

Offering seminars through college extended education programs (#5)

For more than 30 years I offered 2000+ seminars, workshops, and conferences in California, with more than half given at the California State University system (now CSU, formerly CSUC). Since I spoke at all but four of the 23 campuses then, let me focus on that structure to explain how one can get booked by the college extended education system.

(Most of the other programs I offered were at community (junior) colleges; a few were through the UC system.)

For those unfamiliar with the CSU system, it is the largest educational system in the world. It is comprised of institutions at the following locations: Arcata (Humboldt), Bakersfield, Carson (Dominguez Hills), Chico, Fresno, Fullerton, Hayward (East Bay), Long Beach, Los Angeles, Martinez (CA Maritime Academy), Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona, Rohnert Park (Sonoma), Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, San Luis Obispo, San Marcos, and Ventura (Channel Islands).

A quick, sad insert here. There have been key changes in the California extended ed offerings in the past five or so years, with single programs (mine were usually four hours long) usually replaced by certification programs. So booking with these colleges today will likely be less satisfactory. However, in other major system nationwide, the process and bookability hasn't changed much, so what I'm sharing here is the way getting booked is still widely done elsewhere. The CSU system was the most comprehensive and reliable system I used (when I also spoke in five other states) so the way to apply and perform where you live and work (except in California)

shouldn't be much different than what I am sharing.

While there were policies that tied all 23 schools together, most operated independently, particularly where seminars were concerned. The office you contacted was usually called the Office of Extended Education (or Programs), sometimes the Office of Continuing Education. A call to the school or a look at the current college catalog (check the listing in front under Administration) will give you the proper name—and the name of its director.

Some extended education offices had relatively free control over the type of programs they offered. Others were tightly controlled by the academic faculty at the institution. The latter is the case everywhere when the seminars you suggest were identical to or significantly overlapped academic classes given (or logically included in an academic program) at the institution. Thus you had the best chance at all CSUs if your program was different from what that institution offered or was some phase of practical application of theoretical academic programs. If you had an idea for a seminar and you were unsure, however, a call and discussion with the extended education director or staff would quickly tell you if your idea would be considered or would be acceptable.

The traditional approach was either to call or write a letter to the director suggesting a possible seminar or seminars, with a brief explanation of your qualifications, the seminar's title, a brief description of its contents, and the length of time it lasted. The director would tell you if it was being offered in a similar form now or planned to be added in the near future, as well as whether it fit into their particular extended education format. The director might also have indicated whether he/she wanted to include it in the next bulletin or catalog.

At a later point more information would be required. (Some preferred to approach the director with a full project at the

outset that included all that would be required.) This would include a concise letter of introduction presenting yourself and your seminar idea(s). Regarding yourself, it should tell who you are, why you should offer the seminar, past experiences enhancing your qualifications and a copy of your resume or dossier. For each seminar idea there should be a title, brief description, possible scheduling dates and times, a suggested cost to the participant, and the kind of audio-visual equipment needed or used. A seminar outline was highly desirable. A suggestion of who would want to attend the seminar and why, with perhaps an estimate of approximate attendance, would help sell the program to the director.

If you had given the seminar elsewhere, by all means indicate the dates, locations, and the person (and college) through whom it was scheduled (so the director could check the reference). Favorable comments made by the participants at earlier presentations should also be shared.

Pay varied widely throughout the CSUs but generally it fell in the 40-60% category. That means that you received that percentage of the income generated by pre-registrations and at-the-door payments. For that percentage you paid all of your costs, including transportation and room/board. Preparation of handout material was usually arranged with the director. Sometimes they picked up the tab if the handout isn't excessively long or complex. When academic credit was awarded for participation, your payment was almost always based on the number of units given rather than on attendance. With BRN and other credentialing credit, it varied. The director handled all publicity, inclusion in the bulletin or extension catalog, room and audio-visual arrangements, support paperwork, pre-registration and other services. If your idea wouldn't draw a minimum attendance, in the director's opinion, he/she usually rejected your idea at the outset.

If there was the likelihood that your offering would attract sufficient participation the director would likely offer the

seminar on the condition that if it failed to attract sufficient registration, it would be cancelled. Thus the minimum number needed to keep the seminar "alive" should have been decided with the director beforehand.

I found that by working with directors to provide additional publicity for your program, you could help attract more participants. This was done by preparing press releases and lists of groups or people who should be sent the bulletin or a flyer, plus offering to give interviews on radio or TV about your seminar. All of the promotion had to be clearly synchronized with the director so your activities and theirs were complementary.

Timing was also very important. To be included in the extension bulletin you had to contact the institution at least four (better, six) months before the start of the quarter or semester during which the program would be offered.

While cross-scheduling with other CSU schools in the same area at the same time made no sense, you could book your seminar at the University of California schools, community colleges, church groups, recreation programs, and other civic organizations and clubs. CSUs usually paid the best, unless you offered a self-sponsored seminar nearby. (They were far riskier so I never overlapped that way.)

The take-away here is to contact the colleges where you want to speak and follow the process explained above. Be prepared from the outset to "sell" your program(s) to the extended ed leaders and staff. The whole procedure is rather confusing the first time or two, but after that it's a triple win: for you, the participants, and the extended ed program.

Thus is blog #5 of 15 blogs, one appearing every 7-10 days, about "[How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar.](#)" (We also have an audio cassette/workbook program available about the full topic.)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett