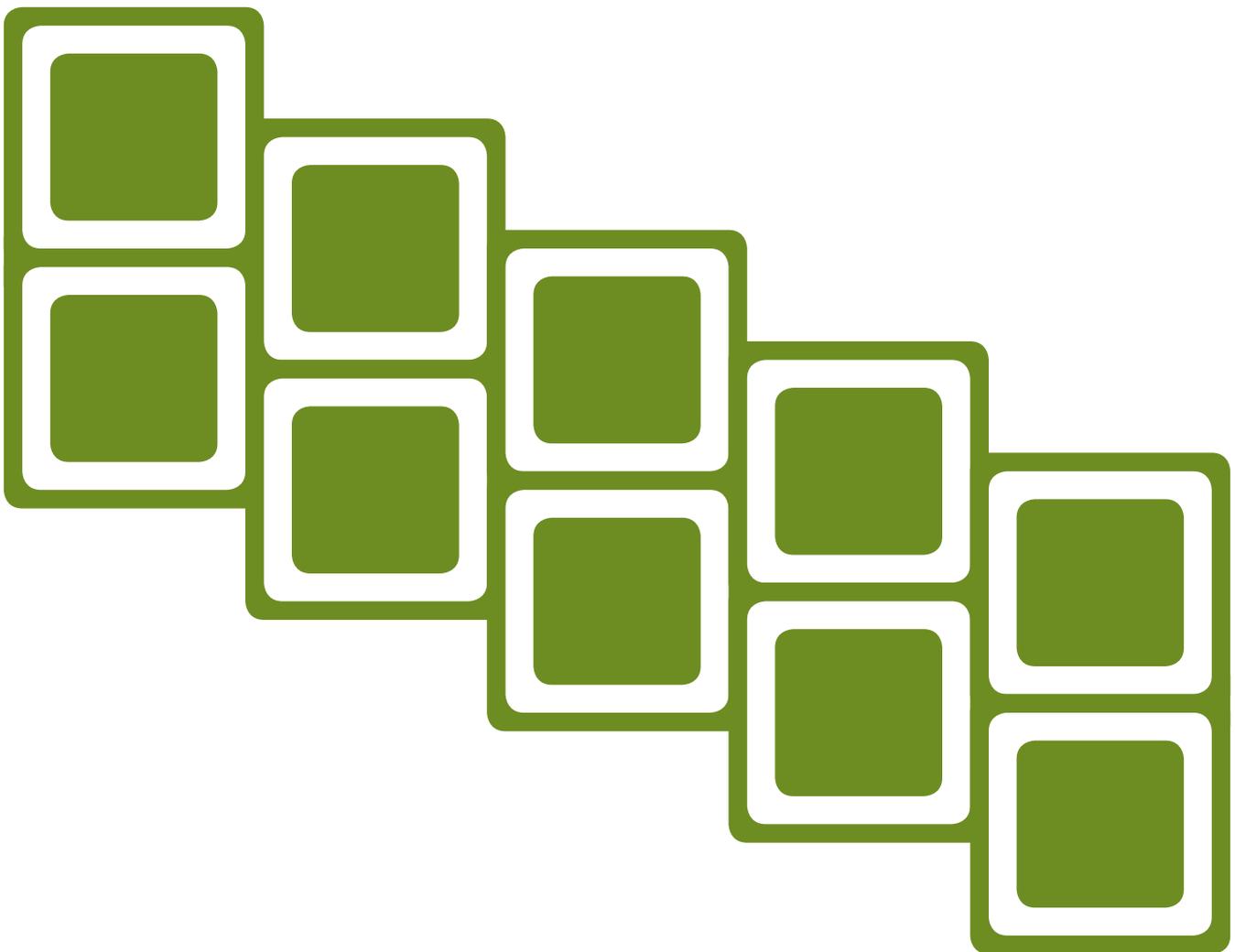


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# *Differences in the Administrative Organization of Summer Sessions: AUSS, NAASS, NCCSS, and WASSA Member Institutions*

