The Second Annual Survey of Continuing Education Programs Conducted by Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education

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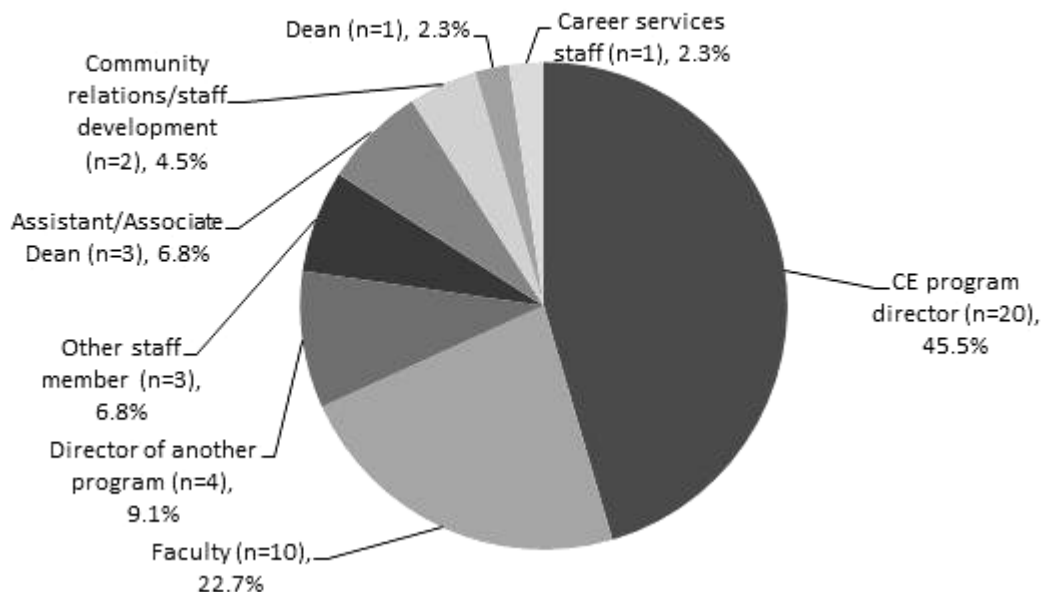
Gerald Cochran and Noel Landuyt

Introduction

In 2009, *Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education* conducted a survey of continuing education (CE) programs in North America. Results of this survey were published in the *Journal* in the summer 2010. The purpose of this survey was to establish a foundation of information to act as a benchmark and a resource for CE program directors, program administrators, and the broader social services community. Also, the collection of this information was intended to operate as an impetus in shaping future collaboration between programs, which has the potential to improve the overall quality and effectiveness of CE programs. Continually improving the information offered in

CE programs helps social workers to be actively engaged in learning and education so as to stay current and informed with respect to the science and evidence of the profession. As social work practitioners are involved in CE, their skill sets can be sharpened and the lives of clients can be improved (NASW, 2003).

In order to update responses from the 2009 survey of CE programs, investigators from *Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education* re-administered the survey in 2010. The following report relates to the results of the 2010 survey. Specifically, it reports updated data for the majority of questions from the 2009 survey, and it reports the answers that respondents give to addi-

Figure 1: *Professional Role(s) of Respondent*

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tional questions that were added in the 2010 version.

Methods

In order to gather information on CE programs, a cross-sectional survey was designed and carried out by *Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education*. Members of the Continuing Education Network (CENet), a committee within the Council on Social Work Education, were targeted as recipients of the survey. The membership of this committee consists of 90 CE programs within the United States and Canada. Members of the CENet committee were selected because of their work with their own CE programs and their expertise and knowledge of social work CE. The lead administrators of the CE programs and/or those individuals listed as the program contacts received, via email, a cover letter introducing the purpose of the project and the survey itself. With these materials, participants were asked to complete and return the survey within an approximate two-month period in the summer of 2010.

