment at institutions with an administrator for online programs (M = 267) far exceeded enrollment at institutions with no administrator (M = 73).

The presence of an administrator did not, however, have any significant impact on the number of online programs offered by an institution. This finding may be unsurprising, as program creation and curriculum are commonly under the jurisdiction of the faculty and not administration. Responsibilities common to an administrator of online programs, including recruitment, marketing, oversight of adjunct faculty, supervision of instructional designers, and retention efforts lend themselves toward enrollment, quality, efficiency and retention, which may be more related to number of students than number of programs.

Efficiency of processes related to the oversight of online programs was significantly affected by the employment of an administrator dedicated to online programs. New program proposals, new program development, and curriculum and program revision were rated significantly more efficient when an administrator was overseeing those processes. The only area not significantly more efficient was student services. It cannot be overstated that this research was not intended to thoroughly examine all facets of efficiency, and student services in particular covers a significant number of separate factors.

Future Research

While this study categorized administrative structures as separate, somewhat separate, or not separate from traditional programs, it did not explore any differences in the ways somewhat separate structures are different or the effects of those differences. As well, this study analyzed four types of efficiencies – new program proposals, new program development, curriculum and program revision, and student services. Those broad categories should be examined separately and with significantly more detail, particularly the area of student services. This study brushed the surface of the work that must be done to understand effective administrative structures for online programs.

Conclusion

CCCU institutions as a group are behind their public and private for-profit counterparts with respect to the number of fully online programs available to nontraditional adult learners. Unfortunately there is little quantitative research available to guide the development of administrative structures. This research sought to contribute to the literature regarding the impact of the administrator and administrative structure on the total number of online programs, total enrollment in online programs, and efficient operation of online programs. Expanding enrollment provides an opportunity to Christian colleges to live out their mission with a new population of students. To do that, they must quickly and intentionally overcome cultural and structural barriers in order to competitively improve their foothold in the online student market.

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Appendix A

This survey should take less than 15 minutes to complete. By completing the survey you are consenting to participate in the research. Your responses will be anonymous unless you choose to share your name in the final question of the survey. Even if you choose to share your name, your institution's name will not be shared publicly. You may stop the survey at any time if you do not wish to continue.

What is your job title?

The following questions ask for basic information about your institution.

Does your institution have at least one fully online, hybrid, or low-residency program?

[If no, then]
Does your institution plan to develop online, hybrid, or low-residency programs within the next two years?

What is your full-time student enrollment, regardless of delivery method (including residential programs)?

What is your part-time student enrollment, regardless of delivery method (including residential programs)?

An online student is considered to be one who takes all coursework online. What is your approximate enrollment of students in online programs? Type 0 if you have no online programs or students.

[Participant thanked for their participation, provided names of researchers]

[If yes, then]

How many fully online programs are offered at the undergraduate level?
How many fully online programs are offered at the undergraduate level?

How many hybrid and low-residency programs are offered at the undergraduate level?

How many hybrid and low-residency programs are offered at the graduate level?

In what year did your institution offer its first fully online program?

What is your full-time student enrollment, regardless of delivery method (including residential programs)?

What is your part-time student enrollment, regardless of delivery method (including residential programs)?

An online student is considered to be one who takes all coursework online. What is your approximate enrollment of students in online programs? Type 0 if you have no online programs or students.

From 2012-2014, have your online student enrollments:
    Stayed about the same
    Increased
    Decreased

The following questions will ask for information about how your online operations are managed.

Do you have an administrator dedicated to online programs?

[If no, then] You indicated there is no administrator dedicated to online programs. Please use the space below to describe how your online program is managed.

[If yes, then] Is the administration of the online program the administrator's full-time position?

What is the title of the administrator?

Who does the administrator report to?

Does the administrator serve on the president's cabinet?

Does the administrator have faculty status?

Does the administrator oversee other staff?

[If yes, then] List the positions overseen by the administrator.

Describe the level of authority the administrator possesses in the following areas. You may choose no authority, limited authority, or full authority.
    Set policies for online programs.
    Set procedures for online programs.
    Propose new programs.
    Approve new programs before they are submitted to the faculty or a committee for approval.
    Develop new programs.
    Hire online faculty.

Supervise online faculty.

Does your institution use a third-party vendor to facilitate any aspect of your online programs? (i.e. tutoring, marketing, course development)

[If yes, then] Please indicate the areas facilitated by the third-party vendors:
  Recruiting
  Registration
  Financial Aid
  New Program Development
  Admissions
  Technical Support
  Marketing
  Instructional Design
  Course Development
  Tutoring
  Proctoring
  Other

Does your institution have a separate division for online or adult programs?
  Yes
  Somewhat
  No

Indicate the areas in which the division has authority:
  Set policies for online programs
  Set procedures for online programs
  New program proposal
  New program development
  Control over the curriculum
  Hiring online faculty
  Supervising online faculty
  Marketing online programs
  Recruiting new online students
  Advising online students
  Registrar functions
  Financial aid functions
  Admissions functions other

Is there a separate governance body for online programs?

[If yes, then] Indicate the areas in which the division has authority:
  Set policies for online programs
  Set procedures for online programs
  New program proposal
  New program development
  Control over the curriculum
  Hiring online faculty
  Supervising online faculty
  Marketing online programs

Recruiting new online students
Advising online students
Registrar functions
Financial aid functions
Admissions functions
Other

Is there a separate governance body for online programs?

At your institution, who has the authority to propose new online programs? Select all that apply:
Individual faculty members
Academic departments
Online learning division
Other

For each statement below, indicate the level to which the traditional faculty are involved with online programs. (No involvement, some involvement, full involvement)
New online program proposals
New online program development
Teaching in online programs
Managing the curriculum of online programs
Advising online students

Do faculty have voting authority to approve or deny new programs?

How efficient is your institutional structure for the management of online programs with respect to the following areas? (Please note this question pertains to the structure, and not to the actual people in place). (Likert scale: 0 = Not at All through 5 = Highly)
New program proposals
New program development
Curriculum and program revision
Student services

Are new online programs strategically identified as an institution, or based on the initiative of individual faculty members?
Institutional
Individual
Both
Neither

The following questions will ask for information regarding professional development intended to prepare faculty to teach online.

Is the training on instructional strategies required before an instructor is allowed to teach online?

Are faculty compensated or offered an incentive (ie software, equipment, conference registration) for the time they spend in training?

[If yes, then] Are faculty compensated or offered an incentive (ie software, equipment, conference registration) for the time they spend in training?

Please describe the amount of compensation or incentive.

Is the optional training on instructional strategies offered to instructors before they teach online?

Is technical training required before an instructor is allowed to teach online?

Are faculty compensated or offered an incentive for the time they spend in training?

[If yes, then] Please describe the amount of compensation or incentive.

Is optional technical training offered to instructors before they teach online?

Is pedagogical training (beyond formal education) required before an instructor is allowed to teach in a traditional brick-and-mortar classroom?

Who provides the professional development required or offered to faculty preparing to teach online? (choose all that apply)
    Center for Teaching and Learning
    Program directors
    Director of online programs
    Instructional designers
    Curriculum specialists
    IT department staff
    Individual faculty with specialized skills
    Other

Do you feel as if your institution's professional development, whether mandatory or optional, is sufficient to meet online faculty needs?
Are faculty responsible for developing courses in online programs?

Are faculty required to participate in training prior to their work in development of online classes?

Are faculty compensated for the time spent in training?

Is optional training available to faculty prior to their work in development of online courses?

Are faculty compensated for the time spent in training?

[If yes, then] Please describe the amount of compensation or incentive for training in development of online classes.

Are faculty compensated for course development for online programs?

[If yes, then] How are faculty compensated?
    Stipend

Course release
Either stipend or course release
Other

What is the amount of the stipend?

Who owns the course after it is developed?
Faculty member who developed the course
Institution
Joint-ownership is shared
My institution has no policy regarding course ownership

Who develops courses for online programs?

Would you be open to participating in a case study or focus group about the administration of online programs at CCCU schools?

[If yes, then] Because you indicated an openness to participating in a case study or focus group, please provide your name, position, institution, and email address below.

Thank you so much for your participation in this survey. You may withdraw the data you contributed at any time if you wish. You will be notified when this research is published.