

A Credential Mashup: Creating Value and Cultivating College Completers

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Introduction



- ▶ **Nicolet College** – “...education that transforms lives, enriches communities, fosters economic development, and expands employment opportunities.”
- ▶ **Environmental Training Institute (UND)** – outreach trainer specializes in professional EHS credentialing required by state and federal authorities.



Consider this...

- Majority of Americans believe higher education is important.
- > 75% of jobs lost during the recession were those requiring HS or less and almost all of the net new jobs created since Jan. '10 require at least some college.
- < 50% of millennials believe college prepared them for careers; most faculty say graduates are well prepared
- By 2020, 2/3 of job openings will require some post secondary education
- Most graduates have basic skills, but too many lack "21st century skills"
- Employers seek candidates who can think critically, but also carry experiential knowledge.



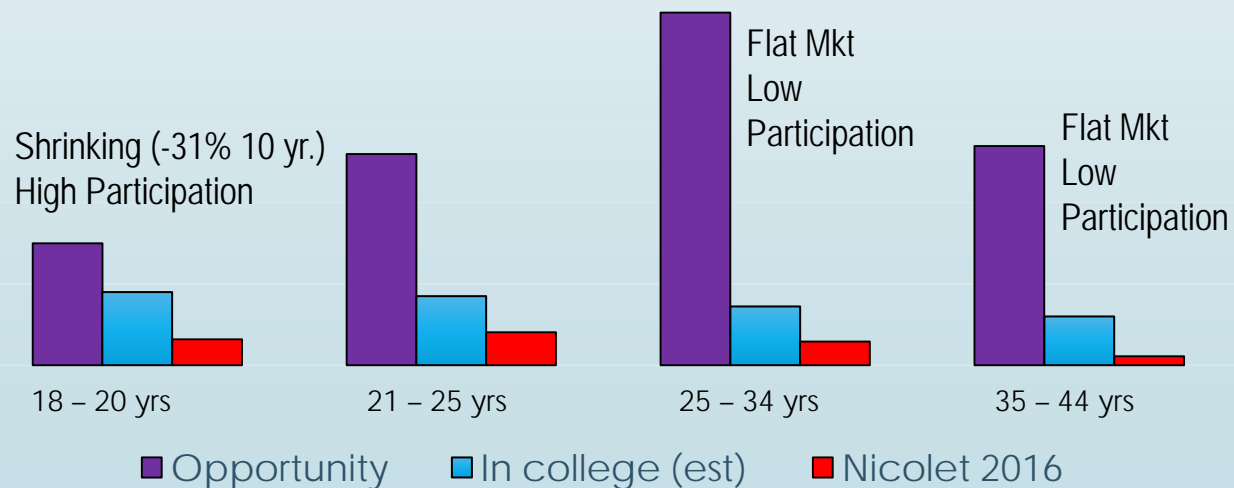
A 4 Year Degree and/or...?

- ▶ Professional post-baccalaureate certificates.
- ▶ Some fields require professional training, testing, or apprenticeship in addition to degree completion
- ▶ Alternative credentials (badges, micro-credentials, nanodegrees), offered by alternative providers (and some traditional IHEs)
 - ▶ In some fields, these technical certifications are worth more than traditional college degrees.
- ▶ Professional organizations offer certificates and training in government regulated industries.
- ▶ EQUIP (Dept. of Ed) extends Title IV aid to programs with >50% of content from non-traditional (unaccredited) providers.

Who has time for it all?

- Noncredit students outnumber credit students in many 2 year colleges.
- 85% of American undergraduates are “non-traditional”
 - Work full time, attend school part time
 - Have dependents / may be a single parent
 - 25 or older, supporting self and family financially

Nicolet College District Demographics





The Problem

- ▶ Employers insist on 4 year degrees, yet complain that too many graduates are ill-prepared for work
- ▶ Employers/industries place high value on specific training, credentialing, certificates, experiences.
- ▶ Almost half of students drop out before receiving a degree, or take more than 6 years to complete it.

