



Micro-credentials and Badges Connect Learners to Workforce and Higher Education Opportunities

By: Northeastern State University

In today's rapidly changing economy, it's important for employees to have the skills and training they need to enter, advance and effectively serve the workforce. Micro-credentials and digital badges are one way that higher education institutions are ensuring workers can efficiently gain those skills and market them to potential employers.

Micro-credentials are short-term, measurable non-credit bearing activities or projects, and/or up to 9 hours of credit bearing course that provide specific career critical skills, competencies and knowledge that are readily transferred to the workplace.

A digital badge is a web-based artifact that contains metadata that documents an earner's completion of a credential and which can be shared and verified electronically. This sharing allows earners to display their credentials in independent and verifiable ways.

There are several digital badge credential types, some including college credit. Badge credential types include: participation, recognition or membership, non-credit course, credit course, micro-credentials, certificate, bachelor's degree, master's degree and doctorate degree.

Not only do micro-credentials and digital badges assist potential employees and those on the job hunt, they also can boost the qualifications of individuals who are currently employed at a company or organization.

For example, an employee might have reached their highest salary and promotion level for their degree or training. With micro-credentials and badging though, they have the opportunity to gain further education and skills in a way that can be documented to their employer.

Micro-credentials are also important to employers who are looking to fill roles within their business with employees who have particular skills and training.

By equipping learners with micro-credentials and digital badges, universities are helping to bridge the gap between employees and the workforce.

The Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education allocated \$1.8 million in micro-credential and rapid re-employment funds to jump start micro-credential use in the state for the 2022 fiscal year.

Northeastern State University is one of 19 institutions participating in the Workforce Micro-credentials and Rapid Re-employment Initiative and is in the process of expanding its micro-credential and badge offerings.

At NSU, micro-credentials are represented as branded digital badges that explain the skills and competencies the student gained. This spring, NSU issued over 300 badges to students who have completed the Alternative Certification for Educators (ACE) Institute and will continue to award more badges in the coming year.

Micro-credentials also offer learners a way to receive college credit that can be stacked toward completing a degree when the time is right for them. In turn, a college degree can also advance an employee in their career and salary.

If you are looking to find employees who can meet a certain need in your business or advance in the workforce while also getting closer to a college degree, micro-credentials and digital badging might be your solution.

For more information about micro-credentials, digital badges and other NSU workforce initiatives, visit www.nsuok.edu/workforce.