

UPCEA Creates Hub for Credential Innovation with New Council for Credential Innovation & Alternative Credentials Network

Dedicated community to deliver strategic and practical guidance for postsecondary pros involved in design, development and delivery of alternative credentials

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, August 24, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Alternative and non-degree credentials continue to gain relevance and traction with students and higher education leaders. This has created a demand for credential innovation and for dedicated resources to advance quality

standards, policy and best practices. It is within this context that the University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA) announces the formation of the Council for Credential Innovation and the creation of the Alternative Credentials Network.



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Together, these new bodies will form a new community that is grounded in research, guided by leading practitioners, and informed by UPCEA's 100-plus-year history of serving adult and nontraditional learners with credit and noncredit programs. UPCEA is the only association that focuses on the holistic development and delivery of university credentials focused on learner and workforce needs. Its members are at the intersection of entrepreneurship, best practices, and praxis.

A foundational resource in this effort is UPCEA's [Hallmarks of Excellence in Credential Innovation](#), a quality framework

for non-degree credentials at the enterprise level.

Also among the building blocks for this new credential innovation community is an important

benchmark study released last month by UPCEA and research partners Modern Campus and The EvoLLLution titled, "[Shifting Paradigms](#): Understanding Institutional Perspectives on Microcredentialing." The report reveals how alternative credentials position higher education institutions to overcome one of the greatest critiques leveled at them, which is a lack of connectivity between programming and the needs of learners and the labor market.

"Our research shows alternative and non-degree credentials will be a vital driver of the future success and long-term viability of institutions," said Robert Hansen, chief executive officer of UPCEA. "We see the creation of a dedicated community for credential innovation as an imperative, not only for advancing the field of alternative credentials, but for aligning higher education programming with the needs of learners and the marketplace."

In addition to its research, UPCEA convened the Strategic Task Force on New Credentials, a group of national leaders whose recommendations for advancing credential innovation include the formation of a community to engage academic leaders, practitioners and other non-degree credential stakeholders.

"UPCEA possesses the ability to convene non-degree and alternative credential stakeholders to engage in solutions-based discussions focused on complex issues such as accreditation, non-credit to credit pathways, instructor credentials, budgetary as well as pedagogical models, and more," said Henry Leitner, Ph.D., Associate Dean for IT, Chief Innovation Officer & Sr. Lecturer, Harvard University, & Co-Chair of Strategic Task Force on New Credentials.

The Task Force explained that in important ways, growth in the alternative and non-degree credentials field is analogous to the position of online education about 15-20 years ago – operating on the margins, its quality questioned by faculty and some employers, and uncertainty about whether it will evolve into a true disruptor.

"Just as online education benefited from the sharing of best practices and other resources, credential innovation demands community input," said Jennifer Bott, Ph.D., Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Western Michigan University, & Co-Chair of Strategic Task Force on New Credentials. "UPCEA is uniquely positioned to serve as this credential innovation hub. Its members have led the world for more than a century in the area of noncredit credentials. Today, UPCEA's members are at the forefront of the latest innovations in workforce aligned credentials."

Two Bodies, One Community, a Shared Focus

The Council for Credential Innovation is comprised of senior leaders charged with driving non-degree credential strategy at the unit or campus level, and key thought leaders from other nonprofit organizations and companies that are actively contributing to the development of the alternative credential space. The Council and its leadership will focus on leveraging the strategic potential of non-degree credentials and non-credit education and training to transform

institutions of higher education as well as the talent marketplace.

Each UPCEA member institution has the opportunity to identify a representative to the Council for Credential Innovation. Select nonprofit partners and corporate partners engaged in alternative credentials will also have an opportunity to participate.

The Council's strategic focus will be complemented by the practice-focused Alternative Credentials Network. The mission of the Network is to share best practices and emerging trends related to non-degree or non-credit credentials. This includes an exchange of ideas, programs, services, and initiatives that expand member knowledge regarding new, innovative, and entrepreneurial programs to serve the needs of diverse learners. The Network represents postsecondary professionals that work within externally focused professional, continuing and online (PCO) divisions and units at post-secondary institutions. As with UPCEA's seven existing professional affinity Networks, participation in the Alternative Credentials Network is open to all UPCEA members.

The new Council for Credential Innovation and the Alternative Credentials Network will launch in September. To sign up for updates and information on how to participate, [click here](#).

About UPCEA

UPCEA is the association for professional, continuing and online education. Founded in 1915, UPCEA now serves most of the leading public and private colleges and universities in North America. The association supports its members with innovative conferences and specialty seminars, research and benchmarking information, professional networking opportunities and timely publications. Based in Washington, D.C., UPCEA builds greater awareness of the vital link between adult learners and public policy issues. Visit www.upcea.edu.

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