

Telling the Whole Story: Aligning Academic, Credential, and Employment Data in Higher Education

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The ability to help a learner tell the best story possible about what they know and what they can do across their learning journey can be challenging. Technology systems are not always well integrated, leaving the learner at a disadvantage in summarizing the skills and competencies they have acquired over time and across learning experiences.

The University of Texas (UT) System's Texas Credentials for the Future has experienced such challenges. The UT System has a relationship with Coursera, which allows it to offer no-cost access to industry credentials from various providers such as Google, IBM, and Meta, with the hope that a college degree, together with an industry credential, will help learners stand out more easily in the world of work.

Such an effort has not been without challenges, which can then serve as opportunities to improve how learner data flows throughout the learn-earn ecosystem. The UT System's academic campuses use student information systems such as Banner and PeopleSoft. However, such systems are not natively able to integrate with platforms such as Coursera.

Current students' data are available within a Student Information System (SIS), but such data about their academic courses, demographics, and majors are not integrated with the learning experiences that Coursera captures. In addition, each campus cannot currently know which of its course sections have faculty who are choosing to embed industry credentials from Coursera and non-Coursera platforms in their courses. Another challenge is that Coursera learners do not currently have access to verifiable credentials that they can download to a digital wallet from the platform.

Another key challenge is that, although job outcome data in the form of unemployment insurance data is available to the UT System through a partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission, this data does not include any of the system's current data about its microcredential learners and earners.

Outside of the data collection challenges experienced within the UT System, there is a lack of effective practices that are shared across colleges and universities engaged in similar work. The UT System has a current opportunity to share its data gathering challenges/opportunities within a new community of practice consisting of eleven community college and university systems across the United States that are engaged in helping their campuses integrate Google career certificates in areas such as data analytics, cybersecurity, and project management in courses and co-curricular pathways.

This presentation highlighted the above challenges and also explained how the UT System is attempting to rectify them. Specifically, the presentation:

- Discussed UT System's current pilot with Territorium to create digital badges for learners who complete industry credentials and their requisite courses.
- Discussed how UT System academic campuses are working together to identify fields within their SIS systems to better track course sections within embedded industry credentials to help determine how learners are accessing industry credentials through courses compared to co-curricular pathways.
- Discussed how the UT System is integrating industry credential data from Coursera with its current job outcome data for UT System alumni.
- Discussed how the UT System's data collection challenges/opportunities will be shared with the new microcredential community of practice sponsored by the National Association of Higher Education Systems and Google.

Keywords: data, research, microcredentials, industry credentials, student information systems, learn-earn ecosystem, Coursera, Google Career Certificates