



OHIO UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP ENDORSEMENT

FINAL REPORT • JANUARY 2020
ACADEMIC INNOVATION ACCELERATOR



OHIO
UNIVERSITY

| DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ohio University Leadership Endorsement (OULE) is an innovative microcredentialing program designed to engage students in the co-curricular space. Created through a partnership between Ohio University Academic Affairs and Division of Student Affairs (DOSA), this program uses digital badging as a means of credentialing students in eight learning goals: self-awareness, adaptability, interpersonal communication, team development, innovation, intercultural competency, well-being and problem solving. The language for these goals shifted during the project implementation from “leadership skills” to “learning goals,” in alignment with DOSA adopting these eight skill areas as learning goals.

During the first Academic Innovation Accelerator (AIA) cycle in 2016, DOSA proposed the Student Employment Microcredentialing program. The proposal was selected by the Champions Group as the sole awardee out of 32 proposals and received \$389,000 to fund the project. At the beginning of the project, the objectives were to:

- Develop an assessment process for evaluating and testing DOSA’s eight learning goals.
- Formulate, structure and articulate DOSA’s eight learning goals as competencies that build up to a microcredential.
- Identify and test a microcredentialing technology platform.
- Recommend an institution-wide process for students to gain microcredentials.
- Develop a co-curricular transcript.

As the project evolved, the name changed to Ohio University Leadership Endorsement (OULE) and project objectives were refined to:

- Develop an innovative leadership competency microcredentialing system for DOSA student employees.
- Track and verify students’ out-of-class involvement and experiences.
- Measure student accomplishment and development within the eight learning goals.

Key outcomes include:

- Project insights and lessons learned that initiated a university-wide discussion about alternative credentialing and the need for OHIO to create an infrastructure for the development and use of alternative credentials for both curricular and co-curricular purposes.
- Designed, developed and tested a microcredentialing system.
- 1,607 students earned the Foundations of Leadership badge.
- Students increased articulation of and confidence in learning goals.



STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF OULE

OULE is a credentialing program that helps students at Ohio University learn about and build eight skills that employers value, reflect on their personal growth and articulate how they use these skills.

Through the Leadership Endorsement program, students earn digital badges after they complete assessments, reflections and activities on the fundamentals of the skill areas. The badge is a way to demonstrate a quantified skill set in a portable, consistent and identifiable way.

There are two levels to OULE — Foundations and Advanced. The Foundations level engages students in building knowledge about the learning goals. The Advanced level challenges students to participate in and lead initiatives related to each learning goal. The final phase of the Advanced level requires students to discuss their skill in the goals.

The program begins with the Foundations of Leadership Badge (FOL). Students earn this badge

by completing the overview course that explores the eight learning goals. The aim is for every DOSA student employee to finish the FOL module during onboarding. After completing the FOL Badge, students are encouraged to work toward Advanced badges in each learning goal area. In order to complete the Advanced badges, students must demonstrate how they used the skill in an activity or program.

Students who complete the FOL badge and all eight Advanced badges can earn the culminating Leadership Endorsement by completing a mock interview in the Career and Leadership Development Center. The interview requires students to demonstrate their knowledge of the eight learning goals and discuss their experience in each area. The Leadership Endorsement will be available as a visual graphic for students to professionally demonstrate their mastery of all eight leadership skill areas.



An individual who is competent in adaptability can recognize when a change is needed and demonstrate resilience in shifting environments.



ADAPTABILITY



PROBLEM SOLVING

An individual who is competent in problem solving is able to think critically about all factors associated with a problem; evaluate potential solutions from a systems perspective and make an informed decision about which option to implement; and evaluate the chosen solution's effectiveness following implementation.

An individual who is competent in innovation is able to develop creative ideas, take calculated risks to test ideas and engage and challenge others by conveying the need for dynamic change.



INNOVATION



SELF-AWARENESS

An individual who is competent in self-awareness can identify personal interests, skills, values, strengths, and motivations and can incorporate self-knowledge into decision-making.

An interculturally competent individual is able to support and engage in creating an environment of cultural respect and inclusion.



