What can we learn from a LEAGUE conference in the USA?

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The League for Innovation in Community Colleges (in the USA) was formed 35 years ago as forum for cooperation and networking among the community colleges in the USA. The League focuses on making a difference for college institutions, students and communities. These colleges mostly offer post-school undergraduate qualifications, very similar to the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITP's) of New Zealand. In recent years these colleges faced challenges regarding new technologies, academic standards, fading student numbers and foreseen retirement by the majority of members of senior management in following years. More than 100 corporate partners are involved in the initiative to advance leadership, promote innovation and the use of ICT in community colleges This poster reports observations from the annual conference on Information Technology of the League for Innovation in Community Colleges during October 2003.

SIZE AND LOGISTICS: 24 rooms for presentations, each 50-200 people, with the latest equipment. More than 20 rooms used for open workshops and sessions on invitation. Rooms distributed across the conference centre and adjacent hotels. Sessions scheduled 08:00 to 18:00. Seven parallel streams covering spectrum from teaching, leadership and industry partnership. Up to 1000 sessions.

ATTENDANCE OF SESSIONS: Forums generally poorly attended, competing with interesting events such as hands-on lab sessions, special sessions and open general sessions presented by seniors from industry and education, and also breaks for tea and lunch. Some presenters actively marketed their sessions with more posters, pamphlets at the coffee shops and even drop leaflets at the hotel rooms. Sadly, no proceedings were available and presenters often did not hand copies out.

UNIVERSITY AND INDUSTRY SERVICE: Six universities are key partners in the LEAGUE conference, mostly private institutions. Sessions regarding management and personal development involved university staff. More than three quarters of the sessions involved people with job titles including words such as "President", "CEO" and Director". More than one quarter of the sessions involved at least one "Professor" from a university or college.
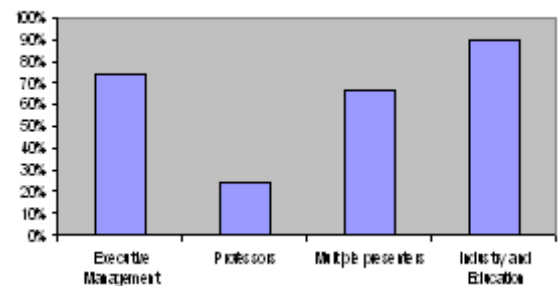
PERSONAL STUDIES: Seventeen sessions were reserved for students busy with their MS studies in Education at Antioch University McGregor. The students attended specific open sessions presented by professors, followed by closed workshops to discuss selected conference material as part of gaining credits in their studies. In this way residency required for the MS study was integrated with conference attendance sponsored by their employers. Walden University presented their PhD degree in community college management that is available from 2004 - by October 2003, 25+ students already registered for this degree with on-line study components, a thesis with 25% of total credits and a faculty of very senior professors from across the USA and industry leaders to lead the students. These might be matters worthwhile of further exploration for New Zealand, considering the challenges Polytechnics face.
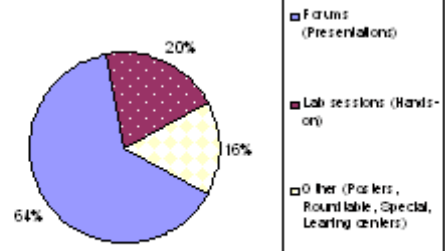
References:
Website of the LEAGUE for Innovation in the Community College: www.league.org Accessed on 29 October 2003.
Conference programme of the 2003 Conference on Information Technology, 19-22 October 2003, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. (Also available on LEAGUE website)

Sessions with senior staff involvement and teamwork

Most of the 485 session were formal presentations

Forums (Presentations)
Lab sessions (Hands-on)
Other (Posters, Roundtable, Special, Learning centers)

Most of the sessions were related to teaching

Teaching and learning
Leadership and organizational development
Emerging and future educational technology
Workforce partnerships and collaborations
Enterprise-wide systems and infrastructures
Student and Community Services
Math, Science, Allied Health, and Vocational education