Questions in the 2010 survey were carried over from the 2009 survey. In addition, items were added to the 2010 survey based on questions suggested by respondents from the 2009 administration. The survey itself targeted 32 items; however, four of the items were multifaceted and asked for multiple answers. The survey items were both closed and open-ended, including answer choices that ranged from "yes/no" to "choose all that apply." The items in the survey covered the following topics: state or province CE hour requirements, CE program and staff information, resources available, and course topics. Data from completed surveys were entered into the PASW (SPSS) 18.0, and descriptive statistics were applied in order to describe the responses given.

Results

A total of 61 members from the CENet were contacted and asked to participate in the survey. Of these, 27 individuals responded, a response rate of 44 percent. Programs from which participants responded served a variety of areas in the US, including the Midwest (n=7) Northeast (n=6), the West (n=4), the Southeast (n=4), and the Southwest (n=2). The work roles of respondents varied, since many of those who participated in the survey indicated they performed multiple roles within their departments or organizations. As a consequence of this, the following frequencies reporting the roles of individuals are not mutually exclusive and sum to more than 27 total individual respondents. Most respondents acknowledged their role as the director of the CE program (n=20).

In addition to the roles played by the participants within their departments or organizations, the number of years each respondent had worked in their current position was also asked (see figure 2). Of those who responded (n=27), the largest group of participants had worked in their position between three and five years.

CE Program Resources and Costs

CE Staff. The survey included items that assessed the capacity of the program to manage and administer the individual workshops. One specific aspect of program capacity about which the survey asked was the amount of staff support available (see table 1). The survey asked participants to report the number of full-time and part-time paid professional staff, contract/temporary/project staff, and teaching assistant/student support. Respondents (n=21) reported that the average number of full-time, paid professional staff members was two. This average of two professional staff members was also the highest mean of all categories of full-time staff members reported. In addition to professional staff members, the average number of part-time professional staff reported was one (n=17); the average number of full-time contract/temporary staff members reported was less than one (n=5); the average number of part-

Figure 2: *Number of Years in Current Position*
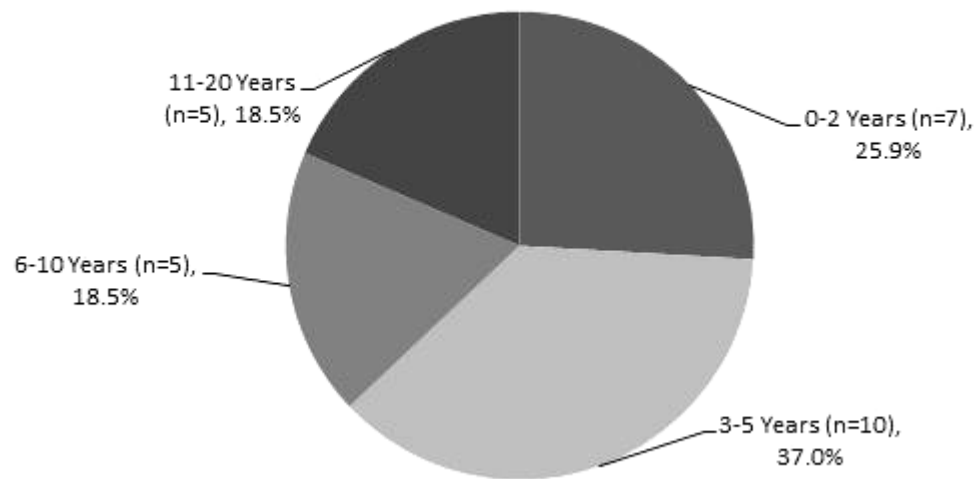
Table 1:
Number of staff employed by the CE program

Staff Description	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Number of Reponses
FT professional paid staff	2	9	0	21
PT professional paid staff	1	2	0	17
FT Contract/Temporary Staff	<1	4	0	5
PT Contract/Temporary Staff	<1	2	0	9
FT TA/ Student Support	<1	1	0	6
PT TA/ Student Support	1	4	0	14

