Stackable Credentials That Lead to Careers -- Resources

Tools from OCTAE’s Mapping Upward Project
Welcome

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A two-year project of the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) funded by the National Activities under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education of 2006 (Perkins IV).

**Purpose:**

- Build capacity of community and technical colleges to improve CTE credential attainment rates by offering stackable credentials, a series of shorter pathways to associate degree completion.
- Help students progress along the education continuum; earn a postsecondary credential with labor market value.
- Deepen employer engagement and partnerships.
- September 2015-September 2017
Key Activities

- Environmental scan of existing practices
- Delivery of technical assistance to college networks in support of local expansion of stackable credentials
- Creation of community of practice for collaboration and resource sharing
- Development of toolkit, podcasts, and tutorials to support the field
Stackable Credentials

Characteristics

- Responsive to labor market/talent development needs of region
- Link educational certificates to industry credentials
- Developed through active employer engagement
- Support diverse groups of learners
- Provide multiple entry and exit points
- Support work-and-learn models through flexible scheduling
- Provide credentials with labor market value on the path to a degree
Project Colleges

- Bakersfield College, Bakersfield, CA
- Catawba Valley Community College, Hickory, NC
- Forsyth Technical Community College, Winston-Salem, NC
- Isothermal Community College, Spindale, NC
- Lehigh Carbon Community College, Schnecksville, PA
- Luzerne County Community College, Nanticoke, PA
- Mitchell Community College, Statesville, NC
- Northampton Community College, Bethlehem, PA
- Piedmont Community College, Roxboro, NC
- Reedley College, Reedley, CA
- Robeson Community College, Lumberton, NC
- Rowan-Cabarrus Community College, Salisbury, NC
- Shasta College, Redding, CA
- **July 2016-July 2017**
- Tailored to local needs; guided by action plan
- Dedicated TA coaches; targeted support from SMEs
- Kick-off Institute offered learning sessions, team planning, program tours
- Coaching calls monthly; workshops on employer engagement; facilitated work sessions
- Online community of practice for resource sharing
- Webinars, podcasts, toolkit, tutorials
Tour of Tools

- Podcast Series
- Stackable Credentials Toolkit
- Tutorials

Available on cte.ed.gov
Podcast Series

Podcast 1: Implementing and Sustaining Stackable Credentials Across the Institution
Featured Guest: Dr. Maria Coons, Chief of Staff and Vice President–Institutional Planning & Strategic Alliances, Harper College, Palatine, IL

Podcast 2: Aligning Curriculum to Industry Certifications
Featured Guest: Dr. Annette Parker, President, South Central College, North Mankato and Faribault, MN

Podcast 3: Building Lasting Partnerships with Business and Industry
Featured Guest: Debbie Davidson, Vice President of Business & Workforce Solutions, Gateway Technical College, Kenosha, WI
How to Use

1. Select topic of interest.
2. Encourage colleagues to listen and discuss in a roundtable over lunch.
3. Excerpt key segments to share in meetings or faculty workshops.
4. Use as idea starters to consider topics for your own local podcasts.
IDEAS FROM THE FIELD: Leadership and Innovation

Providing college-wide leadership
At Harper College, college leaders actively supported the transformation of all workforce development programs to the stackable credentials model. In 2010 college and regional stakeholders developed a strategic plan that included a goal of increasing the number of students completing credentials and moving into employment. The stackable credentials framework helped departments rethink curriculum and how each credential within a two-year degree contributes to mastery of skills in a given field. This review process brought faculty and employers together to consider the progression of courses, the kinds of credentials that would
Designing Curriculum for Stackable Credentials

Having established a common interest in and demand for stackable credentials, partners can move forward with the task of designing a stackable curriculum with clear opportunities for students to earn short-term certificates that confer real labor market value. Because the stackable approach is meant to prepare students for employment, it is critical to engage employers up front and have the hiring needs of the industry define the skills and credentials on which your program should focus. Begin by asking employers to describe their expectations of exit points—what students should know and be able to do upon completion of each stackable credential and what industry certification, if any, is aligned to each credential and valued by their companies.

Engage Employers in Stackable Design

To help clarify what courses, certifications, and credentials your program should include, engage employers around the following questions:

- What knowledge, skills, and abilities are in demand? What do employers need to know?
- What skills or competencies should they have when they arrive on the job? This helps you determine whether the material in your current course offerings has direct industry relevance or needs revision.
- What skill levels are in demand? How many credentials need to stack to their desired level of competency? Are employers looking primarily for entry-level, certificate-holding applicants, or are they looking for ways to upgrade the skills of their incumbent workforce?
- What industry credentials have value across the sector, not just with particular employers?

The graphic in the right demonstrates the stackable nature of the industry credentials embedded in Harper College’s manufacturing technology program. Building on the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council’s (MSSC) Certified Production Technician (CPT) credentials as a foundation, the program organizes into specialty areas, each featuring a series of credentials that stack toward the AAS degree.
Stackable Credentials Toolkit

**TOOLS**

**Business and Industry Leadership Teams (BILT)**

**Target Audience:** Community college educators and administrators seeking to align programs with the skill need of business and industry.

**Description:** BILT teams have been formed in several industries using a model initiated by the Convergence Technology Center, an NSF-ATE Center of Excellence at Collin College in Texas. In this model, the BILT defines the knowledge, skills, and abilities that business representatives want to see in future community college graduates and assists partner colleges through recruitment and hiring, class presentations and keynotes at conferences, traditional internships, and virtual internship/externship experiences using business mentors. BILT teams comprise high-level executives and technicians from large corporations and small companies alike, who understand the current state of the industry and what skills get students hired. The BILT model was featured in a webinar titled *Effective Approaches for Aligning Curriculum with Business Demand*. The webinar features several systematic approaches colleges in various disciplines across the country are taking to ensure workforce programs are tightly aligned to industry. The slides and archived webinar are available for download, as is an issue brief on the BILT model. You can also watch videos of educators and employers engaged in the BILT process.

**How and When to Use It:** When seeking to initiate stackable credentials programs or improve alignment of current programs to prevailing business conditions.

**Types of Outcomes:** Improved alignment between educational program outcomes and local industry needs.
Stackable Credentials Toolkit

Mapping Upward
Stackable Credentials That Lead to Careers
Tutorial 1: Exploring Credit for Prior Learning

Tutorial 2: Breaking Down Silos to Build In-demand Pathways

Tutorial 3: Learning What Works: Data and Documentation in an Evidence-based World
Exploring Credit for Prior Learning

Jaime Spaciél, MSE
Career Pathways Manager
Gateway Technical College
Kenosha, Wisconsin

Mapping Upward
Stackable Credentials That Lead to Careers
Breaking Down Silos to Build In-demand Pathways

Strategic use of non-credit and credit offerings to meet industry need and accelerate student success
Mapping Upward

Stackable Credentials
That Lead to Careers

Learning What Works
Data & Documentation in an Evidence-based World
Summer 2017

Kristin Wolff, SPR
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Project Resources online: cte.ed.gov