

# The State of Nonprofit Management Education in Canada

*A Project Summary Paper Prepared for the Institute for Nonprofit Studies Mount Royal College*

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## ABSTRACT

This paper highlights early findings from a research project begun in Summer 2007 to catalogue every course in nonprofit management offered at a college or university in Canada. The project is expected to serve both academic inquiry and practical purposes through providing open access to a database of these programs categorized in a number of ways.

A database of 47 institutions offering over 700 courses was created, and the programs were analyzed by type, revealing a landscape strongly focused on instrumentalist rather than academic approaches. Credentials tended to lean more towards certificates (both credit and noncredit) and diplomas rather than degrees, and there was great heterogeneity amongst programs, even those with similar names.

The paper ends with an early attempt to create a curricular typology for Canadian programs.

## INTRODUCTION

The field of nonprofit education has developed quite differently in Canada than in the United States. While Professor Mirabella (2006a) lists some 238 institutions offering 426 programs, her global research (2006b) identifies only 19 institutions in Canada. Using the general rule of thumb based on Canada having one-tenth of the population of the United States, this still indicates nearly one-third fewer programs in Canada than one might expect.

A survey conducted in late 2006 by the Association of Community Colleges of Canada (ACCC) on behalf of the proposed Nonprofit Studies Affinity Group, a joint venture of ACCC and the Human Resources Council for the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sectors had a much different result: 42 institutions offering 206 programs. However, due to methodological constraints, “program” here could mean an entire degree program, as in the Bachelor of Applied Nonprofit Studies at Mount Royal College’s Bissett School of Business, or a single course, as in a half-day workshop in Managing Change offered by Collège Boreal.

We did know prior to beginning this work that the program at Mount Royal College is the only undergraduate degree program in general nonprofit management in this country<sup>1</sup>, and that there is no American Humanities equivalent where students may learn about nonprofit management to complement their studies in another field. Further, we thought that the scope of graduate programs is quite limited – where programs exist, they tend to be streams in other degrees (e.g. MBA, MPA).

Because of this somewhat scattered landscape, it was felt that there was value for teachers, students and researchers to better understand what is available today and to develop thoughts for future direction. This paper outlines the methodology used, some early findings, and thoughts towards how this research might help define curricular guidelines in the future

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<sup>1</sup> There are a couple of other specialized bachelors’ degree programs in fields like Human Services Administration or Community Economic Development that are also included in the database, but MRC’s program is the only general nonprofit studies undergraduate degree.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Imagine a social worker in Ontario who gets a promotion to a management role and takes a continuing education or extension course in financial management in the nonprofit sector. Her appetite whetted, she may decide to further her education in the field and complete a degree. However, finding the right program would prove daunting – should she be looking at business schools, or schools of public administration, or colleges of arts and sciences? While academics may engage in the “best place” debate, it’s not very fruitful for students who are merely trying to find the best program for their needs.

Similarly, a student in the Applied Degree in Nonprofit Studies at Mount Royal College in Calgary might like to learn more about special events management. Mount Royal may not have enough students to offer a course in this area, but there may be a course at Algonquin College in Ontario that is both offered online and undersubscribed. If the academic advisor knew the details of the course, he could direct the student to it, and offer him transfer credit for it as an elective in his program.

One goal of this work, therefore, was to develop a database that would serve as the backbone of a proposed web portal. More than a collection of links, this portal would drill down to the course outline level of each program – extension, undergraduate and graduate – creating an invaluable resource. This could be valuable for a number of different users – prospective students, students in-program looking for transfer credit, and faculty members seeking to develop new courses or collaborate on course delivery.

More pertinent to this paper are the ways in which the database lends itself to academic inquiry: how has the field evolved in Canada versus in the United States? Would the NACC graduate curricular guidelines (2004) be a helpful tool for Canadian colleges and universities to adopt, or do we need to create our own version? How well are Canadian colleges and universities meeting the needs of various target markets? [Note: in 2007 the NACC graduate curricular guidelines were revised and new undergraduate guidelines were created. A future iteration of this research will incorporate these new guidelines.]

For the purposes of this paper, we are interested in examining the broad trends influencing nonprofit management program design in Canada, and distilling the curricular design principles (if any) that have guided this evolution.

## METHODOLOGY

### Form

The methodology for this inquiry has been quite simple. The Association of Canadian Community Colleges in late 2006 undertook a survey of all nonprofit management education programs across Canada to gather baseline data on what programs are being offered where. Using these data as a starting point, and the NACC curricular guidelines as a guiding reference, we created categories or “data labels” to categorize the various programs. These include level of study (undergraduate, graduate, extension), delivery method, and subject focus (e.g. volunteer management, arts administration). Table 1A, below, summarizes these data labels for each program.