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## **Abstract**

This article reports on the first phase of a two-phase study. Phase 1 aimed to determine how summer sessions are organized at member institutions of the Association of University Summer Sessions (AUSS), the North American Association of Summer Sessions (NAASS), the North Central Conference on Summer Schools (NCCSS), and the Western Association of Summer Session Administrators (WASSA), to better understand the range and diversity of responsibilities for performing essential summer session functions. Results of Phase 1 indicate that the organization of summer sessions among member institutions falls along a continuum, from centralized (most functions and services are performed by a summer session office) through hybridized (some functions/services are provided by a summer session office while others are devolved to other campus units/departments) to decentralized (most functions and services are performed by various other campus units/departments). Phase 2 will examine whether differing organizational models affect performance-based outcomes important to the success of the summer term.

## Introduction

The goals of the authors' research are twofold: Phase 1, whose results are reported here, aimed to determine how summer sessions are organized at member institutions of the Association of University Summer Sessions (AUSS), the North American Association of Summer Sessions (NAASS), the North Central Conference on Summer Schools (NCCSS), and the Western Association of Summer Session Administrators (WASSA). Phase 2 will assess the possible extent to which differences in these organizational/administrative structures might affect the success of the summer term.

For purposes of this study, organizational structures can be operationally categorized as centralized (most summer sessions functions administered by a summer session office), decentralized (most functions administered by several different campus units/departments), or hybrid (some functions administered by a summer session office, while other functions are devolved to other campus units/departments). In a fourth type, the outsourced model, all summer session functions are administered by a third-party, off-campus vendor; this model was not included in the study. All models offer advantages and disadvantages to an organization. Centralized models tend to offer greater control over decisions, enhance unity of purpose and consistency of action, and potentially increase cost efficiencies. Decentralized models offer more decision-making autonomy for individual units, increase responsiveness to client/student needs, and may provide greater opportunities to customize functions and services to meet local departmental, faculty, and student needs. While there is no correct organizational form, it has been observed previously (Kops, 2010) that institutions undergo pendulum swings, in which they move between one form and another in an effort to gain advantage and/or remedy the problems of a previous structure. Most often the change decision is based on reasons other than performance outcomes (Kops, 1998).

If differences in organizational structures significantly impact operations and the overall success of summer sessions, it seems reasonable to expect that outcomes (such as student head count, credit hours, and financial performance) might vary as a function of the degree to which the oversight and provision of summer functions are centralized or decentralized. Further, changes in the degree to which centralized structures are replaced by decentralized ones might also have untoward consequences for the long-term viability and vitality of professional associations devoted to the management of the summer term. For example, Kops and Lytle (2010) noted that decentralization of summer sessions at most California State Universities (CSU) in early 2000 was accompanied by a major reduction in the number of CSU memberships in WASSA (from a high of 14 CSU institutional memberships in 1996 to only two in 2010).

To date, there has been a paucity of research to support decisions to change organizational structures. To the authors' knowledge, the only investigator (Heikel, 2000) to examine the consequences of different summer session operational models concluded that centralized models appeared to be more successful financially and in meeting student needs compared with decentralized summer session operations. The Phase 1 research described herein explores the question further by attempting to gain a better understanding of the range and diversity of summer session organizational models, Phase 2 of the study will look for a connection between summer session organizational models and performance outcomes, including speculating on how changing organizational models might impact the well-being of relevant professional associations.