How can we assure college access, improve completion rates, and better prepare graduates without placing further burden on their (or employers') time and finances?



Potential Solutions

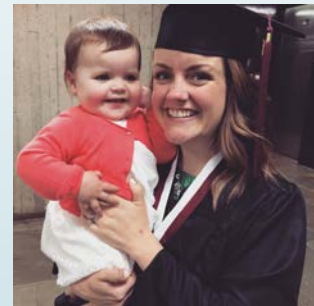


Liberal arts universities. Professional and vocational programs. Can't we all just get along?

- ▶ Stackable credentials combine traditional liberal arts education with industry-specific education
- ▶ Non-credit to credit pathways: Use non-credit coursework, rigorously assessed prior learning, college-level certificates, and/or documented work experience as equivalencies to supplement for-credit coursework

Appeal

- ▶ Learners over 25 are different.
- ▶ Adult Learners:
 - ▶ Are practical; prefer control over their learning; want to know “why” when completing a task
 - ▶ Are comparison shoppers, expect value
 - ▶ Are goal-oriented; do not have time for filler or repetition
 - ▶ Learn by experience; already have knowledge learned from life and work
 - ▶ May have other risk-factors that contribute to lack of success in traditionally delivered degree programs



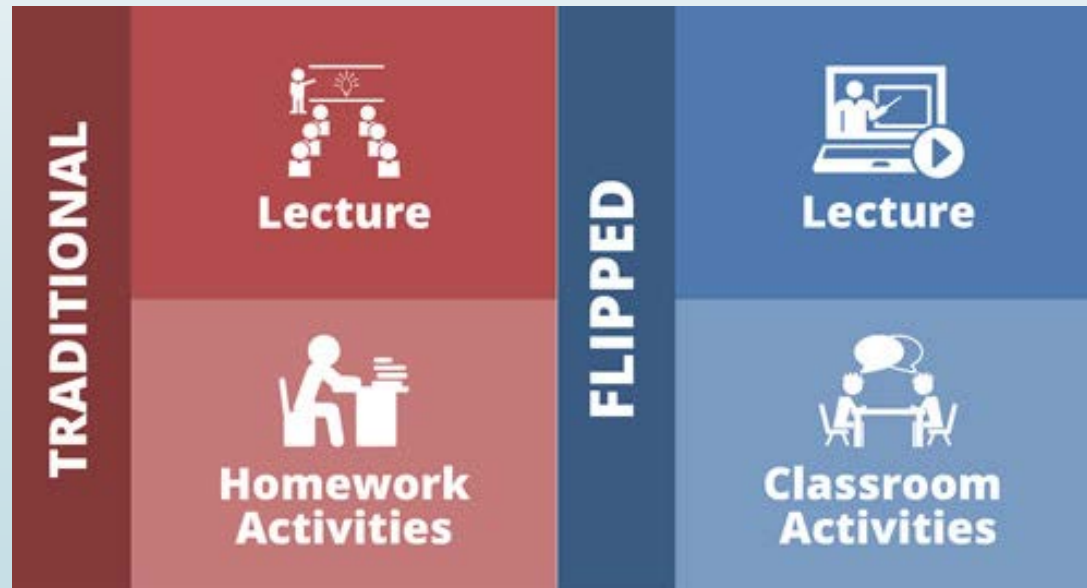
Design Considerations

- CBE (Competency-based education)
 - Removes time as the enemy of success
 - Focus on mastery
 - Direct assessment
 - Reliable, credible, portable, reproducible
 - Employers get it
 - Accreditors like it (measures learning outcomes, truly)



Design Considerations *(Cont.)*

- ▶ The flipped classroom
 - ▶ Complete projects relevant to the learner
 - ▶ Less direct instruction and more hands-on



