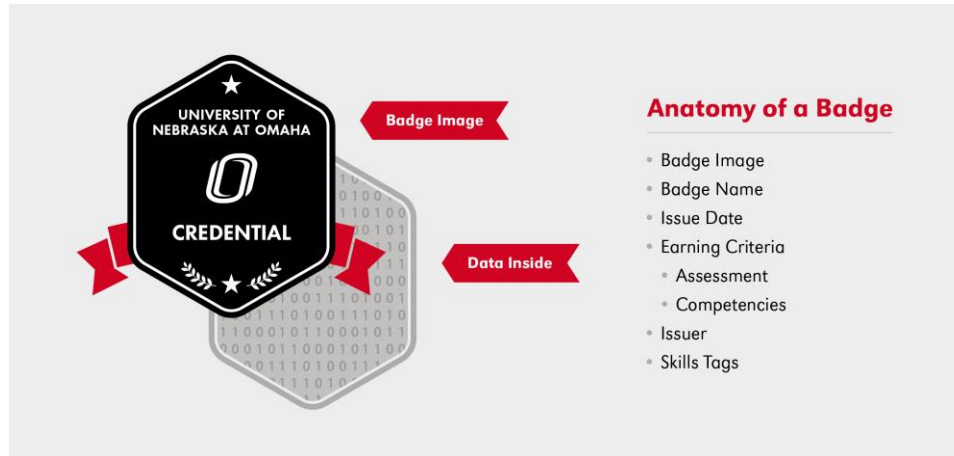**THE CASE FOR DIGITAL BADGING**

Digital badges offer transparency into the skills and competencies developed in both for-credit course content and co-curricular learning experiences. A helpful analogy is to consider that badges and their respective meta-data are the "nutrition facts" of a student's learning experience.

By incorporating an overview of the course/learning experience and an outline of student learning outcomes and tagging structured skills/competencies from established skills taxonomies in their metadata, digital badges allow students to easily articulate their skillsets and connect them to opportunity. Likewise, employers can more easily identify students who have verified mastery of an in-demand skillset.

Where and how digital badges provide impactful innovation:

Workforce Development

- **Recognizing Skills:** Digital badges provide a visual and easily shareable representation of skills, achievements, and knowledge. They serve as a digital credential, allowing individuals to showcase their accomplishments and expertise in a specific domain. This recognition can be valuable when seeking employment, applying for higher education, or engaging with professional communities.
- **Portable and Verifiable:** Digital badges are portable across various platforms and can be shared on social media profiles, websites, or digital resumes. They contain metadata that provides detailed information about the issuer, criteria, and evidence required to earn the badge. This metadata enables easy verification of the badge's authenticity, ensuring credibility and trustworthiness.
- **Facilitating Microcredentials:** Digital badges are a key tool to facilitate microcredential courses (short-form, skills-based offerings). Microcredentials are often engaged outside of a traditional degree program and a digital badge allows them to be issued evidence of their accomplishments from an accredited university that they can then share with employers. It also allows provides a tool for these offerings to "stack" upon one another, potentially leading to larger awards.

Though microcredentials are still largely noncredit, the insights provided by digital badges make the translation to credit-bearing simpler.

- **Providing Enhanced Assessment:** Digital badges can be tied to robust assessment criteria, providing a comprehensive evaluation of an individual's abilities. These criteria can include project-based assessments, peer evaluations, or evidence of real-world application. By focusing on demonstrable skills rather than solely relying on test scores, badges offer a more holistic and authentic representation of an individual's capabilities.
- **Facilitating Skills-Based Hiring:** Digital badges are uniquely positioned to assist hiring managers and HR teams with talent acquisition and management. Due to their direct alignment with skills and competencies earned, digital badges provide an enhanced avenue for organizations and individuals to sync up the skills needed for a role with the skills of those they are hiring. We see this as additive and complementary to other means typically utilized in the candidate screening process such as prior work experience (roles held), degrees earned (BA, MA, JD, PhD), and time-based measures (20 years of service).