INTERCULTURAL
COMPETENCY



TEAM
DEVELOPMENT

An individual who is competent in team development is able to work toward a shared purpose through facilitation, collaboration, compromise and conflict resolution.

An individual who is competent in interpersonal communication can build effective relationships through clear communication and understanding with others by listening, verbal and nonverbal communication, confidence, empathy and respect.



INTERPERSONAL
COMMUNICATION



WELL-BEING

Well-Being is achieving personal growth and fulfillment through an active process by making positive choices, engaging in meaningful experiences, and connecting with others.



PROJECT IMPACT

Outcome: Develop an innovative leadership competency microcredentialing system for students.

The OULE team designed and developed a microcredentialing system and tested it repeatedly over the course of the pilot. Project insights and lessons learned initiated a university-wide discussion about alternative credentialing and the need for OHIO to develop an infrastructure for the development and use of alternative credentials for both curricular and co-curricular purposes. The pilot system iterations made clear what infrastructure gaps exist across the university as well as within current external vendor options. The project also enabled other internal OHIO stakeholders to strategically move forward on their version of alternative credentialing, including Human Resources and the Russ College of Engineering.

Outcome: Track and verify students’ out-of-class involvement and experiences.

The OULE program can track and verify out-of-class involvement. This project pushed the institution to actively explore options for tracking and assessing students’ co-curricular experiences, while acknowledging that this process is vital to the university’s success and continuing accreditation. There is a university leadership team exploring technology solutions to effectively meet this outcome for the entire institution.

Outcome: Measure student accomplishment and development within eight learning goals.

The project began measuring students’ development within the eight learning goals. As students advance through the OULE process and more students reach the Advanced level, additional data will be available. The system infrastructure is in place to meet this goal within the project scope.

Outcome: Develop an assessment process for evaluating and testing DOSA’s eight learning goals.

The OULE team built an assessment process that evaluates student awareness, development and articulation of DOSA’s eight learning goals.

Outcome: Formulate, structure and articulate DOSA’s eight learning goals as competencies that build up to a microcredential.

Through the course of this project, DOSA’s leadership skills terminology changed to learning goals. This project increased collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, and assessment language has been aligned across the institution. The need for the institution to have clear definitions related to learning became apparent, and the University Curriculum Council passed terminology related to experiential learning. Institutional Research & Effectiveness supported institution-wide terminology for learning outcomes and learning goals.

Outcome: Recommend an institution-wide process for students to gain microcredentials.

This report serves in part to recommend next steps to the University regarding an institution-wide process for microcredentialing, identify lessons learned, highlight infrastructure needs and gaps and solidify the recommendation that alternative credentialing should take place at Ohio University. The project itself created enough excitement and support to move the institution towards alternative credentialing even before the pilot’s end.

Outcome: Develop a co-curricular transcript.

This outcome has been moved to a larger university-wide discussion regarding the need for a co-curricular transcript. As experiential learning expands from the Career and Experiential Learning Fee, the concept of a co-curricular transcript is being examined by various individuals and work groups.

UNINTENDED POSITIVE PROJECT IMPLICATIONS

The Ohio University Leadership Endorsement program led to several important implications: increased student awareness of the skills employers seek, connected co-curricular and curricular experiences for student employees, heightened priority of DOSA assessment work and DOSA’s adoptions of the eight learning goals. The project also became a DOSA strategic priority and highlighted the need to further partner with Academic Affairs. Finally, the project demonstrated that student employee supervision must occur for student employees to be challenged and supported in their work toward the DOSA eight learning goals.



ASSESSMENT

An evaluation and research graduate assistant led the design and implementation of ongoing assessment for the project. The team gathered data during the pilot using surveys, focus groups, pre and post-tests, program design evaluation and qualitative data analysis.

54%

AVERAGE INCREASE IN
CONFIDENCE ACROSS ALL
EIGHT LEARNING GOALS

72%

OF STUDENTS RATED THE
PROGRAM BENEFICIAL

3.75/5

VALUE RATING FROM
STUDENTS

FINDINGS (FALL 2017 – FALL 2019)

There was an increase in articulation of the eight learning goal definitions.

