Executive Summary

Following a program review with the strategic guidance of its *Program Advisory Committee*, the *Leadership Excellence Certificate* program has been revised and updated to strengthen the program's impact and alignment with sector needs. The program's name has been revised to: **College Executive Leadership (CEL) Certificate.**

Purpose

The *College Executive Leadership Certificate* program builds the core competencies senior leaders need to bring strategic, operational, and people leadership to the executive table within Ontario's colleges.

Targeting leaders who are ready to learn, grow, and advance their leadership practice, the program supports those in **Dean, Director, AVP**, or equivalent roles. It helps participants move beyond operational and tactical leadership to embrace a broader, strategic perspective required at the executive level.

Key program enhancements include:

- Clarifying the target audience: **Dean, Director, AVP**, or equivalent role

- Enhanced content development appropriate to the **strategic** level

- Program enhancements to include **VP thought leadership** exchange, networking and reflective learning

- Fully **virtual format**

- **No** program fees

- Requires **endorsement of a sponsoring VP/Executive**

Website: Leadership Excellence - The College Centre

Program Overview

Purpose

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Targeting leaders who are ready to learn, grow, and advance their leadership practice, the program supports those in **Dean, Director, AVP**, or equivalent roles. It helps participants move beyond operational and tactical leadership to embrace a broader, strategic perspective required at the executive level.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the program, participants will be better prepared to meet expectations associated with executive leadership roles, including:

1. Effectively supporting the work of the President and the Board of Governors with an understanding of key legislative requirements and the Ontario college context

2. Leading with a deeper understanding of the strategic role of executive leadership within Ontario's college system

3. Leading as an accountable leader

4. Leading change within the complex and dynamic college organization

5. Clarifying individual development priorities and strategic growth opportunities

6. Enhancing professional networks

Program Structure

The program is delivered **virtually** over the program year (September – June) and includes:

- On-demand webinars for instructional content
- Interactive sessions led by experienced college leaders and external partners
- Networking and learning sessions with current Vice-Presidents/Executive Leaders
- Scenario-based learning focused on sector-specific challenges
- Peer learning and networking opportunities

Participants are expected to engage in approximately 24-30 hours of learning across multiple modules, including both synchronous and asynchronous components.

Eligibility Criteria

This program is intended for college leaders who:

- Hold a current Dean, Director, AVP, or equivalent position (with minimum experience of 1 year at this level).
- Have the endorsement of their college (Vice-President/Executive support).
- Demonstrate readiness to engage in leadership development at the executive level.
- Are committed to contributing to the strategic direction and collaborative leadership of their institutions.
- Are available to attend synchronous sessions.
- Can complete all program components by June 30 each year. Participants have 10 months to complete the program (beginning September).

Enrolment

Enrolment is coordinated through an HR Liaison at each college.
- There is no registration or program fee.
- An application process requires the endorsement of a sponsoring VP.
- An enrolment "key" is provided through the HR Liaison once participation has been confirmed. This key provides immediate access to the learning platform and all content within this program.
- Enrolment opens to new participants annually in August.
- Enrolment is limited to a maximum of 2 participants per college, each year. The maximum cohort is 48 participants each year. If unused spaces are available, consideration will be given to allow more than 2 participants from a college.

Completion Criteria

Based on the table below, participants will be required to complete:

- Seven webinars (on-demand)
- Two synchronous, virtual workshops
- Two of four synchronous Leadership Exchange sessions
- Five Reflections exercises
- Time to develop Leadership Resource Library

The expected hours required to complete these courses are 24-30 hours. Depending on individual factors around reflections, and other asynchronous activities, the time spent might be marginally more or less.

Program-at-a-glance

Program overview with suggested timelines. All courses are mandatory.			
Asynchronous Courses: Webinars On-demand	**Tasks required**	**Time**	**Recommended Completion Date**
The College System – An Overview	View webinar & knowledge assessment	1.0	October 31, 2025
College Labour and Employee Relations – An Overview		1.0	October 31, 2025
The College, the Board and the Governor: Legal Framework and Obligations (series of 6 tutorials)		1.5	October 31, 2025
College Financial Leadership		1.5	February 28, 2026
Understanding College Financial Statements		1.5	February 28, 2026
Risk Management for Senior Managers – An Introduction		1.5	February 28, 2026
Understanding the Ontario College: Structural and Strategic Drivers		1.5	March 31. 2025
Asynchronous Courses: Self-guided			
Leadership Reflection Exercises (including Sponsor check-in)	Self-guided	3.0 – 5.0	Five check-in points
Leadership Resource Library	Self-guided	3.0 – 5.0	Ongoing
Asynchronous/Synchronous Courses: Instructor-led			
Leadership Exchange Series	Attend **minimum** of two sessions	2.0+	Four sessions will be offered, times TBC
Leadership Accountability Gap	Preparation & session attendance	3.0	November 17, 2025
Strategic Change Leadership	Preparation & session attendance	3.5	February 23, 2026
	Total hours	**24 – 30**	**Completion by June 30, 2026**

