



WICHE Cooperative for
Educational Technologies

The leader in the practice, policy, & advocacy of technology-enhanced higher education.

Policy Framework for Innovation and Credential Transitions

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21st Century Credentials
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Why do we mean by credential?

- “A documented award by a responsible and authorized body that has determined that an individual has achieved specific learning outcomes relative to a given standard” (Lumina Foundation, 2015).
- “...a verification of qualification of competence issued to an individual by a third party with relevant authority....” (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010)
- Diplomas, certificates, degrees, licenses, certifications, and badges

Why is everyone talking about credentials?

- The growing interest in credentials reflects an important shift in focus in education policy..
 - Beyond access and affordability to a focus on completion and transitions into the labor market
 - A rethinking of what quality is in relation to higher education
 - And a fundamental rethinking of how higher education relates to other approaches for building skills and knowledge

What changed?

- Demand Side:
 - Rising credential requirements for jobs
 - Driving increasing demand for postsecondary credentials
- Supply Side
 - Increase in the numbers and types of credentials available in the marketplace
 - Increasing cost (and risk)
- New opportunities to design and deliver credentials – linked to advances in educational technology
 - Technology-enabled instructional design
 - Digital credentials

What do we want from credentials?

1. Mobility
2. Validation
3. Communication
4. Guidance

Key questions for policymakers

- Does a credential policy or practice
 - Support student transitions through higher education?
 - Transfer policies
 - Support transitions into the labor market?
 - Employment and earnings outcomes
 - Alignment with industry standards...
 - Make the credential more communicative?
 - Expand the scope of learning or competency that can be validated and credentialed?
 - Allow students to get credit for learning outside of formal higher education
 - Simplify, make credentials more coherent, consistent, consumer friendly...
 - Help students make good choices.
 - Protect consumers and hold institutions accountable for credentials that don't support mobility... ?

Who makes these policies?

- Policymaking in relation to credentials is highly fragmented, decentralized, silo-ed, duplicative, byzantine,
 - Institutions
 - Professional societies, industry associations, licensing boards
 - Accreditors (and speciality accreditors)
 - State governments
 - The federal government

Major Types and Issuers of Credentials

	Education & Training Providers	Higher Ed		Govt.	Industry & Prof. Assoc.	Employer
		2-year	4-year			
Certificates	✓	✓	✓			
Degrees (Associate)		✓				
Degrees (BA and up)			✓			
Licenses				✓		
Certification					✓	
Digital Badges	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