Delivery Considerations

- ▶ Educational Technology and Online Ed
 - ▶ Synchronous class sessions, office hours, and/or student groups using video conferencing software.
 - ▶ Blended learning: attend face to face or online
 - ▶ Record lectures; have students record presentations



Delivery Considerations *(Cont.)*

- ▶ Blocks of time on campus (but only if proven necessary to learning)
 - ▶ Complete work over an accelerated block or blocks of time. (1 or 2 weekends per term; summer residencies; etc)
 - ▶ Other work is completed independently or using online methods



CBE + Ed Tech =

- ▶ Flexibility that appeals to non-traditional learners; adult learners
- ▶ Wider appeal to potential students who have previously struggled to compete colleges:
 - ▶ Location/transportation
 - ▶ Direct and indirect costs
 - ▶ Conflicts with work and life commitments
 - ▶ Time, energy and perceived return on investment





End Goal



- ▶ A stackable credentials or non-credit-to-credit model incorporating CBE & the use of technology.
 - ▶ Recognizes previous work experience, professional credentials, and non-credit coursework to fill out a degree.
 - ▶ Teaches theory as well as practical & procedural knowledge.
 - ▶ May be faster or slower to completion; students can take break when “life happens.”

Benefits: Students

- ▶ More college completers:
 - ▶ From high school to college
 - ▶ From GED to college
 - ▶ Back to school while working
 - ▶ Non-college goers, especially underserved populations, pursuing higher education





Benefits: Institutions

- ▶ Increase graduation/success rates (aka retention)
- ▶ Increase revenue by attracting learner audiences not interested in or well-served by traditional models.
- ▶ Increase rate and quality of post-graduation placements
- ▶ Improve social and economic well-being of the regions they serve

Benefits: Employers



- ▶ Expensive and time-consuming training is not needed at time of hire
- ▶ Prospective employees have vocational as well as liberal arts knowledge; are ready to work
- ▶ Employees have confidence in their ability to learn and are eager to advance
- ▶ Employer investment in education and training can closely parallel changing needs, strategies, and external market conditions.

Result



- ▶ Well-rounded education that appeals to students and employers, increases success and retention rates, and focuses on high-quality instruction to produce mastery knowledge
 - ▶ Just-in-time learning; students go where they want to go, when and how they want to
 - ▶ Employer have more confidence that their new hires can “hit the ground running” and can acquire new KSAs
 - ▶ Completers have portable proof of mastery level knowledge, that can lead to higher earning potential



Challenges: Time, or Learning?

- ▶ “4-year” degree is about time, not learning
- ▶ Carnegie credits are about time, not learning
 - ▶ A credit hour or Carnegie unit: 16 weeks x (1 hour lecture + 2 hours homework) = 1 credit
- ▶ Financial Aid is based on time, not learning
 - ▶ If we are really focused on student learning outcomes, then FA for non-credit and/or certification work (with credible assessments) should be a no-brainer.
 - ▶ Part-time is the new reality for most students, but support is scarce.

Challenges: Accreditation & Regulation

- ▶ Standards vary
 - ▶ Regional (the big six)
 - ▶ National (career education; industry & trade – sponsored)
 - ▶ Government agencies, within and between
- ▶ Interests and priorities differ
 - ▶ Counting inputs is easier than assessing learning, and is still common practice.





Challenges:

Innovators and consumers are not enemies

- ▶ Regulators and accreditors are wary of new learning models, especially when public funds are involved.
 - ▶ Online interaction should simulate “seat time” .
 - ▶ F2F vs distance.
 - ▶ Competencies must be mapped to credit hours.
 - ▶ “Regular and substantive interaction”