## Research Methodology

An electronically formatted survey instrument with 38 items and a four-point rating scale was developed to provide a systematic method for characterizing summer session organizational structures among participating institutions. The survey, with instructions and a cover letter indicating the purpose of the research, was sent electronically in spring 2011 to persons listed as institutional representatives in 327 (non-duplicated) institutions drawn from the paid membership lists of AUSS, NAASS, NCCSS, and WASSA. A total of 115 institutions returned completed surveys (35% response rate). Before analysis of the survey data, respondent institutions were classified on the basis of funding, size based on Fall term unduplicated student head count, location, and organizational affiliation (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Institutional Characteristics of Survey Respondents (n=115)

Survey Respondent Institutional Characteristics	Percent
<b>Funding Basis</b>	
Public	55%
Private	45%
<b>Size</b>	
Small	37%
Medium	33%
Large	30%
<b>Location</b>	
Canadian	3%
U.S.A.	96%
Other	1%
<b>Professional Organization Affiliation<sup>1</sup></b>	
AUSS	82%
NAASS	32%
NCCSS	20%
WASSA	19%

1. Total percent responses exceed 100% because many respondent institutions hold memberships in more than one professional organization.

Respondents were asked to rate each survey item by indicating the extent to which a function or service was influenced by the respondent's summer session office. The degree of control exerted was indicated using a four-point scale, with each point assigned a numerical value:

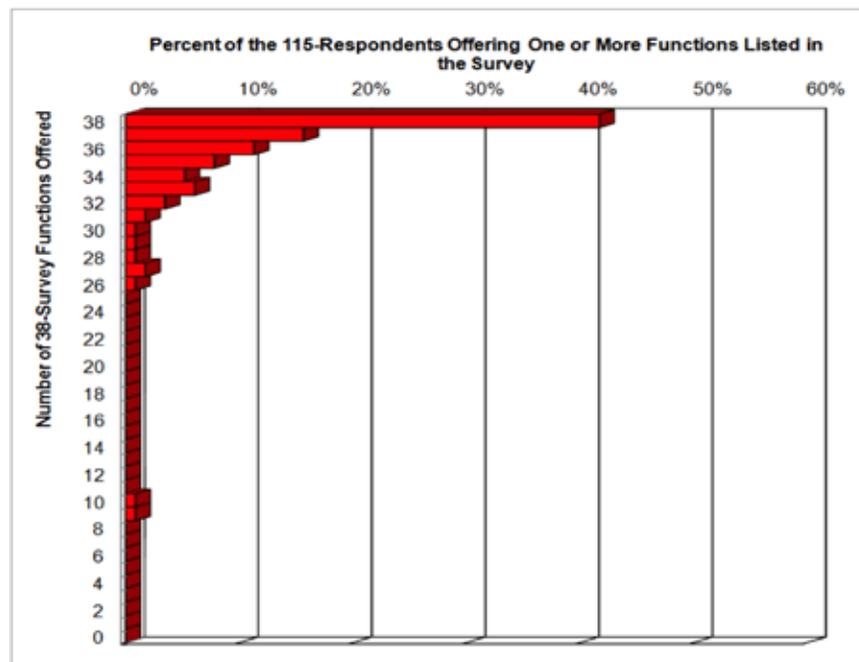
- high = 3 (decision by summer session office)
- medium = 2 (decision shared with other units)
- low = 1 (decision by other units with limited input from summer session office)
- no involvement = 0 (decision by other units with no input from summer session office)

Functions scored “not applicable” (the function was not performed at the institution) were tallied, but excluded from the analyses. The 38 survey items were evaluated to gauge the degree of control exerted over each by summer session offices, as well as the extent to which the functions were carried out at each of the institutions represented in the survey.

A centralization/hybridization/decentralization (CHD) score for each institution was compiled using a daisy-chained, computer-based worksheet methodology developed to handle the large data sets encountered in earlier work analyzing the functionality of NAASS and WASSA websites (Abe, Barry, Kops, & Lytle, 2010). The CHD score was determined by transforming the numerical total of the 38 ratings for degree of control to a mean percent score and expressing it on a continuum using a 100-point scale, where 100% means centralized and 0% means decentralized, with intermediate scores indicating varying degrees of centralization, decentralization, or hybridization. As an example, to achieve a score of 100%, a summer session office would have been rated as highly involved (3 points) on each of the 38 functions and would have achieved a total of 114 points (3 times 38). Institutional CHD scores were further analyzed to determine whether they varied by funding basis, size, country of origin, or organizational affiliation.