See Appendix 1: *Program Overview and Competencies*

See Appendix 2*: Individual Course Overview*

Appendix 1
Program Overview and Competencies

This program focuses on building core competencies which are required at the executive level in the Ontario College system. The focus is on strengthening the capacity of senior leaders to bring strategic, operational, and people leadership to the executive table within Ontario's colleges. Upon completion, participants will be better positioned to excel at the executive leadership level by:

1. **Effectively supporting the work of the President and the Board of Governors through a deeper understanding of:**
   - The college system in Ontario through the lenses of colleges Ontario and CEC.
   - The role of governance within the Ontario college legislative framework.
   - Risk and financial management/oversight.

   Related activities include the following on-demand webinars:

   - *The College, the Board and the Governor: Legal Framework and Obligations*
   - *Ontario College System – 2025 Profile (Colleges Ontario)*
   - *Labour & Employee Relations – An introduction (CEC)*
   - *College Financial Leadership*
   - *Understanding College Financial Statements*
   - *Risk Management for Senor Managers – An introduction*

2. **Leading with a deeper understanding of the strategic role of executive leadership within Ontario's college system, including:**
   - Building leadership presence and influence at the executive table and effectively contributing to a high-performing executive team.
   - Navigating the balance between operational responsibilities and strategic priorities.
   - Enhancing cross-college collaboration and system-level thinking.
   - Making effective decisions and communicating them well.

   Related activities include the following:

   - *Understanding the Ontario College: Structural and Strategic Drivers* (on-demand webinar)
   - *Leadership Exchange Series*

3. **Leading as an accountable leader**
   - holding self and others accountable for performance

   Related activity includes the following course offering asynchronous and synchronous, interactive components:

   - *Leadership Accountability Gap*

4. **Leading change within the complex and dynamic college organization**

   Related activity includes the following course offering asynchronous and synchronous, interactive components:

   - *Strategic Change Leadership*
   - *Leadership Exchange Series*

5. **Clarifying individual development priorities and strategic growth opportunities**

   Related activity includes a 5-part series:

   - *Leadership Reflections – Self-guided*

6. **Enhancing professional networks:**

   Related activities include:

   - *Leadership Exchange Series*
   - *Scenario-based learning through various interactive sessions*

Resources:

Provided by presenters, facilitators and panelists, with invitation for participants to add to the list:

- reading list – books, other
- online resources (websites, newsletters, blogs, podcasts, etc.)
- courses/certifications
- top daily online feed
- other

Appendix 1
Program Overview and Competencies

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Appendix 2
Individual Course Overview

The College, the Board and the Governor: Legal Framework and Obligations

This 6-part tutorial course provides Ontario college board members and senior administrators with a foundational understanding of the legal and governance framework that defines their roles and responsibilities.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this training session, participants will have a better understanding about:

1. **Legislative Framework**
   - the legal and regulatory framework governing Ontario colleges, including *the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002* (OCAATA), its regulation (O. Reg. 34/03) and relevant binding policy directives, as well as the Ontario *Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010* (ONCA)
   - the hierarchical relationship between OCAATA, ONCA, binding policy directives, by-laws and board policies
   - the nature of colleges as Crown agents and registered charities

2. **Role of the Board**
   - the required composition of college boards including the distinction between external governors (LGIC-appointed vs. board-appointed) and internal governors
   - term limits, board vacancy procedures and other OCAATA board requirements
   - the "four sights" governance model (hindsight, foresight, oversight, insight) and how it translates into board responsibilities
   - some examples of matters requiring board approval

3. **Role of the Governor**
   - the fiduciary duties and standard of care required of all governors, including the duty to confidentiality, the duty to avoid conflicts of interest and the duty of solidarity
   - sources of governor liability
   - available protections from personal liability including indemnification, insurance, and due diligence defenses

4. **Board Delegation**
   - the role of the President, the Chair and the Vice Chair
   - the role of board committees in supporting effective board functioning