Before completing Foundations of Leadership (FOL), students wrote pre-definitions for all eight learning goals. After completing FOL, students wrote post-definitions. Most students scored low on pre-definitions, compared to high on post definitions.

After completing FOL, students increased their confidence in the eight learning goals by:

- 64% (Intercultural Competency)
- 62% (Well-being)
- 60% (Adaptability)
- 60% (Team Development)
- 58% (Self-Awareness)
- 46% (Innovation)
- 44% (Problem Solving)
- 34% (Interpersonal Communication)

72% of survey respondents found the program beneficial.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

Technology issues were the main focus of negative student and staff feedback as well as project workflow. Throughout the pilot, the OULE team worked with internal and external stakeholders on 15 technology iterations.

Technology required constant changes due to the following concerns:

- Systems not integrating
- Needing to have two different systems for the program
- Ineffective Blackboard functionality
- Numerous workflow processes did not work
- Students were unable to save progress in the Foundations level due to Adobe Connect functionality
- Students did not receive completion emails due to integration issues
- Students were not consistently able to log into Portfolium due to vendor issues

Students reported that communication about the program was unclear at times. Due to the iterative nature of the pilot project, constant changes were occurring.

Students rated the program’s overall value as 3.75/5.

Students self-reported an increase in confidence in each of the eight learning goals after completing FOL. Participant quotes include:

- “I always felt I was good at interpersonal communication, but knowing all the exact parts and words [helped me] understand and breakdown interactions with others.”
- “Definitions are now clearer, and I have a better understanding of what I can do better as part of a team.”
- “I had no idea there were so many levels of well-being!”
- “It was helpful to learn the places I can go to improve my innovation [skills].”
- “I was surprised that social identity is comprised of so many parts. However, after reviewing them all I quickly realized that they all are important in forming who you are.”
- “I was surprised about how many categories there are that make up our identity. These are things I don’t think about even when someone asks you to tell them about yourself. It really opens your eyes to be more conscientious of how people identify and which categories they value more.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Follow-through on a joint UCC-DOSA committee to create an alternative credentialing infrastructure at OHIO.

This AIA project necessitated a university wide discussion about alternative credentialing. An alternative credentialing Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) sub-committee met several times during the spring 2019 semester. A new TLA sub-committee was created this fall and is exploring alternative credentialing models. Attention should be given to finalize this work and implement an official alternative credentialing infrastructure by the end of the 2019-2020 academic year. The lack of infrastructure is postponing and impeding innovation progress for various units and departments resulting in lost revenue and enrollment.

Questions to be considered:

- What are defined standards for earning an alternative credential?
- What criteria are used to validate microcredentials or badges?
- What does evidence of completion look like?
- Who “owns” or serves as the subject matter expert for different skills?
- How do we communicate and think about rigor?
- What level of detail should be in a rubric?
- Are we trying to build the infrastructure within current restraints?