Figure 3: *Program self-supporting*
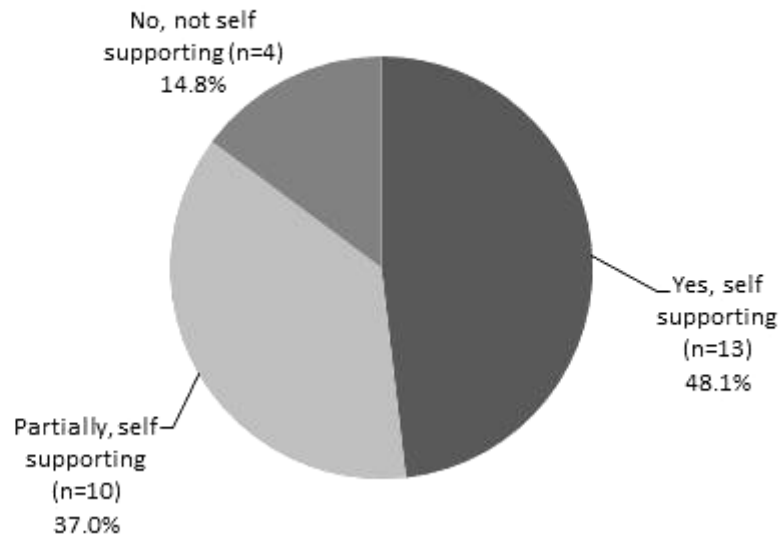
time contract/temporary staff members reported was less than one (n=9); the average number of full-time student support reported was less than one (n=6), and the average number of part-time student support reported by respondents was one (n=14).

In addition to the number of staff members working within CE programs, respondents were also asked the annual amount budgeted to employ those individuals. The mean cost of those who responded (n=13) was an annual budget of just under $90,000, and the median was $69,700.

However, as a result of the variation in the size of programs, the largest budget reported was $500,000 and the lowest was $60.

Program Support. A second question asked regarding resources available to CE programs was whether or not the program was self-supporting. The meaning of this question was to inquire whether or not funds to operate the CE programs were generated by the programs themselves, whether they came totally from an external source, or whether programs were partially self-supporting (see figure 3). Most respondents

Table 2:

Costs associated with attending half- and full-day CE courses

Category	Mean cost ($)	Maximum cost ($)	Minimum cost ($)	Number of Reponses
Half day: Amount participants pay	65	90	38	23
Full day: Amount participants pay	118	168	50	24

Table 3:

*Fees paid to presenters at half- and full-day CE courses**

Category	Mean cost ($)	Maximum cost ($)	Minimum cost ($)	Number of Reponses
Half day: Amount paid to presenters	410	800	150	24
Full day: Amount paid to presenters	782	1300	300	21

*Fees do not include travel allowances

(n=13, 48.1%) reported that their program was totally self-supporting. Of those who reported to be partially self supporting (n=10, 37%), the average level to which the programs were self supporting was 60% (n=9).

Programs were also asked if they received administrative support from other departments. Of those who responded (n=25), 13 that had previously indicated they were self sufficient now responded that, indeed, they received administrative support from other departments. Participants were also asked if they received external sponsorship for workshops offered. Ten programs reported having external sponsorship for an average of six individual programs from sources such as government,

foundations, and corporate entities.

In a similar vein, participants were also asked if they have advisory boards. Respondents (n=24) indicated that most programs did not have an advisory board (n=14). However, ten participants acknowledged having a board. While participants reported that the function of boards varied, nine of the ten respondents indicated that one role of their advisory boards included involvement with the development and/or approval of program curriculum.