Appendix 2
Individual Course Overview

5. **Board Meetings**
    - proper handling of confidential matters
    - consent agenda processes and their role in improving meeting efficiency while maintaining governance oversight
    - conflict of interest procedures including declaration processes, voting restrictions, and withdrawal requirements
    - dissent procedures when disagreeing with board decisions while maintaining duty of solidarity

6. **College Specific Governance Issues**
    - the components of strategic plans
    - the role of external and internal governors
    - the president-chair relationship
    - the current moratorium on entrepreneurial activities and international partnerships and its implications for college operations
    - the college as a Crown agent and the Section 28 Financial Administration Act requirements for indemnities, financial commitments, etc., and available exemptions

Appendix 2
Individual Course Overview

Ontario College System – 2025 Profile (Colleges Ontario)

Understanding the context for the college system as a whole is critical to all senior leaders, and Boards of Governors. The legislative framework, economic and political trends, as well as key sectors for college graduates are explored. The course will also explore the role of Colleges Ontario as the sector's advocacy and coordination body, highlighting how collective action supports system-wide strength and sustainability.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, participants will have a better understanding about:

1. The mandate and structure of Ontario's public college system, including its legislative and policy foundations under the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act (OCAATA).

2. The colleges' role in supporting Ontario's economy, including their contributions to skilled trades, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and other key sectors.

3. The regulatory and funding environment colleges operate within, including reporting requirements, accountability measures, and Ministerial directives.

4. The key challenges facing the college system, such as structural deficits, shifting enrolment trends, and federal policy changes affecting international students.

5. The differentiation between Ontario colleges and universities, particularly in terms of governance, accountability, credentials, and applied research focus.

6. Current policy issues and funding constraints, and how they impact institutional planning, sustainability, and program delivery.

7. The role of Colleges Ontario, the sector's advocacy and coordination body, and its work to represent college interests with government and other stakeholders.

Appendix 2
Individual Course Overview

Labour & Employee Relations – An introduction (CEC)

The College Employer Council (CEC) provides system leadership to labour and employee relations. Understanding this sector leadership and function is important to senior leaders and Boards of Governors.

By the end of this session, participants will better understand the role of CEC across bargaining and employee relations.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, participants will have a better understanding about:

1. The mandate, strategic priorities and governance of CEC.

2. Bargaining in the Ontario college sector.

3. CEC's role providing guidance to colleges, and oversight of benefits and compensation in Ontario's colleges.

Appendix 2
Individual Course Overview

College Financial Leadership

Financial leadership is critical to both boards of governors and senior college administrators.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this training session, participants will have a better understanding about:

1. Good governance practices around financial leadership.

2. Key components of revenue and expenditures.

3. Financial health indicators.

4. The current financial status of the college system.

5. The influence of the province on college financial matters.

6. Good governance concepts.

7. The importance of understanding legislation, regulations, risk management and fiduciary duties and standard of care.

8. Strong financial oversight.

Appendix 2
Individual Course Overview

Understanding College Financial Statements

Financial statements provide critical information on a college's financial health and its ability to pursue and achieve its strategic objectives.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this training session, participants will have a better understanding about:

1. Basic components of financial statements.

2. PSAS conceptual framework .

3. Generally accepted accounting principles – "PSAS" for colleges.

4. Role of senior management and boards vis-à-vis financial statements.

5. What to focus on when reading the financial statements.

6. Current issues impacting colleges and their financial statements.

7. Reporting of financials to key internal and external stakeholders.

8. Upcoming "PSAS" changes for college financial statements.

Appendix 2
Individual Course Overview

Risk Management for Senior Leaders – An Introduction

The senior manager's role is critical in leading risk management, building a pervasive risk mitigation culture and ensuring that the board has the information it needs to endorse the president's proposed approach to, and proposed strategies for, risk management.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this training session, participants will have a better understanding about:

1. Key risk management concepts, including risk, likelihood, impact, control, risk appetite, and the risk management cycle.

2. The role of risk management in college governance, including its connection to strategic planning and institutional objectives.

3. The difference between risk oversight (board role) and risk management (senior management role) within Ontario colleges.

4. Integrated risk management (IRM) as a process used by colleges the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders (board of governors, senior management, departments) in managing and overseeing institutional risk.

5. Guiding principles to tailor risk management practices to the specific context, culture, and strategic goals of their college.

6. Common barriers to implementing effective risk management systems and exploring strategies to overcome them.

Appendix 2
Individual Course Overview

Understanding the Ontario College: Structural and Strategic Drivers

This webinar focuses on the strategic and structural drivers that impact decision making and strategy implementation within the Ontario college system. Emphasis is on the consideration of internal and external drivers, and formal and informal structures within the Ontario college system, and how executive leaders can navigate those forces to maximize the achievement of key strategic initiatives.