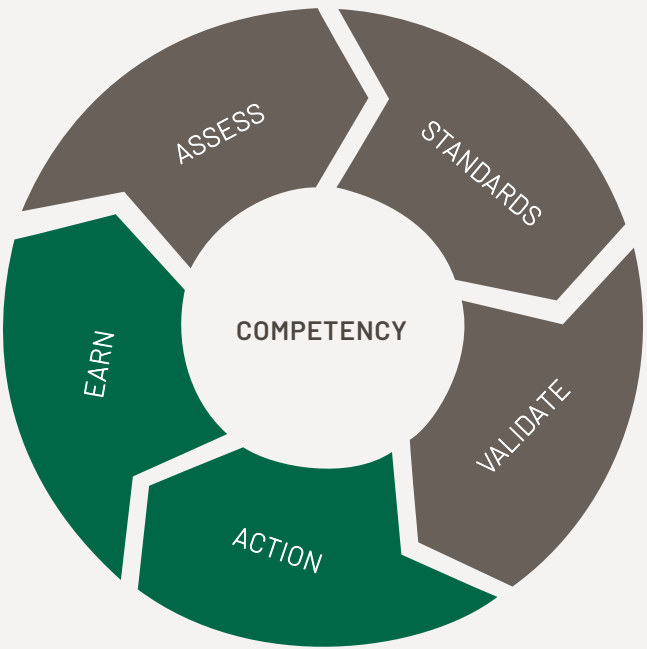
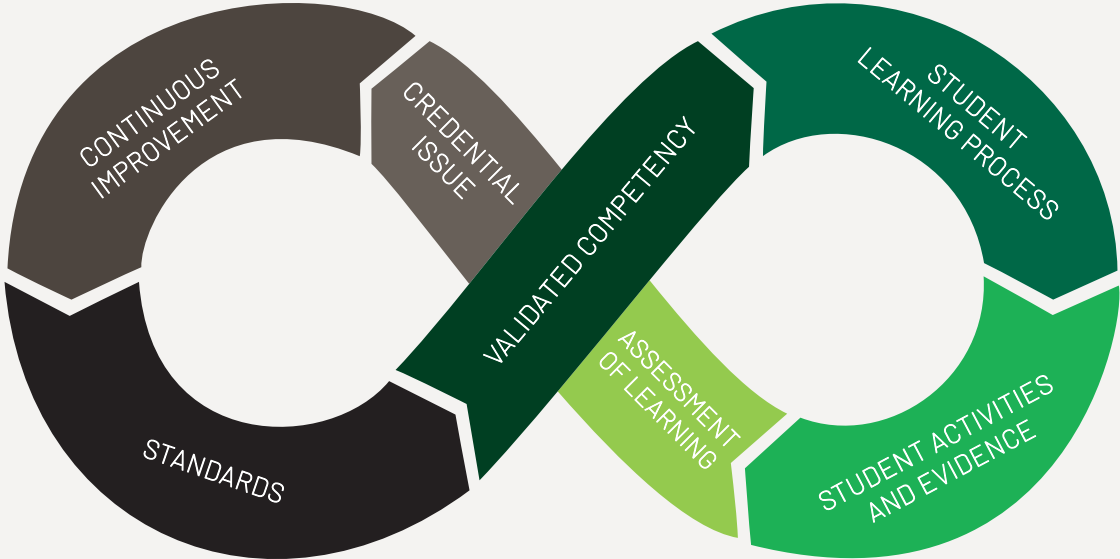
- Is it about learning something new or demonstrating knowledge?
- Do we focus on competencies that are transferable?
- Who validates microcredentials or badges?
- Who verifies that microcredentials or badges are achieved?
- What criteria are used to validate microcredentials or badges?
- Who issues microcredentials or badges?
- How are microcredentials or badges issued to students?
- Does how we assess affect scalability?
- How is quality control measured?

Is the microcredential or badge achieved based on observable performance or a rubric(s)?

Lessons learned:

- Define standards for earning an alternative credential.
- Automate the issuance of microcredentials or badges.
- Embrace alternative credentialing diversity in the co-curricular space.

SAMPLE ALTERNATIVE CREDENTIALING MODELS



Competency: Unit identifies the competency(s) students need to develop to be successful in a global society.

Standards: Standards developed for microcredential with support from subject matter experts.

Validate: Process for validating learning designed. Learning assessment tools finalized. The microcredential opportunity is communicated to students.

Action: Students engage in learning and reflective activities. Students demonstrate competency in skill.

Earn: Students meet established microcredential criteria and earn the microcredential.

Assess: Unit evaluates the microcredential and issuing process for continual improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

2) Identify and implement an institution wide technology platform that captures and catalogs experiential and co-curricular learning, serves as a mechanism for student reflection, issues alternative credentials and/or badges and enables OHIO to better assess and evaluate learning while supporting accreditation needs.

An RFP has been issued, and OIT is leading this process for a fall 2020 implementation.

3) DOSA continues to provide OULE.

DOSA is positioned well as the institutional leaders in alternative credentialing and will continue to offer the eight learning goal badges to their 3,400+ division student employees. Currently during onboarding DOSA student employees complete FOL. By completing FOL, DOSA student employees are aware of and have enhanced their confidence in the eight learning goals. These represent the top competencies employers look for in college students regardless of industry or sector. Having DOSA continue OULE better positions Ohio University students for the world of work.