**Table 1A: Data Labels, Program Level**

<i>Data Label</i>	<i>Potential values</i>
Institution	
Department	
Program	
Credential 1	Masters Degree , Bachelors Degree, Diploma, Certificate, Course Credit, Other
Credential 2	As above.
Focus areas of program	Governance and Executive Leadership Advocacy and Public Policy Law Financial Resources Accounting and Financial Management Human Resource Management Organizational Theory and Behaviour Marketing and Communications Information Management and Technology Decision-Making and Analytic Methods General Administration Communication Community Development
Length	
FT or PT	
Delivery method	Classroom, online, mixed, either
Practicum Component	Field study, Internship, Other
Cost	
Subsidy	
Target Market	High School Leavers, Young Professionals, Mid-Career Professionals, Career Changers
Contact information	
Number of courses	

A simple relational database based upon these data labels was then created, and populated with more information about each course in the program, using similar data labels to those above (focus area, delivery methods, number of hours, credits).

This database was designed to be web-friendly from the ground up, and will form the heart of a publicly-available, web-accessible tool. It has been transferred into an SQL format, and we expect to launch the web portal after conducting data verification by Spring 2009.

## Content

Any database is only as good as the information it contains. The research team started with the ACCC list of programs to populate the database; then contacted schools individually to garner more information about the programs where websites were not clear. Other programs were added based upon the knowledge and expertise of the research team. There are two considerations to this method that should be highlighted:

- It is possible that we have not captured all programs in Canada. We will use professional associations and other sources of information to capture other programs as they exist. We relied on our own internal filters to determine if a program was truly focused on the nonprofit sector. We excluded programs of general interest to nonprofit, for-profit and public managers, and attempted to include only *bona fide* nonprofit programs. Our filter here may have been too fine, particularly as it relates to non-credit and extension programs.

In early 2009, our intention is to perform significant data validation by contacting the programs listed in the database, as well as by circulating the website widely to attempt to capture any programs that we have missed. **Programs who wish to examine the database prior to public release are encouraged to contact the author. The author welcomes any suggestions for additions or changes to the database**

## FINDINGS

The database contains a total of 754 courses, offered through 47 institutions across Canada.

Table 2, below, summarizes the programs that exist in the database.

**Table 2A: Programs in Canada**

<i>Type of Program</i>	<i>Number</i>
Certificate (both credit and non-credit)	42
Associate Degree	1
Bachelors' Degree	4
Diploma	11
Masters' Degree	1
Other (e.g. course credit, no terminal credential)	17
Total Number of institutions	47
Total number of "programs"	74 <sup>2</sup>
Total number of courses	754

This is quite clearly different from Mirabella's US findings (2006a) as below:

	<i>2006</i>
Universities Offering NME Undergraduate Courses	117
Universities Offering NME Graduate Courses	161
Universities Offering NME Noncredit Courses	75
Universities Offering NME Continuing Education Courses	56
Universities Offering NME On-Line Courses	17
<b>Number of Institutions</b>	<b>238</b>
<b>Number of Programs</b>	<b>426</b>

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<sup>2</sup> This number should be imprecise, and should be used with some caution. It counts every institution offering even one course as a "program" whether or not this program leads to a formal credential.

Perhaps the most striking difference is in the number of non-degree courses in Canada. It seems that most of the Canadian offerings are clustered as for-credit and non-credit certificates and diplomas. Digging more deeply into the data, it can be seen that the majority of all offerings are targeted at people with pre-existing academic credentials. Whether offerings are for-credit or non-credit, they are aimed at working professionals, whether already in the sector or contemplating a career change.

This career-oriented mindset is also seen when examining the areas of program focus within most programs. Grant MacEwan College's new Post-Diploma Certificate in Executive Leadership in the Non-profit Sector is perhaps typical. The program is aimed at people with a prior post-secondary credential (either 2-year diploma or 4-year degree) and is described on its website as follows:

Designed for the working professional, the program is intended for those who are already working in the non-profit arena, or who are looking to move into the sector. The program is delivered in a hybrid model, with most of the coursework completed through distance, on-line delivery. The program will take eighteen months to complete, with assignments and projects tailored for completion within your current work environment or with the assistance of a non-profit organization(s). However, students are **REQUIRED** to attend the roughly ten sessions throughout the year at Grant MacEwan College's City Centre Campus, located in downtown Edmonton. Attendance is mandatory for completion of the certificate.

Programs are attempting to meet the needs of this target market through delivery methods as well; roughly half of the programs surveyed are offered by distance, whether online, through traditional correspondence, or through mixed-delivery methods.