## Results

Over three-quarters of the responding institutions performed at least 34 of the 38 functions included in the survey: 42% performed every function and an additional 35% offered 34–37 of them (Figure 1). Only 7% of the responding institutions performed less than 30 of the listed survey functions; among these, only two institutions performed less than 11 of the functions (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Functions/Offered by Survey Respondents

## Conference Papers

### *Differences in the Administrative Organization of Summer Sessions*

Ten of the functions (scheduling courses and programs, recruiting instructors, selecting instructors, establishing instructor salaries, processing instructor appointments/payroll, marketing summer sessions, establishing registration deadlines, establishing student fee payment deadlines, reporting performance outcomes, and representing the campus in summer session matters) were performed by 98% or more of the survey respondents (Table 2; Column A). In contrast, less than 80% of the responding institutions supported the delivery of online courses, were involved with surplus distribution to the academic/campus units, or determined administrative overhead (Table 2; column A).

**Table 2:** Percentage of Summer Session Functions Offered (Column A) and Median Degree of Control by Summer Session Offices (Column B)

Number	Summer Sessions Functions	A: Percent	B: Median <sup>1</sup>
1	Developing mission or purpose statement(s)	90%	3
2	Planning/developing courses	97%	2
3	Developing special (e.g., pre-college; travel study; summer camp) programs	96%	2
4	Developing (e.g., instructional design; support resources) online courses	87%	1
5	Scheduling courses/programs	100%	2
6	Recruiting instructors	99%	1
7	Selecting instructors	99%	1
8	Establishing instructor salaries	98%	2
9	Processing instructor appointments/payroll	100%	3
10	Processing instructor grievances	94%	1
11	Processing instructor evaluations	93%	1
12	Processing course evaluations	95%	1
13	Approving additional funding requests from instructors	90%	2
14	Supporting the delivery (e.g., maintaining websites/servers/security) of online courses	79%	0
15	Marketing summer sessions	99%	3
16	Establishing registration deadlines	98%	2
17	Establishing student admission policies	97%	2
18	Processing student admissions	97%	1
19	Providing student academic advising	97%	1
20	Processing course enrollment lists	97%	1
21	Processing student course grades	94%	0
22	Maintaining student grade records	92%	0

Number	Summer Sessions Functions	A: Percent	B: Median <sup>1</sup>
23	Processing student records	93%	0
24	Establishing student fees	97%	1
25	Establishing student fee payment deadlines	98%	1
26	Establishing student fees for other campus resources (e.g., lodging; classroom use; library; recreation)	93%	0
27	Establishing student fees for other campus services (e.g., tutorial services; counseling; career advising)	88%	0
28	Establishing budget allocations for academic units	84%	1
29	Providing funding for new academic program development	94%	2
30	Collecting student fees	97%	0
31	Controlling revenue distribution to campus units	86%	1
32	Paying expenses (e.g., instructor salaries; benefits; campus resources/services)	97%	3
33	Establishing summer surplus distribution to academic units/ individuals	74%	0
34	Establishing contributions to administrative overhead	79%	0
35	Carrying out special program evaluations	90%	2
36	Reporting performance (e.g., enrollments; credits; student/ instructor demographics; financial) outcomes	99%	3
37	Preparing annual reports	94%	3
38	Representing the campus in summer sessions matters	100%	3