BARRIERS TO INNOVATION

Two barriers stifled innovation in this project: technology and institutional resistance.

Over the course of the three years, technology issues, concerns and limitations were the central reason that this project was delayed at different times and that core processes were ineffective.

The second barrier was resistance to DOSA developing credentialing that signified learning. This resistance identified the need for the University to develop better processes and policies around innovation, specifically, alternative credentialing. It is noteworthy to address the ongoing need for OHIO to link efforts between traditional Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. Students learn in and out of the classroom and linking efforts is necessary and better serves students.

APPENDIX A: PROJECT TIMELINE

Pre-AIA Grant (2015 – 2016)

DOSA created a Student Employee Task Force.
Conducted industry research and identified eight key leadership skills needed in the market.
Identified opportunities for each DOSA student employee to develop the eight leadership skills.
Designed a leadership skills rubric based on competency level.
Collected skill development activities and mapped these to the competency rubric.
Created student employee onboarding and offboarding checklists.
Attended AIA Accelerator.

Spring 2017

Project start date: January 2017.
Project team formed.
Benchmarked institutional alternative credentialing programs.
First Champions Group meeting.
Designed project outcomes, rubrics and level one activities.
Technology platforms reviewed.
Program guide created.
Regular project team meetings began.

Summer 2017

Reviewed and revised initial program design, rubrics and activities for each of the eight learning goals.
Communication plan developed.
Program branding developed.
Badge infographics created.
Team met throughout the summer for extended strategic sessions.
Communicated with OHIO faculty and staff regarding feedback on eight learning goal definitions.
Developed goals worksheet.
Introductory video for the pilot.
Trained DOSA staff.

Fall 2017

Soft pilot launched to 75 students with two learning goals – team development and intercultural competency.
Second Champions Group meeting.
Program assessment.
Program revision.
IRB.
Project research plan finalized in early fall.
Focus groups conducted.
Developed workflow for January 2018 launch.
Decision to automate level one (Foundations).
OII created videos for all eight learning goals.
Updated learning goal rubrics.
Ongoing DOSA staff training.

Spring 2018

Pilot launched with all eight learning goals to all DOSA units (approximately 300 students).
Program assessment.
Program revision to three levels.
OIT involvement with tech solution. Numerous meetings with vendors and OHIO leadership regarding technology issues and concerns. Blackboard is used as the platform.
Updated DOSA communication plan.
Compass article written about AIA and OULE:
<http://bit.ly/2RJPg9V>
HR and ENG connected with team for synergistic ideas.
Reviewed DOSA onboarding and timelines for student employee hiring.
DOSA graduate assistants tested level one and level two.

Summer 2018

Program revision.
Badging platform research and selection (Portfolium selected).
Third Champions Group meeting.
Level one (Foundations) curriculum redesigned by OII.
Research and data collection redesigned.
Focus groups conducted.
Level one (Foundations) became a requisite for DOSA student employment as part of onboarding.
Team decided Blackboard was not an option moving forward due to lack of functionality.
Research report completed on spring pilot.
New team members joined, including an alumni

Foundation board member.
Wrote conference proposals.
Identified eight learning goals videos for the Foundations level.
Redesigned the advanced level. Transition to two levels instead of three.
In-depth program assessment discussions.
Constant iterations necessitated the move to the project being a pilot.
Reviewed competing priorities of ease of completion vs. depth of learning.
Created OULE website.
Moved to the Acclaim platform.
Vendor issues.

Fall 2018

Program redesigned in new software (Articulate Rise).
Program migration to new platforms (Adobe Connect and Portfolium).
New badge design.
Developed DOSA common student performance evaluation draft .
Technology issues delayed all DOSA unit launch to spring 2019.
Mock interview added to measure articulation.
Chronicle article on AIA and OULE:
<http://bit.ly/2QQwAWF>
OULE involved with UCC and overlap with OHIO common goals.
Ongoing staff training.
Vendor issues.

