

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 14, 2015

CONTACT: [Libby May](#)
Phone: 301-656-0348

C-BEN Members Invited to Participate in Innovative Experimental Sites

WASHINGTON, DC – Eleven members of the Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN) have been invited by the U.S. Department of Education to participate in a new round of experimental sites. The experimental sites will open the door to higher education innovation aimed at increasing college access and providing more affordable and flexible paths for students seeking quality credentials. The invitations were issued in early January and institutions have until March 1 to officially sign on.

These federally authorized experimental sites will include three strands: competency-based education models; models that include a mix of both competency-based education and traditional academic instruction, or so-called “hybrid” models, which also have approval to offer direct assessment of learning; and the assessment of prior learning for academic credit.

“Experimental sites will allow institutions and the federal government to engage in responsible innovation and learn which types of programs work best for improving student outcomes” said Laurie Dodge, co-chairman of C-BEN and vice chancellor of institutional assessment and planning for Brandman University, a private school based in California. “Experimental sites are critically important in helping to answer the many open questions we still have regarding competency-based education, and ultimately, the lessons learned will help inform other policy goals such as increased student retention and program completion and college affordability while addressing the value, rigor, and quality of degrees. The C-BEN institutions fully support the Department’s interest in fostering responsible innovation and experimentation with these learning models.”

To date, C-BEN has collected a list of 40 institutions that received invitations, 11 of which are C-BEN members: **Antioch University, Brandman University, Capella University, Charter Oak State College, Kentucky Community & Technical College System, Lipscomb University, Northern Arizona University, Salt Lake Community College, Southern New Hampshire University, University of Maryland University College, and University Of Wisconsin-Extension.**

“The experimental sites will help the Department, and all of us, answer the many questions we still have about competency-based education,” said Paul LeBlanc, president of Southern New Hampshire University and a member of the C-BEN steering committee. “There is emerging a new, bolder generation of competency-based education programs and current Title IV policy and rules are not well aligned with these exciting innovations. Experimental sites will provide an opportunity to understand these challenges and how Title IV rules have to change in order to support the new learning models and still protect federal dollars. It’s a very smart, safe way to experiment in a controlled, responsible manner.”

The Education Department began working on experimental sites in 2013. At the C-BEN quarterly meeting in July 2014, Undersecretary of Education Ted Mitchell announced the launch of applications for experimental sites to test these emerging models of student-focused, outcomes-based academic delivery. It is unclear how many institutions submitted applications, but the Department of Education will release a full list of participating institutions in the coming weeks. For more information on the Competency-Based Education Network please visit: www.cbenetwork.org