Learner-Centric Education

- **Motivating and Engaging:** Badges can act as a motivational tool, encouraging learners to actively participate in educational or training activities. By breaking down learning into smaller, achievable goals, badges provide a sense of accomplishment and progress. They also promote healthy competition, collaboration, and engagement within communities by fostering a culture of recognition and achievement.
- **Comprehensive:** Individuals can earn digital badges from a number of employers, agencies, organizations and institutions. Badges are collected in a digital backpack, and it is up to the learner to determine which badges they want to share where, and with whom. Digital badges can easily be shared via portfolios and resumes, through social media platforms like LinkedIn, or directly with hiring managers and supervisors. The badges live with the learner rather than with the institution, as we see with traditional for-credit transcripts.
- **Promoting Lifelong Learning:** Digital badges promote lifelong learning by allowing individuals to acquire and display new skills and knowledge throughout their lives. As individuals pursue different interests or transition between careers, badges offer a flexible and adaptable way to demonstrate continuous learning and professional growth.
- **Flexible and Stackable:** From many awarding organizations, badges are stackable. Whether moving from novice to proficient in competency development (perhaps of durable skills) or gaining a more advanced skill or ability (perhaps of technical skills), badges are designed to stack which shows continued growth and development of a particular competency.
- **Fostering Community**: Digital badges facilitate the formation of online communities and networks around shared interests or achievements. Individuals can connect with others who have earned similar badges, fostering collaboration, mentorship, and knowledge sharing. This sense of community strengthens social interactions, encourages participation, and expands opportunities for networking and professional development.

Overall, digital badges offer a flexible, portable, and verifiable means of recognizing and showcasing skills, fostering motivation, supporting lifelong learning, and building vibrant communities.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) acknowledges that it is not the first higher education institution to incorporate badging into its curriculum. However, UNO believes it has an advantage as a second mover in this area. Drawing insights from various badging schemes across the country, UNO has developed an ideal badging scheme that fosters more meaningful connections between students and industry.

One notable example is Northwestern University, which has implemented a multi-level framework for badging. UNO recognizes the importance of such a framework, as it enables the widespread use of badges while ensuring the ease of verifying education through skills-based courses such as microcredentials.

Looking closer to home, Wichita State University has also established a badging framework that includes credit-bearing, stackable badges. Although UNO is not currently seeking credit-bearing status for its badges, its framework incorporates time recommendations that can easily align with future for-credit requirements if desired. This forward-thinking approach ensures that credit-bearing status remains a possibility in the future.

At UNO, the highest level of badge is the collection badge, which facilitates the stacking of credential badges. This means that a bundle of skills-based coursework can equate to a higher learning achievement, much like how a series of courses can lead to a certificate or degree in traditional academic programs.

UNO's GOALS FOR DIGITAL BADGING

1. Create a cohesive badging framework to be used broadly by interested parties across UNO as a way for learners to signal skills and competencies they have earned in a wide variety of learning experiences
2. Create a framework that is considered an industry-leader
3. Take an agile approach in order to effectively align to emerging expectations of NU BOR, HLC, State of Nebraska agencies, common sharing platforms like Linkedin, and workforce partners – all of whom we anticipate helping to shape and regulate this space in the coming years
4. Empower badging pilots to begin as early as August 2023, with full campus scale-up in AY 2024-25
5. Consider strategies for badging backpacks to become "second page of the transcript" for learners to easily share learning experiences that go behind traditional transcript courses and academic programs
6. Utilize existing/complementary technology stack already in place at UNO/NU for (1) maximum integration opportunities and seamless data transfer across student information system (MavLink), customer relationship management platform (Salesforce), learning management system (Canvas, NU Advance, Bridge), and engagement platforms for event check-in (Presence), (2) financial efficiency and (3) most effective support

FRAMEWORK

Based on needs and ideas that have already been brought forward, it is clear that UNO will need multiple categories of badging that allow for different types of units (college, department, student organization, faculty support team, etc,) to take advantage of this offering. We have broken this framework into four categories: non-credit micro credentials, faculty/staff badge, student co-curricular and student curricular.