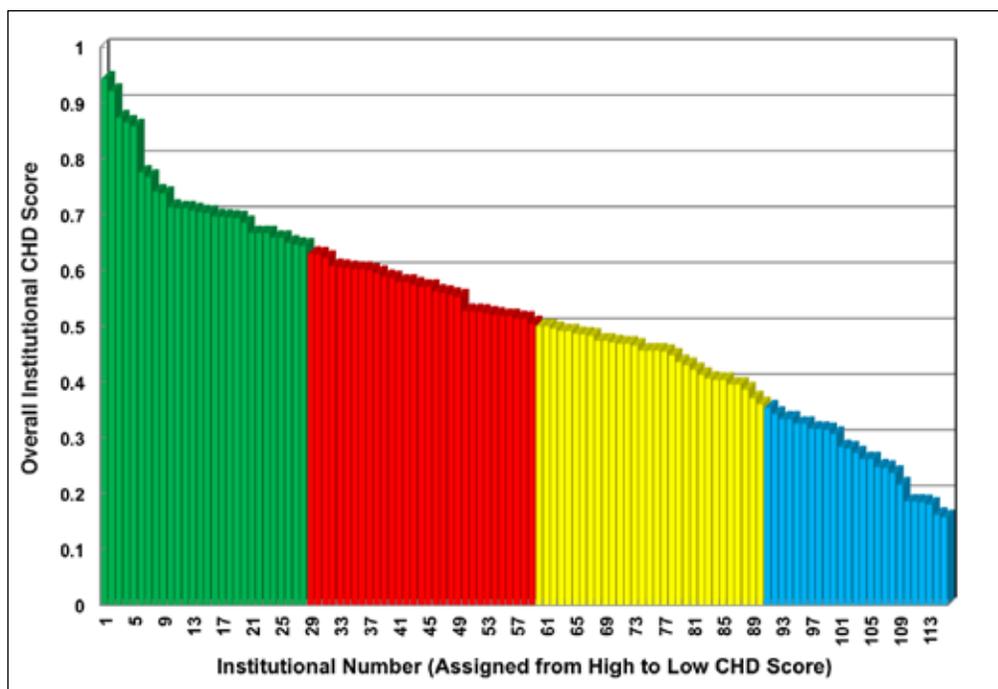
1. Degree of control by summer sessions estimated using a four point scale:  
0 = no involvement; 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high level of involvement.

Seven of the surveyed functions (developing mission or purpose statements, processing instructor appointments/payroll, marketing summer sessions, paying expenses, reporting performance outcomes, preparing annual reports, and representing the campus in summer session matters) received the highest median ratings for degree of control (indicating that the functions were centralized): (Table 2; Column B). Of the 10 functions performed at 98% or more of the responding institutions, four (processing instructor appointments/payroll, marketing summer sessions, reporting performance outcomes, and representing the campus in summer session matters) were typically the sole responsibility of the summer session office. In contrast, twenty-two of the surveyed functions offered by the institutions had little (34% received median scores of 1) input from the summer session office, and 26% of the functions had no input from the summer session office (received median scores of 0).

Overall CHD average scores were compiled for each of the 115 institutional respondents and evaluated for possible differences based on institutional funding, size, country of origin, and professional association affiliation. The individual CHD scores for each institution represented in the survey are not included here but are available to survey respondents upon request. The 115 institutional CHD scores, rank ordered from high to low, ranged between 94% (centralized) to 16% (decentralized).

The high-to-low ranks were divided into quartiles (Figure 2) using the following operational definitions:

- CHD Score  $\geq 64$ : Majority of functions centralized to summer session office.
- CHD Score 51–63: Hybrid with some functions administered by summer session office
- CHD Score 39–50: Hybrid with some functions administered by campus units other than summer session office.
- CHD Score  $\leq 38$ : Majority of functions decentralized to other campus units.



**Figure 2:** Individual Institutional Centralization/Hybridization/Decentralization (CHD) Scores Arrayed from High to Low and Divided into Quartiles<sup>1</sup>

1. CHD scores are percentages of total possible ratings for high degree of control (38 survey items x 3 points = 114 points) by summer session offices at each institution. Green histograms are institutional CHD scores ranked in the first quartile (centralized); red histograms are institutional CHD scores ranked in the second quartile (hybridized with some centralization), yellow histograms are institutional CHD scores ranked in the third quartile (hybridized with some decentralization), blue histograms institutional CHD scores ranked in the fourth quartile (decentralized).