The overall purpose of this webinar is to provide current and future executive leaders with a solid knowledge base related to the major strategic and structural drivers impacting the Ontario college system and invite them to consider how to navigate those structures as they work to deliver on the vision and mission of their respective institutions.

Appendix 2
Individual Course Overview

Leadership Accountability Gap

This session has been a program cornerstone since 2017. Dr. Vince Molinaro has been additionally engaged by CEC to conduct leadership research within Ontario's college system – first in 2011 and again in 2019. Dr. Molinaro incorporates these research findings with participants' survey data to provide relevant, evidence-based insights tailored to the sector's leadership challenges.

2025-26 Program Year

Guest presenter and facilitator: Dr. Vince Molinaro, CEO, Leadership Contract Inc.

Participants will discuss what it really means to be a leader today. This has become the most critical question for colleges as they contend with a myriad of challenges at a time of unprecedented change and disruption. To succeed, colleges will need truly accountable leaders in place at every level. This thought-provoking and practical course will help participants become the truly accountable leader colleges require.

Course includes:

- two weeks of asynchronous activities on the *Leadership Accountability Academy* learning platform
- two-hour virtual, interactive meeting
- 3 months' access to the learning platform

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, participants will have practical insights on how to:

1. Be a more deliberate and purposeful leader.

2. Learn to tackle the hard work that is vital to moving forward.

3. Build a strong leadership culture in your college.

Additional resources:

- *College Employer Council - Leadership Expectations Report (2020)*

- *The Leadership Contract and Accountable Leaders (Dr. Vince Molinaro)*

- *The Leadership Contract Field Guide (Dr. Vince Molinaro)*

Appendix 2
Individual Course Overview

Strategic Change Leadership

The content and delivery format are reviewed and updated annually to ensure relevance and maximum impact. Sessions are delivered by either sector experts or external consultants, depending on current strategic priorities and participant feedback.

2025-26 Program Year

Guest presenter and facilitator: Tim Arnold, President, *Leaders for Leaders*

Most change initiatives divide and disappoint. Opposition and confusion are common, making the process feel like an uphill battle. But it doesn't have to be this way. While others struggle to deal with the inevitable conflicting values that come with change, you're going to tap into the power of "And" thinking.

Course includes:

- asynchronous learning activity before the 3-hour workshop
- 3-hour virtual workshop
- follow-up asynchronous module that has participants creating action plans around content that was most relevant to them

Learning Outcomes:

By learning how to leverage healthy tension in these 5 areas, change management becomes change mastery:

- Embrace innovation AND consistency

- Validate facts AND feelings

- Focus on the short term AND the long term

- Promote planning AND action

- Value complexity AND simplicity

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, participants will have practical insights and tools on how to:

- Create a practical, actionable blueprint to navigate change with skill and confidence

Appendix 2
Individual Course Overview

Leadership Exchange Series

Four discussion panels will be offered throughout the program year. Featuring college vice presidents as panelists, topics will be explored that support the program's learning outcomes, enhance the professional networks, and reveal the often-hidden cultural and organizational dynamics that drive strategic success.

Participants will be required to attend a minimum of two sessions.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of these sessions, participants will have:

- Expanded their professional networks within Ontario college leadership

- Acquired strategic, executive-level perspectives on college leadership including:

  o An understanding of the interconnectedness between all divisions
  o Leading through complexity, disruption and fiscal parameters
  o Leading strategically, with the whole college view
  o Finding confidence and clarity in leadership

Appendix 2
Individual Course Overview

Leadership Reflections: Self-Guided

Participants will complete self-guided reflective exercises at five key points throughout the program year. The final reflection requires a structured conversation with their sponsoring college vice president to discuss insights and development priorities.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of these reflections, participants will have:

- Developed deeper insight into their readiness for executive-level leadership.

- Identified specific areas requiring continued development and action planning.

- Engaged in substantive dialogue with their sponsoring vice president/executive leader regarding leadership growth and strategic focus areas.

Note: Participants are welcome to meet with their sponsoring VP/Executive leader more frequently if desired, and at the beginning of the program.

Leadership Resource Library: Self-guided

Participants will advance their leadership effectiveness through a well-curated resource library that keeps pace with the rapidly evolving higher education landscape.

By tapping into regular resource feeds, books, and networks of thought leaders while scanning economic, political, technological, and demographic/social trends, this strategic resource library will support strategic thinking, risk management, innovative leadership, and confident decision-making in an increasingly complex sector.