Cost of Program. In connection with program support are the costs paid by practitioners to attend CE courses (see table 2). The average cost of attending a half-day course was $65 (n=23), and

Table 4:

Numbers of workshops and attendees each year

Question asked	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Number of Reponses
How many half day workshops do you offer per year?	25	125	0	21
How many full day workshops do you offer per year?	53	287	1	20
How many half day attendees do you have per year?	532	3400	15	20
How many full day attendees do you have per year?	1520	9000	15	15

Figure 4: *Technological resources available to programs*
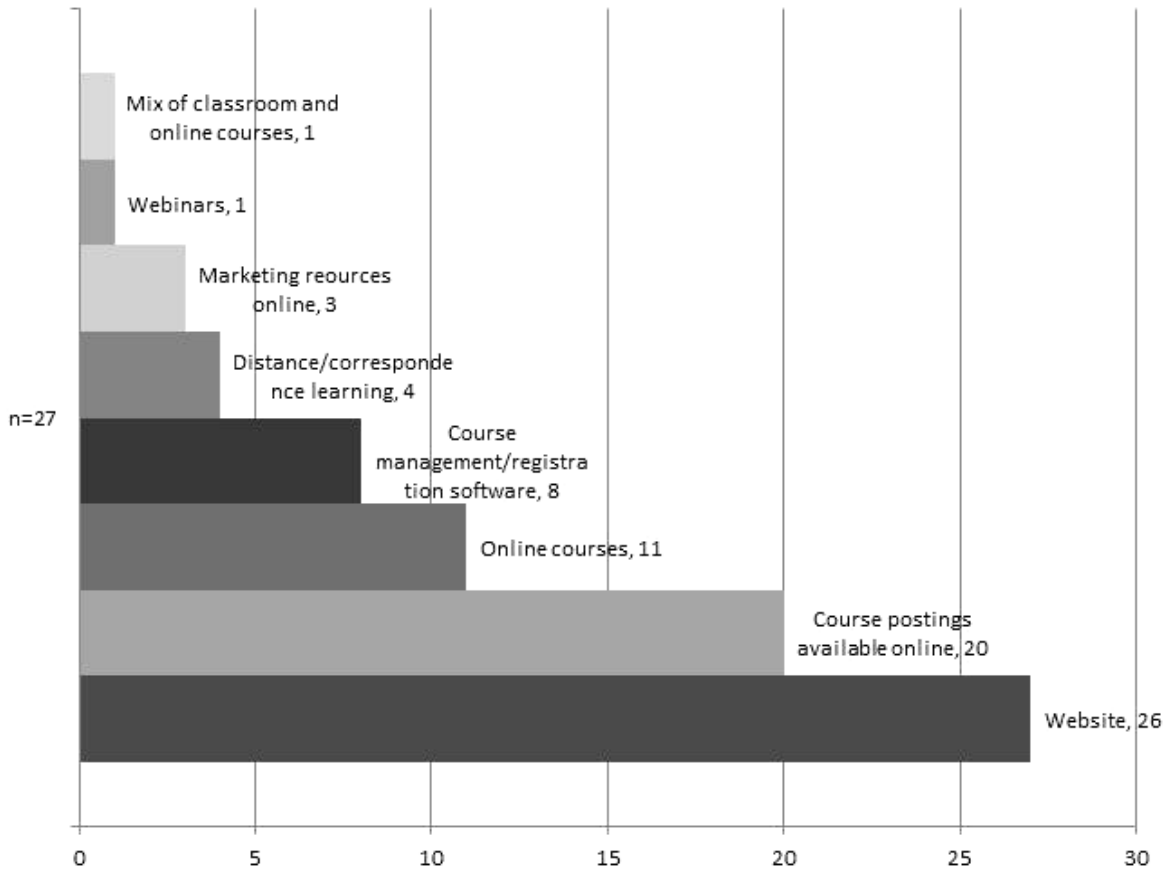
the average cost for attending a full-day course was just under $118 (n=24). However, some half-day courses were as much as $90 and others as low as $38. Some full-day courses cost as much as $168 and others as little as $50.

One important aspect of providing CE courses is offering classes by individuals who are experts in the topic areas. Participants were also asked about the costs for compensation to presenters (see table 3). Respondents reported that the average fee paid to presenters for a half-day course was $410 (n=24), and that the average cost paid for a full-day presenter was $782 (n=22). However, the maximum fee paid to a presenter for a half-day

course was $800 and the minimum fee paid was $150. For a full-day presenter, the maximum cost was $1300, and the minimum was $300.