Given this, it is not surprising to see that courses and programs are strongly focused on what Mirabella refers to as "inside function" issues. It is interesting to array some programs against the 2004 NACC curricular guidelines, as shown in Table 3 below. It should be noted that these guidelines are, of course, for graduate degree programs, but it is nonetheless interesting to see how programs do and do not reflect the recommended curriculum guidelines.

<b>NACC Curricular Topics</b>	<b><i>Mount Royal College, Bissett School of Business</i></b>	<b><i>Grant MacEwan College</i></b>	<b><i>Capilano College</i></b>	<b><i>University of Western Ontario</i></b>	<b><i>Concordia University</i></b>
	<b><i>Bachelor of Applied Nonprofit Studies</i></b>	<b><i>Post-Diploma Certificate in Leadership Training and Development</i></b>	<b><i>Associate degree in Global Stewardship</i></b>	<b><i>Diploma in Not-for-profit Management</i></b>	<b><i>Graduate diploma in Administration</i></b>
<b>Scope and Significance of Philanthropy and Voluntarism</b>	Canada's Nonprofit Sector -- Foundations				
<b>History and Theories of Philanthropy, Voluntarism and the Nonprofit Sector</b>	Canada's Nonprofit Sector -- Foundations				
<b>Ethics and Values</b>	Governance and ethical issues in organizations				
<b>Nonprofit Governance and Executive Leadership</b>	Governance and ethical issues in organizations  Strategic Management for Nonprofit organizations  Program Planning and Assessment  Intro to Management	Executive Leadership in the Nonprofit Context  Board Governance and Collaborative Leadership	Nonprofit Management	Boards and Governance  Foundations of Leadership	
<b>Advocacy and Public Policy</b>	Intro to Political Science  Intro to Public Policy	Introduction to Public Affairs - Government and Regulatory Issues	Course in political science	Public Policy and the Not-for-profit Context	
<b>Nonprofit Law</b>	Business Law				Law for Charitable, Not-for-Profit, Sport and Entertainment Organizations
<b>Nonprofit Financial Resources</b>	Intro to Fund Development  Corporate Philanthropy	Strategic Financial and Fund Development in the Non-Profit Sector		Development and Fundraising for Not-for-profit Organizations	Public Relations and Fund Raising for Not-for-Profit Organizations
<b>Accounting and Financial Management</b>	Financial Accounting Concepts  Managerial Accounting Concepts			Finance for Not-for-profit Organizations	Accounting for Not-for-Profit Organizations
<b>Human Resource Management</b>	Intro to HR Management  Intro to Volunteer	Leading HR Development in the Non-Profit Sector	Two seminars on working with nonprofit organizations	Human Resource Management in Not-for-profit Organizations	

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	<i>Bachelor of Applied Nonprofit Studies</i>	<i>Post-Diploma Certificate in Leadership Training and Development</i>	<i>Associate degree in Global Stewardship</i>	<i>Diploma in Not-for-profit Management</i>	<i>Graduate diploma in Administration</i>
	Management				
<b>Organizational Theory and Behavior</b>	Organizational Behaviour  Strategic Management			Strategic Planning in Not-for-profit Organizations	Organizational Behaviour and Administrative Theory for Not for-Profit and Sport Organizations  Not-for-Profit Managerial and Administrative Theory and Practice
<b>Marketing and Communications</b>	Intro to Marketing  Business Communications  Intro to Public Relations			Writing for the Not-for-profit Sector  Marketing and Public Relations for Not-for-profit Organizations	Marketing for Not-for-Profit Organizations
<b>Information Management and Technology</b>	None			Technology in the Not-for-profit Sector	Management Information Systems with Applications in Not-for-Profit and Sport Organizations
<b>Decision-Making and Analytic Methods</b>	Business Statistics			Managerial Economics with Applications in Not-for Profit and Sport Organizations	Quantitative Research Methods in Organizations
<b>Other<sup>3</sup></b>	Community Development  2 field studies	Organizational and Community Development  Capstone field study	2 internships	Personal Career Management  Field Study	Internship  Major research project  Several options in health care, sport, and arts management

<sup>3</sup> Not including options, electives, and arts/science/general education requirements