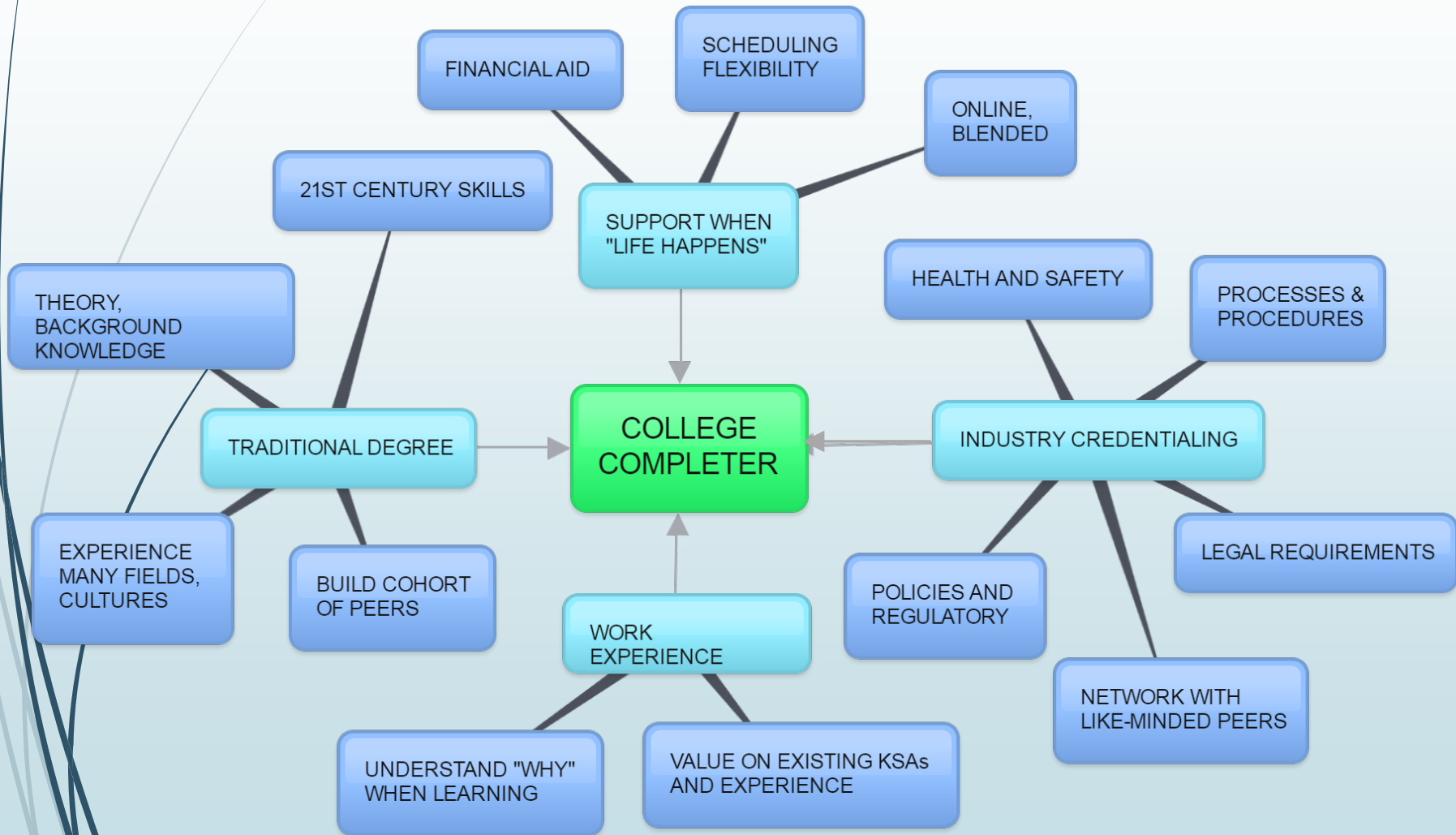
Challenges: Ego & Fear

- ▶ Must liberal arts and technical curricula be in conflict?
- ▶ Aren't well-rounded liberal arts degrees valued in the business world?
- ▶ Do industry-certifications have academic value?
- ▶ Are we *really* ready to let outcomes supplant inputs as the more important measure of quality?

“The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from old ones.

– John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936)

We Must Mash Up What Works





Questions?