Median CHD scores were slightly lower for publicly funded institutions, suggesting that while both public and privately funded colleges and universities are characterized by hybrid administrative structures, publicly funded ones may be slightly more decentralized compared with private institutions (Table 3). No systematic differences in CHD scores were observed across institutions of different sizes, and the small number of survey respondents outside the United States (four in Canada and one in Australia) made it difficult to determine whether the low CHD scores compiled for the Canadian respondents were statistically meaningful. It was also difficult to determine whether the relatively higher CHD scores compiled for AUSS-affiliated institutions were statistically meaningful, since most survey respondents held membership in more than one professional organization.

**Table 3:** Median CHD Scores as a Function of Institutional Characteristics

Institutional Characteristics of Survey Respondents	Average CHD Score
<b>Funding Basis</b>	
Public	48%
Private	54%
<b>Size</b>	
Small	49%
Medium	53%
Large	51%
<b>Location</b>	
Canadian	41%
U.S.A.	51%
Other	74%
<b>Professional Organization Affiliation</b>	
AUSS	57%
NAASS	51%
NCCSS	47%
WASSA	52%

Survey items were sorted into seven *post hoc* functional categories (Table 4): (1) developing mission or purpose statements, (2) curriculum development, course planning, scheduling, (3) instruction, including faculty recruitment, selection, salaries, and evaluation, (4) admission, registration, fees, (5) marketing, (6) budget and financial allocations, and (7) data collection, analysis, reporting, representing. The percentages of the 115 survey respondents indicating that summer session offices had high degrees of control (ratings of 3) in each of the seven functional categories were compiled and, as Table 4 shows, 60% and 83% of all survey respondents indicated a high degree of control by summer session offices over developing mission or purpose statements, and marketing, respectively. Only one-third of survey respondents had high levels of control over the data collection category, and even fewer institutions indicated that summer session offices were responsible for budget and financial allocations, curriculum/course development, and instruction. Not surprisingly, none of the respondents had primary responsibility for student admission/registration decisions and establishing student fees.

**Table 4:** Percentage of Respondents Indicating High Levels of Control by Summer Session Offices in *Post Hoc* Functional Categories

Post Hoc Functional Areas <sup>1</sup>	Percentage
Developing mission or purpose statement(s) (1 survey item: no. 1)	60%
Curriculum, course planning, scheduling (6 survey items: nos. 2–5 & 14)	5%
Instruction, including faculty recruitment, selection, salaries, and evaluation (8 survey items: nos. 6–13)	3%
Admission/registration/fees (13 survey items; nos. 16–27 & 30)	0%
Marketing (1 survey item: no. 15)	82%
Budget/financial allocations (6 survey items: nos. 28, 29 & 31–34)	14%
Data collection, analysis, reporting, representing (4 survey items; nos. (35–38))	33%

1. Survey item numbers refer to the survey functions listed in Table 2.

## Conclusions

The 38-item survey instrument developed for the research project proved useful for identifying and characterizing a range of organizational structures currently in place for the administration of summer sessions. Institutions differed in terms of the range of functions provided: those concentrated in the summer session office, and those distributed among various campus units. Centralization/hybridization/decentralization (CHD) scores for responding institutions ranged between 94% (centralized) and 16% (decentralized). The overall average CHD score of 51% indicated that the organizational model for summer sessions in most responding institutions can be characterized as a hybrid model, with varying degrees to which functions were performed by other campus units (the higher the CHD score, the greater degree to which summer session offices had functional authority).

The next phase of the study will attempt to determine the extent to which differences in organizational structure affect the success of summer sessions. The 115 institutions responding to the initial survey will be asked to provide measures on a variety of performance outcomes, such as student head count, credit hours, course numbers, and financial performance. These data will be compiled and analyzed using the CHD criteria established in Phase 1 of the research.

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**Note:** The reader may want to review the summer session organizational model at her/his institution in terms of the benefits it provides to effectively managing the summer term, considering questions such as these: Is the university well served by the current model? Is full advantage being gained from the expected advantages of the structure? Are changes in structure anticipated, and, if so, on what basis might future decisions about summer sessions be made?

Readers are welcome to contact the authors to discuss the Phase 1 data related to their institution:

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