	Engagement Token	Engagement Collection	Experiential Badge	Credential Badge	Collection Badge
Student Curricular Curricular badges are tied to specific academic courses or programs within the university's curriculum.					
Student Co-Curricular Co-curricular badges are awarded to students for their participation and achievements in extracurricular activities, clubs, student organizations, and community service.					
Faculty & Staff Faculty and staff badges are designed to recognize the professional development, achievements, and contributions of university employees.					
External Audiences These badges are issued to learners outside of the university.					
Use Case & Guidelines	Used for honors, achievements, and activities, documents participation. It is best suited to award for engagement in extra-curricular activities, attendance at one or more events, or active membership in an organization. Participation should be meaningful and value adding for the participant but reflection or a tangible assessment of participants is not necessary.	Used for a collection/ bundle of engagement tokens.	Used for experiences where the individual is prepared for the experience, completed the experience, and self-reflection or other assessment is completed. * 15 Hour minimum	Used to acknowledge the individual has gained competencies from a variety of different learning experiences. *15 Hour minimum	A collection/bundle of any other badges. *Must have at least one Experiential or Credential badge included in the bundle.

SUGGESTED BUSINESS PROCESS AND CAMPUS ROLES

For digital badging to be successful at UNO, an overall approach with both centralized and decentralized elements will be critical. It is a top goal of this project that colleges, units, and departments are actively choosing what it makes sense to badge within their scope of work (for example, Student Government should choose what Student Government would like to recognize with a digital badge amongst its participants). As has been reinforced broadly at national conferences and with our Instructure Consultants, an overarching campus-wide strategy with campus-wide badge design/artwork standards is imperative so that external entities can easily sense-make a UNO badge they see on LinkedIn or alongside a UNO student's resume. An overarching campus-wide strategy also allows us to more effectively educate our students on when and how to share badges.

Each UNO unit wanting to issue badges needs to establish the following roles:

- Cohorts of 3+ people to complete the form
- Unit lead designated to approve the form (student organization advisor/sponsor, Director of Service Learning Academy, HR Director, Dean or representative from Dean's office, etc.)

- A minimum of two issuers who will complete training and be responsible for (1) verifying the earning criteria are met, (2) assuring required badge data has been collected, and (3) issues the badges according to the framework

When a unit would like to award a badge or create a pathway with multiple badges leading up to a collection badge, they would follow this process:

- A badge request form/ document is completed, indicating:
    - What type of badge (based on the framework with quadrants)
    - A 2-3 sentence description of what the badge is for
    - Rationale for creating the badge (what purpose does it serve?)
    - Earning criteria including competencies *(pulling from Open Skills Network competency library)* and how they are assessed
    - The list of structured skills *(pulling from EMSI Lightcast skill library)*
    - Any other requirements to receive the badge
    - What the badge text will say
    - If the badge is part of a pathway or collection badge and where it fits in that pathway or collection
    - Who is the badge issuer (college, student organization, other)
    - At least 2 people who will be responsible for verifying the badge has been earned and issue the badge (primary and back-up)
- Once the form is completed, 3+ individuals requesting/supporting the badge will sign off on the form
- Next, the identified unit lead reviews the form and approves it or sends it back with revisions
- Once the form is approved, it is sent to the ILCI team who will use the information in the form to enroll the issuers in training, create the badge image, and set it up in the NU Advance system
    - Issuers in units need to complete training once per year
- Badges can be awarded using the criteria provided in the form

BUILDING A BADGE, BEHIND THE SCENES

The information collected through the form process populates the creation of a badge. Here are some behind-the-scenes views of the amount of information assigned to each badge created in Canvas Credentials.

GENERAL INFO

Name *

Badge image *   Design a badge

⬆
↧   **Drag & Drop File**
or **Select File to Upload**

Description *

Summarize what this Badge represents.

☑ **Display on issuer public page** *

EARNING CRITERIA (At least one field is required)

Write   Preview

Description

Markdown supported

Criteria URL

Build a great badge

Put your best Badge forward! Upload a badge image or build one here using Canvas Badges' easy design tool.