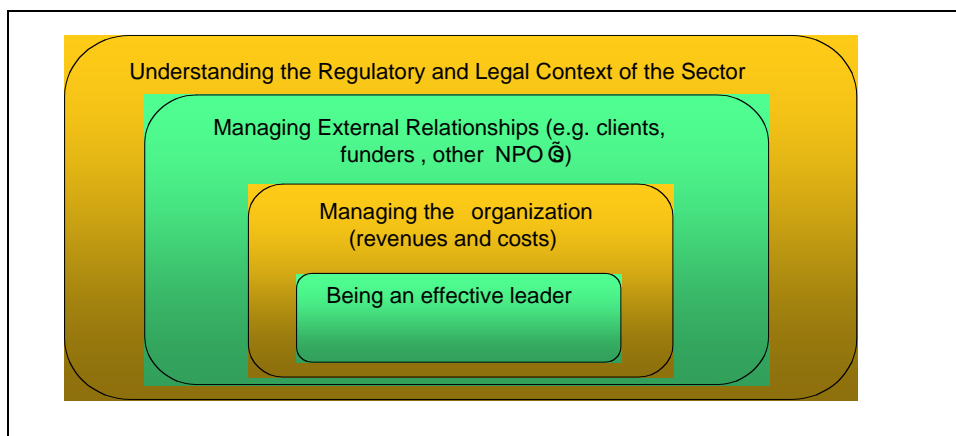
When examining these five illustrative examples, a few points become apparent:

- There is very little emphasis on the first three major sub-areas of the NACC curricular guidelines: scope and significance, history and theories, ethics and values. Indeed, across all courses in the database, there were 18 courses focused on either of the first two, and 19 courses on ethics and values (as against 100+ courses in fund development, for example). This is certainly not to say that scope and history is not taught, but rather that these curricular elements are subsumed in other, more instrumentalist courses.
- Information technology is also very rarely taught, with only 17 courses, most of which are optional. This may reflect the general level of IT knowledge amongst today's student body.
- The curricular guidelines also could be a better match in terms of different kinds of management skills – do writing and business communications courses really fit into “Marketing and Communications”, for example? Where do general management courses go? What about program planning and evaluation? Do courses in strategic management fit better in Organizational Theory or Executive Leadership and Governance?
- In addition to the functional limitations of the curricular guidelines above, there are also some interesting sectoral concerns. By far, the most common type of sectoral course offered in Canada is in the general field of Community Development, with several dedicated programs and some 58 courses across the country. Should there be sector-specific guidelines, which include courses relevant only to that sector?
- Nearly every program has a field-study component, whether a paid or unpaid internship or a field project. This type of work is not directly captured in the NACC guidelines.

## SOME THOUGHTS ON CURRICULAR GUIDELINES FOR CANADA

Given that the NACC graduate curricular guidelines seem to be a less-than-perfect fit for the Canadian context, an obvious question arises: if guidelines are felt to be important, do the guidelines need to change to fit reality, or do the programs need to change to match the guidelines?

As an academic exercise, it is interesting to hypothesize on what curricular guidelines for Canada might look like. Perhaps a schematic like the following might be appropriate:



## 1.0 Understanding the context of the sector

- 1.1 History
- 1.2 Size and scope; international comparisons
- 1.3 Legal and regulatory context

## 2.0 Managing external relationships

- 2.1 Policy and advocacy
- 2.2 Community development
- 2.3 Fund development and financial sustainability
- 2.4 Marketing and public relations
- 2.5 Communications

## 3.0 Managing the Nonprofit Organization

- 3.1 General management, both tactical and strategic
- 3.2 Human resources and volunteer management
- 3.3 Financial management and accounting
- 3.4 Organizational behaviour
- 3.5 Program planning and evaluation
- 3.6 Earned revenue/social enterprise
- 3.7 Governance
- 3.8 Analytic methods

## 4.0 Being an effective leader

- 4.1 Personal leadership
- 4.2 Ethics and values

While the creation of this typology is helpful for future academic inquiry, several issues would need to be addressed prior to any practical implementation. First, is there any need for national guidelines or does the heterogeneity of programs appropriately reflect local or sub-sectoral needs? If there is an appetite for guidelines or standards, does this simple framework assist? To what extent do these guidelines speak to the role of nonprofit organizations in a complex Aboriginal, French, English, and multicultural Canadian society? Who needs to be part of the conversation? The author invites your comments and observations.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The hope is that this initial database will serve as a rich vein for future researchers as well. The full database should be available on the web (at [www.mtroyal.ca/nonprofit](http://www.mtroyal.ca/nonprofit)) in mid-2009 and will be freely accessible for review. Some interesting directions for inquiry may include:

- What are the target markets for learners? Should there be a greater focus on learners looking for primary academic credentials?
- Given the paucity of programs at the graduate level, is there a need for more professional graduate programs? For academic graduate programs?
- Are current programs muting the HR needs of the sector? Is there a need for accreditation or certification from the perspective of employers?

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