Number of Workshops

The number of workshops offered and the total number of attendees each year were also asked (see table 4). The average number of half-day workshops reported to be offered in one year was 25 (n=21), and the average number of full-day workshops reported to be offered was 53 (n=20). As for numbers of attendees to these workshops, the average total number of individuals to half-day workshops per year was 532 (n=20), and the

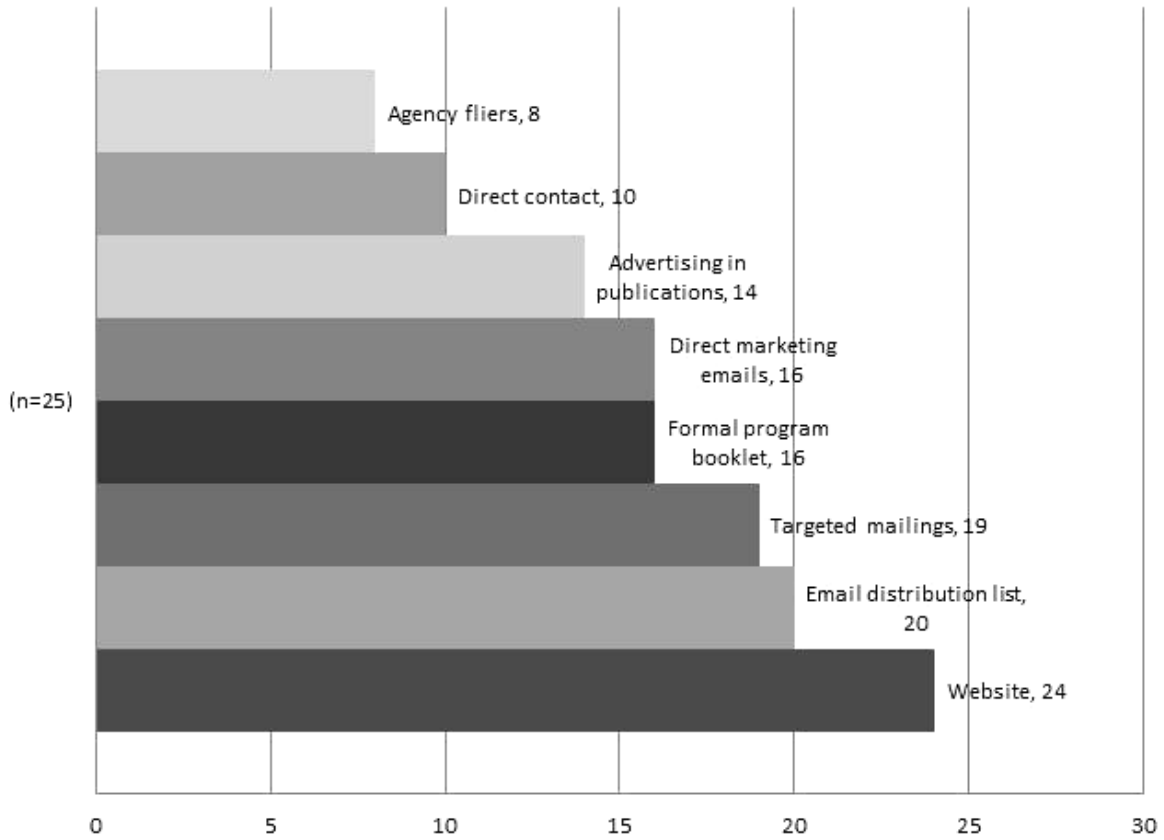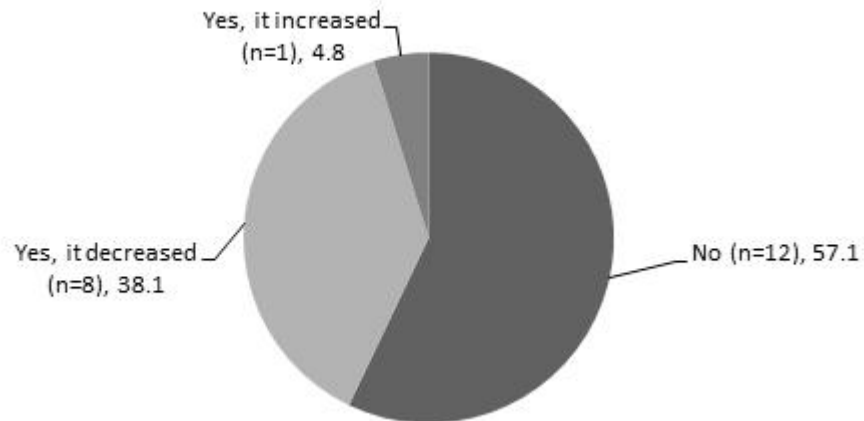**Figure 5**: *Marketing/advertising approaches used by CE programs*

