Choosing between Credit and Continuing Education Career Programs

Deciding upon your educational path can seem confusing because of the many options that you have. One thing that can help you is to understand the advantages and disadvantages of Credit versus Continuing Education programs. (note: Continuing Education is often referred to as Non-credit. At FCC, they mean the same thing.)

The following applies to Continuing Education *career training programs*. There are many other courses offered by FCC’s Continuing Education unit that are not addressed here.

**Similarities**

Both credit and continuing education courses become part of the student’s college transcript. Successfully completing a credit course will result in the student being awarded college credit, which is accumulated for transfer or degree/certificate award. Successfully completing a continuing education courses will result in the student being awarded Continuing Education Units (CEUs). CEUs can be accumulated for a Continuing Education Certificate of Completion, but do not transfer to other colleges or Universities.

Both kinds of courses require the student pass by demonstrating competencies. Both have participation requirements. Both use faculty who are experts in the field. Both may lead to an industry certification.

**Differences**

Students interested in earning a college degree, either an Associate’s degree at FCC or transferring credit for a Bachelor’s degree at another school, should take credit courses. Credit courses are graded experiences. Credit Programs result in either an FCC Letter of Recognition, a Certificate, or a Degree, and are awarded to students completing a listed sequence of credit courses. To earn any of these awards, a student must finish with a 2.0 (C) average. Credit programs that award a degree will include courses that are outside of the technical field a student is pursuing. These additional course requirements are to ensure that the student develops a broader, general education, and is able to demonstrate a wider variety of skills and competencies.

Continuing education courses are usually graded on a pass/fail format, with a concentration on skill development for a particular trade or occupation. Continuing
**Education Certificates** usually do not include courses outside of the technical field that the student is studying. The advantage to this is that the student may complete the program requirements and enter the workforce with fewer courses and in less time. The disadvantage is that these courses do not count toward a degree, or transfer to another school as a credit course might.

**So which one am I?**

- Some career preparation programs are offered as credit only, and some as continuing education only. An FCC student can take either kind of program or course, as long as the prerequisites are met. Usually, you will not have the option of earning credit for a continuing education program. Be sure to double-check the college catalog to confirm which kind of program you are entering.

- If you are coming to FCC to learn a skill to become employed in your field as soon as possible, you are probably a Continuing Education student.

- If you are coming to FCC to enter a career field but anticipate achieving an Associates Degree or a Bachelors Degree eventually, you are probably a Credit student.

- If you want only the technical content and no other educational requirements, you are probably a Continuing Education student.

- If you can’t decide, and think you might want to “bank” college credits in case you change your mind later, you are probably a Credit student.

**Last bits to remember:**

Though the technical coursework may be the same, the credit programs will include courses in addition to the technical content, such as Introduction to the Building Trades, Customer Service, or English.

Some programs are offered in either Continuing Education or Credit formats, not both.

It is best to talk to an advisor who can answer questions and help you select your options.