Note: An uploaded image should be square (400x400 px is ideal) and PNG or SVG format.

What's the path to success?

Describe what a recipient must do to earn this badge. Some issuers link to a promotional page that explains the badge opportunity and how to earn it.

Cancel   **Create Badge**

Tags

Tags are like keywords. They may be added badges to help locate and sort badges more easily by topic, especially when using Pathways. Examples include things like programming, open-source, bit-coin, volunteer, hand-crafted, dogs, astronomy, etc. Additionally, tags will only be comprised of lowercase characters.

TAGS (Optional)

New Tag...   Add tag

What are tags?

Add tags (topic keywords) to help people find your Badge — for example, dogs, programming, or remote learning.

Midstates Superintendents Academy

Created on **Jun 22, 2023**

The Midstates Superintendent Academy is designed to launch current educational leaders from their administrative positions into a ready-to-serve Superintendent.

Offered by
College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences (non-credit)

✅ Verified

Badge Details

EARNING CRITERIA
Recipients must complete the earning criteria to earn this badge

Participants who have earned this badge have demonstrated the ability to:

- Lead the way in building the pipeline to the superintendency by working across a five-state region to recommend candidates for the Academy.
- Seek to increase the pool of diversified candidates for superintendent positions by working directly with school districts to recommend candidates of diversity for the Academy.
- Increase future superintendent leadership capacity across the Midwest by recruiting and selecting qualified applicants into the academy.
- Develop superintendent ready candidates so that school districts can recruit and retain high quality superintendents and communities can best be served.

TAGS

educational administration

educational leadership

SKILLS
Recipients demonstrated these job skills

educational administration ↪   educational leadership ↪

We Issue **Open Badges** 🧊

View JSON

TIMELINE AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

1. Product selected, implemented, integrated, and procured through P2P; tech team trained (AY 2022-23 and Summer 2023 alongside Instructure's Canvas Credentials consulting team)
2. Listening session with individuals/units at UNO interested in badging (March 2023)
   - ▢ Invitees: Troy Romero, April Paschall, Sammi Kaiser, Levi Thiele, Sara Woods, Julie Dierberger, Molly Belieu, Connie Schaffer, Rachel Radel, Marlina Davidson, Matt Schill, Rick Murch-Shafer, Tammie Kennedy, Melanie Bloom, Kate Bard, Matt Burke, Destynie Sewell, David Nielsen, Ana Lopez Shalla, Michael Carroll, Matt Tracy, Jill Russell
3. Presentation to UNO Deans, request to launch working group to draft framework (April 2023)
4. Working group establishes draft framework and business processes across four badging domains (non-credit micro-credentials, faculty/staff, student co-curricular, student curricular) (Summer 2023)
5. Deans, senior leadership, campus stakeholders offer input, common standards adopted at UNO (August 2023)
6. Integration with other existing tools (such as Presence, MavLink, Salesforce) is explored, launched (Fall 2023)
7. Pilot with badges beginning to be awarded in multiple domains (Fall 2023)
8. Review and assess pilot progress (Summer 2024)
9. Campaign to launch university wide (AY 2024-25)

SUMMER 2023 BADGING WORKING GROUP

Jaci Lindburg – Associate Vice Chancellor, Innovative & Learning-Centric Initiatives

Matt Schill – University Registrar, Institutional Effectiveness & Student Success

Levi Thiele – Director of Career Services, Institutional Effectiveness & Student Success

Rachel Radel – Manager, Employee Relations, Development and Talent Acquisition, Human Resources

Ana Lopez Shalla – Director of Strategic Partnerships and New Market, Innovative & Learning-Centric Initiatives

Angie Kennedy – Creative Director, Strategic Marketing & Communications

Christine Billings – Director, Division of Continuing Studies

Rick Murch-Shafer – Director, Academic Technologies

Myah Lanoux-Nguyen – Director, Strategy & Operations (Project Manager for this initiative)