Figure 6: *Change in annual program budget in past year*

average total attendees reported to full-day workshops was 1520 (n=15).

Technology

Most respondents indicated their states permitted fulfilling an average of 22 CE hours online (n=20). Since students are allowed to earn hours online, the survey included questions regarding the availability of technological resources. To respond, participants marked all the approaches available to them (see figure 4). The most common technological resources available to programs were websites (n=26) and the ability to make course postings available online (n=20). The least reported available technologies were a mixture of online classroom courses (n=1) and webinars (n=1).

Marketing

To learn about the marketing and advertising methods used to publicize workshops and courses, participants were asked to mark whether or not they had employed certain approaches. To respond, participants marked all the approaches they had used (see figure 5). The most common marketing mediums used were posting information to an internet website (n=24) and distributing information via email distribution lists (n=20). Other methods used with some regularity were program booklets (n=17) and targeted mailings (n=16). The approach used the least was agency fliers (n=8).

Overall Program Cost

Costs for employing program staff, marketing and operating courses, and maintaining technological services for CE programs equates into significant expenses. In order to gain an understanding of the size of these expenses for programs, survey participants were asked their total annual budgets. Those who responded (n=15) reported their programs' average annual budgets were approximately $272,000. However, the smallest budget for a program reported was $5,000, and the largest was $3 million. Also of interest to investigators was whether or not annual budgets had changed in the preceding year. As can be noted in figure 6, of

those who responded, most participants (n=12, 57.1%) reported that their budgets had not decreased.

Course Topics

One of the central purposes of the survey was to ascertain what course topics are offered by CE programs. One of the things the survey discovered is that while all of the topics offered by the programs can be applied to social work CEs, some of the topics can be applied to other disciplines. Twenty-two respondents (88%) indicated their programs offer CEs to disciplines that range from nursing to psychology. Survey participants (n=22) likewise reported that, in addition to CE credit for an individual course, programs offered certificate programs (n=14, 64%), including. but not limited to, training in areas such as substance-abuse counseling, non-profit management, mediation, and supervision.

Participants were also specifically asked what "hot topics" their programs offered (see table 5). Each respondent was allowed to report three hot-topic classes. The most frequently mentioned hot topic was an ethics course (n=7). The other most frequently reported hot topics were licensure review (n=6), topics related to veterans and trauma, and supervision courses (n=2). The remaining hot topics were mentioned only once each.

In addition to hot topics, participants were also asked what new topics were being offered by CE programs (see table 6). Each respondent was allowed to report three new topic courses. The most frequently reported new topics were those related to gambling (n=2), the elderly (n=2), and ethics (n=2). The remaining new topics reported were mentioned once each.

In addition to hot and new topics, the survey also asked participants to report topics cancelled and a reason why the course was discontinued (see table 7). All topics reported as being cancelled were reported only once each.

