Community Colleges and Non-Degree Credentials: Drivers for Change and Early Lessons Learned

Sean Gallagher, Ed.D.
Executive Director & Executive Professor of Educational Policy

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@HiEdStrat
Opportunity for Community Colleges in the Non-Degree Credential Landscape

• Animated by growing interest familiar to NCRN participants
  • Practitioner-focused resource and call to action
  • Trend analysis, case studies, best practices, frameworks

Today’s Goal:
*Highlight some of the key takeaways with an eye toward implications for future research; prompt dialogue*
Drivers for Change in Higher Education
Nan Maxwell & Sean Gallagher

Using Smaller Credentials to Build Flexible Degree Completion and Career Pathways
Brenda Perea

Connecting Workplace Learning and Academic Credentials via Digital Badges
David Leaser, Kemi Jona, Sean Gallagher

Embedding Industry Certifications into Community College Programs
Russell N. McCaffery, Leslie Backus, Nan Maxwell

Quality Assurance for the New Credentialing Market
Steven C. Taylor & Louis Soares

Reflections on Education in a New Era of Work and Learning
Holly Zanville

A Dialogue about the Emerging Market for New Credentials
Sean Gallagher & Nan Maxwell

Building a Consistent Terminology in the Market for New Credentials
Nan Maxwell & Sean Gallagher
The New Era of Work and Learning

Lifelong learning – more credentials over career, skills longevity

Growth in *workforce-aligned* non-degree credentials

Rise of non-institutional providers

Employers diversifying beyond the degree with skills-based hiring, application of data and analytics
Imperatives for the New Era

1. Unbundle learning
2. Integrate academic and workplace learning, with links to credit
3. Focus learning for careers / lifelong learning
4. Embrace competency-based credentials
5. Recognize emergence of new QA models
   • 3rd parties, State/Fed, Employers
Community Colleges’ Advantages in This New Landscape

- **Dual mission: traditional degrees and workforce development**
  - Opportunity for stackability
  - Embed newer credentials (e.g. badges) into existing coursework
- **Long history of awarding certificates**
  - 65% of for-credit certificate issuance
  - 70% increase in sub-bacc certificates 2001-2016
- **Established infrastructure vis. non-trad providers**
  - QA via accreditation
  - Faculty networks and expertise in instructional design
  - Recognized brands in the community
Building Flexible Degree and Career Pathways and Embedding Industry Certifications
Lessons Learned from Cases Including CO, TN, Broward (FL)

- **System-wide** approaches can provide consistency, positive impact on student success
- Rethink **pathways** to associate degrees to allow credit for 2-year certificates and industry-specific certifications
- Alignment with **certifications** helps students “see” a framework for an industry and understand options
- Challenge of aligning with **frequent industry changes** – refreshing curriculum
- Importance of **leadership** in championing design of pathways to include stacked or latticed credentials – and comprehensive communications strategy
In a Partnership with IBM, Northeastern Has Articulated Digital Badges for Graduate Degree Credit

**Example**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IBM Digital Badge</th>
<th>Advanced Standing</th>
<th>Northeastern CPS Credentials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IBM Associate Project Manager</td>
<td>1 course or 4 Quarter Hours (PJM 5900)</td>
<td>• Masters of Science in Project Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM Advisory Project Manager</td>
<td>1 course or 4 Quarter Hours (PJM 5900)</td>
<td>• Masters of Science in Leadership with a concentration in Project Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM Senior Project Manager</td>
<td>2 courses or 7 Quarter Hours (PJM 5900 &amp; PJM 6000)</td>
<td>• Masters of Science in Program and Project Portfolio Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM Executive Project Manager</td>
<td>3 courses or 10 Quarter Hours (PJM 5900, PJM 6000, &amp; 1 PJM Elective)</td>
<td>• Masters of Science in Corporate and Organizational Communication with a concentration in Project Management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Faculty engagement and governance crucial
- Robust communication and marketing strategy essential
- Need for clearer specifications and badge data to support scalability
Quality Assurance for the New Credentialing Landscape

- Need to expand current system or create new models
  - Pressure on existing triad of State Regulation, Accreditation, Federal
- Emergence of QAEs from EQUIP; who watches the watchers?
- Importance of validation in both learning and working contexts
- Greater focus on outcomes and transparency
- Community colleges need more active role in dialogue about how this unfolds
Looking Ahead in The New Era of Work and Learning

Future Credentialing “Trends to Watch”

- Designing programs with skills/industry frameworks
- Certifications and skills embedded into curricula
- Academic credit - non-credit/for-credit blurring
- Verifying workplace-based learning
- Transparency through common standards and databases
- Digital verification systems and vendors
- Changing employer hiring practices
- Technological advances
- Growing focus on equity
A Reminder of Value of Credentials in a Dynamic Job Market

April vs. March 2020: COVID-19 Impact
Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment Level

Source: BLS Table A-4. Employment status of the civilian population 25 years and over by educational attainment, https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t04.htm

Non-degree credentials and stacking!
Today’s Environment – Prompts for Discussion

• Greater worker and student mobility/disruption
• Acceleration of technology trends (and tech job market)
• Lack of empirical research – outcomes, earnings, equity
• Still uncertain language
• Flexibility – unions, financial aid, institutional processes often inhibit
• Funding/resources e.g. product development, instructional design capacity (role of intermediaries?)
• Need for leadership and system support, faculty support