APPENDIX A (CONTINUED)

Spring 2019

Full program launched to DOSA student employees (approximately 2,000 students).
Three conference presentations.
Spring pilot evaluation plan.
Technology concerns and constant updates.

Summer 2019

Program assessment and research.
Conference presentation.
Proposal for DOSA supervision infrastructure to change to ensure student employees are engaging in dialogue with supervisors related to the eight learning goals.

Fall 2019

Fall launch (approximately 2,000 students).
Documented and presented findings from program research to Champions Group.
Conference presentation.



APPENDIX B: PRESENTATIONS

Assessment Institute

Cogswell, C., & Jaunarajs, I. (2019). Assessing Leadership Development: A Credentialing Model for Innovation Between Academic and Student Affairs. Presented at the Assessment Institute in Columbus, OH, October 2019.

UIDP (University and Industry Development and Partnerships)

Jaunarajs, I., Jackson, M., & Geurra-Lopez, I. (2019). Microcredentialing for Soft Skills. Presented at UIDP in Columbus, OH, September 2019.

NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers)

Jaunarajs, I., McGrain, Z., Monk, J., & Sturgill, A. (2019). Credentialing for Leadership Competency Development: a model for innovation between academic and student affairs. Presented at NACE in Orlando, FL, June 2019.

NIRSA (National Intramural Recreational and Sports Association)

Bonadio, W., Vogel, M., Monk, J. & Rosenberger, K. (2019). Leadership Endorsement: A Student Employee Leadership Development Program. Presented at NIRSA in Boston, MA, March 2019.

NASPA (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators)

Jaunarajs, I., Cohen, A. B., Vogel, M., Monk, J. & Rosenberger, K. (2019). Microcredentialing for Leadership Competency Development: a credentialing infrastructure for student success as a model for innovation between academic and student affairs. Presented at NASPA in Las Angeles, CA, March 2019.

OCPA (Ohio College Personnel Association)

Downing, B., Ward, L. & Hoover, K. (2019) Leadership Endorsement: A Student Employee Leadership Development Program. Presented at OCPA in Columbus, OH, January 2019.

Mixed Methods International Research Association (MMIRA) - Caribbean Chapter

Mahato, S., & Cohen, B. (2019, March). Synergizing Mixed Methods Research and Program Evaluation. Paper presented at Mixed Methods International Research Association (MMIRA) regional conference (Caribbean Chapter), St. Augustine, Trinidad.

American Evaluation Association (AEA)

Mahato, S., Machtmes, K., & Cohen, B. (2018, November). Setting up for evaluation: Reflections from the initial phases of evaluating an innovative program. Paper presented at Evaluation 2018, annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association (AEA), Cleveland, OH.

Publications – Manuscripts under development

Mahato, S., Machtmes, K., & Cohen, B. (2019). Setting Up for Evaluation: An ECB Strategy amidst Limited Resources and Unlimited Expectations. Manuscript in preparation.

Mahato, S., Machtmes, K., & Cohen, B. (2019). Setting Up for Evaluation in Higher Education: An Illustrative Case Study. Manuscript in preparation.

APPENDIX C: CONTRIBUTORS

Project Team:

Imants Jaunarajs, team manager
Sylvia Mickunas, project manager
Megan Vogel, operations manager
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Wes Bonadio, training and implementation coordinator
Kim Hoover, training and implementation coordinator
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Kyle Rosenberger, instructional designer
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MariaPaz Hermosilla, OIT
Seema Mahato, evaluation and research graduate assistant

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Derek Kauneckis
Gregory Kremer
Peter Mather
David Moore
Todd Myers
Linda Rice

APPENDIX D: SELECTED SOURCES

Selected project research sources:

AACU
ONET
Recruiting Trends
Educational Advisory Board
Lumina Foundation
Gallup
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Georgetown Center for Education and Workforce
Board of Regents: Higher Education Condition Reports
Bentley U Project
Hart Research Associates
American Academy of Arts and Sciences
Accenture
Hanover Research
Career Readiness Partner Council
McKinsey
Chronicle of Higher Education/American Public Media's Marketplace





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