Evaluation

As a final component of the present survey,

program participants were asked whether or not they evaluated the CE programs they offer. Of those who responded (n=25), the vast majority (n=22, 88%) indicated they did indeed carry out some form of evaluation with the program they offered. Participants were also asked what method of evaluation they used to assess their programs. Three categories of evaluation emerged from within the data (see figure 7), with the most common being post-only evaluations (n=13, 59.1%).

Limitations

The same limitation exists within the 2010 survey report as did in the 2009 version; namely, due to the fact that this survey was exploratory, the formatting of the survey instrument allowed respondents to write-in open-ended answers to some questions, including those that asked for quantitative answers. As a result of this flexibility, a few respondents provided answers to questions in numerical ranges. For instance, when asked what participants pay for attending CE workshops, one respondent reported $0-300. In order to calculate and report statistics of central tendency (e.g., means, modes, etc.), the mid-point of this response was entered as the amount that participants paid for courses. That is, $150 was entered as the cost of the workshop to the dataset. In those few other cases where ranges were reported by participants, similar midpoint estimations were inputted for calculation purposes.

Discussion and Implications

Findings from the 2010 survey closely mirror those of 2009. Due to this similarity in data, repetitive responses will not be discussed within this section; rather, readers are invited to review the following article: "Cochran, G. and Landuyt, N. (2010). A survey of continuing education programs conducted by Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education. *Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education, 13*(2), 55-72."

Beyond items carried over from the 2009 sur-

vey, participants' responses to a few of the new items in the 2010 version of the survey are of note. A series of the questions to respondents asked about the financial status of their CE programs. In particular, the survey asked about budgeted amounts for staff salaries, overall program budget, and if program budgets had increased or decreased over the previous year. Investigators felt these questions were relevant in light of the current economic challenges within universities due to the financial and housing market crises within the United States. The average budgeted cost for staffing CE programs was $90,000, and the average overall cost of CE programs was $272,000. As was noted above, most programs indicated their budget had not changed in the last year (n=12, 57.1%). However, a little more than a third of those who responded to the question indicted that their budgets had indeed decreased (n=8, 38.1%). While this trend of decreasing budgets is not surprising, it nevertheless calls to attention the potential need for CE programs to not be supported by their institution but rather to more aggressively market the courses and certificates offered. For those programs supported partially or in full by their hosting institutions, these data could signal that CE programs should provide continued demonstrations of their relevance and effectiveness. Fortunately, such need and effectiveness are likely being captured by programs to some degree.

The 2010 survey also included two questions asking whether or not CE programs evaluate courses offered. Nearly all of those who responded to the question (n=22, 88%) indicated that they performed some level of program evaluation. Most promising was that of those who reported carrying out evaluations more than half (n=13, 59.1%) were conducting pre and post evaluations—a design with the ability to detect change in populations tested. As CE programs continue to monitor and evaluate their programming to improve and enhance courses offered, they likely will be able to demonstrate their importance to potential customers and funding sources. Through

Table 5: *Hot topics offered by CE programs*

Course Topic	Reason for Offering	(n)
Ethics	License requirement	7
LCSW Exam Prep	individuals like to be prepared for the exam; and quality course, study guide and instructor	6
Veterans, their families, and trauma	Large volunteer army and local military institutions.	5
Clinical supervision course	Requirement	2
Topics related to grief		2
Animals and Human Health	Growing trend in social work	1
Attachment	High participant interest	1
Autism: What You Need to Know	Prominent issue most learned little about in school	1
Becoming a Nonprofit CEO	Local foundation support for next generation of leadership in nonprofit sector	1
CBT and variations (ACT, DBT)	Evidence supported, actually "works"	1
Courses for licensure		1
Creative Writing for Helping Professionals		1
Cyber bullying	Social workers/adults have limited knowledge on topic	1
Dementia disorders	Important topic for professional and personal reasons	1
Diagnosis and treatment	Requirement	1
Dialectical Behavior Therapy	Skill based and strong presenter	1
Domestic Violence		1
DSM		1
Executive Training	Social workers interested in advancing their careers	1
Field Education	Incentive for field Instructors	1
Gambling Counseling	Start of casino in our state and need to prepare human service sector, social workers, and other helping professionals	1
International global human rights/interdependence		1
Intro to Managing Health Care	Health care is of continuing interest to social workers and other professionals	1
Latino Conference		1
LGBT Issues & the Law	Socially relevant topic	1
Medical Errors	Required for license renewal	1
Motivational Interviewing	Evidence based, excellent with non-voluntary, conduct disordered, and/or substance abusing populations.	1
Neuroscience and social work practice	New knowledge not known by many social workers	1
Older adults	Large older adult population state	1
Pain Management	Mandated	1
Renewing and Sustaining our Spirit of Service through Yoga	Self-care is important for social workers	1
Safety training	Case manager was murdered, and state legislature passed requirement	1
Specific Clinical Techniques/Mental Illness	One of few CE providers providing advanced clinical sessions	1
Spirituality in social work practice	More interest in topic the past few years	1

Table 6: *New topics offered by CE programs*

Course Topic	Reason for Offering	(n)
Gambling topics	Increased addictions to gambling	2
Topics related to ethics	Required and quality course, handouts, and instructor	2
Topics related to the elderly	Area of growing need for social work	2
Adoption		1
Behavioral health and substance abuse treatment in Native American communities	Responding to a need for greater knowledge, awareness, and skill to address the needs of tribal communities	1
Behavioral Health Service Coordinator and Mentoring	County initiative and growing national focus	1
Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor training	Received external funding to launch and run program	1
Disability and SW	result of 4 successful conferences	1
Family Therapy of Internet Addiction		1
Financial Education for Social Workers	Financial literacy needed to help clients during downturn.	1
Global human rights		1
Grant Writing for Social Workers	Budget cuts across the spectrum are hurting agencies and we want to teach social workers about federal funding opportunities	1
Human Trafficking		1
Immigration in Child Welfare	Requested and child welfare training need.	1
Integrating Journaling into Social Work	This just seems to have grabbed people's attention	1
Criminal justice and social work.	Research area of new faculty member.	1
Mental health and recovery	Faculty research area	1
Movie Nights (Participants watch a movie with a social work issue and then have a discussion led by and experienced person in the field)	Participants are looking for new innovative ways to gain their CEU's besides the typical lecture format	1
Neuroscience and Psychotherapy		1
On Being and Having a Case Manager		1
Pain management	Required by state	1
Play therapy		1
Program and policy implications		1
Self-Determination and Person Centered Planning	Addressing a commonly requested topic.	1
Social work safety	new by law this year	1
Spanish for Social Workers	Quality course, handouts and instructor	1
Spirituality and social work	Result of successful conferences	1
Supervision (clinical)	Interest in the certificate	1
Therapeutic Art Making For Children	Registrants constantly ask for art related seminars	1
Treating sexually abused children		1
Treatment issues with children and loss	Requested	1
Working with Hispanic Clients	Growing Hispanic population in region	1
Working with members of the military and their family	Increased need amongst this population.	1

this process of evolution and refinement of CE programs, social workers receiving education through these programs can sharpen their skills and deliver services to clients more effectively—thus accomplishing the mission of social work CE to a greater extent.

References

NASW. (2003). NASW standards for continuing professional education. In NASW (Ed.), *NASW*. Washington DC.

Table 7: *Topics discontinued by CE programs*

Course Topic	Reason for Offering	(n)
Functional Family Therapy	Motivational Interviewing replacing at all levels of intervention.	1
Anything having to do with LGBT-Q	Stigma? Denial?	1
Asian Families	Low registration	1
Community organizing and macro social work topics	Macro social workers aren't required to do CE	1
Contracting Between Parents and Teens	Low registration	1
Eating disorders	No interest	1
Gambling counseling	Significant number of helping professionals now trained	1
In class workshops on general topics		1
Introduction to play therapy	Low registration	1
Self-care	Agencies only paying for evidence based direct practice type of programming. Anything non-traditional or not evidence based is not acceptable at this point.	1
Taming finances in tough times	No interest	1