CONNECTING CREDENTIALS

LESSONS FROM THE NATIONAL SUMMIT ON CREDENTIALING AND NEXT STEPS IN THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE

January 2016

CO-SPONSORS OF THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON CREDENTIALING

In early 2015, Lumina Foundation, in partnership with the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW) and the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), called for a national dialogue on postsecondary credentialing and invited other organizations to join that effort as co-sponsors. By October 5 – the date of a national summit that was held on the topic in Washington, D.C. – 89 organizations had agreed to co-sponsor the dialogue. Those organizations are listed here, grouped by category.

The list of co-sponsors continues to grow, as does general interest in the national dialogue. In total, the October summit was attended by some 200 individuals representing nearly 170 organizations, all of which are listed at the end of this document.

Accrediting, Certifying and Standards Organizations

- Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges Western Association of Schools and Colleges
- Institute for Credentialing Excellence
- National Coalition of Certification Centers (NC3)
- National Heathcareer Association
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges
- WASC Senior College and University Commission

Business and Industry

- Best Western International
- Business-Higher Education Forum
- Business Roundtable
- Committee for Economic Development of the Conference Board
- Goodwill Industries International
- International Association of Business Communicators
- Manufacturing Institute
- National Network of Business and Industry Associations
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

Education Organizations and Associations

- American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
- American Association of Community Colleges
- American Association of State Colleges and Universities
- American Council on Education
- Association of American Colleges & Universities
- Association of Colleges & Research Libraries
- Association of Private Sector Colleges & Universities
- Association for Career & Technical Education
- Council of Chief State School Officers
- EDUCAUSE
- Midwestern Higher Education Compact
- NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
- National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium
- New England Board of Higher Education
- Southern Regional Education Board
- State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
- Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Foundations and Philanthropic Organizations

- AARP Foundation
- ACT Foundation
- AT&T Aspire
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Joyce Foundation
- JP Morgan Chase & Co
- Kresge Foundation
- Lumina Foundation
- National Fund for Workforce Solutions
- Siemens Foundation
- USA Funds

Labor Organizations

- AFL-CIO
- North America's Building Trade Unions
- American Federation of Teachers

Policy, Research and Change Management Organizations

- Achieve
- Achieving the Dream
- Aspen Institute's Skills for America's Future
- Center for Law and Social Policy
- Community College Research Center
- Complete College America
- Corporation for a Skilled Workforce
- Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
- Digital Promise
- Educational Policy Improvement Center
- Forum for Youth Investment
- Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce
- George Washington Institute of Public Policy
- Hope Street Group
- Innovate + Educate
- Institute for Evidence-Based Change
- Institute for Higher Education Policy
- Jobs for the Future
- MDC
- National Academy Foundation
- National Center for Higher Education Management Systems
- National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
- National Skills Coalition
- New America
- Office of Community College Research and Leadership
- Opportunity@Work
- RTI International
- T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center
- University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center on Wisconsin Strategy
- Workcred - An Affiliate of the American National Standards Institute
- Workforce Data Quality Campaign

Student Organizations

- Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society

Technical and Data Services and Communications Providers

- AcademyOne, Inc.
- ACT, Inc.
- Badge Labs
- Burning Glass
- Collective Shift
- Credly
- Education Design Labs
- Education Testing Service
- National Student Clearinghouse
- Parchment
- Pearson

Note: Federal, state and quasi-governmental entities are not co-sponsors, but many are valuable partners in this work. And while many national education and workforce organizations are co-sponsors, the list does not yet include individual colleges, universities and K-12 school systems which are also active in rethinking credentialing.

FOREWORD

THE DIALOGUE ON CREDENTIALING IS GAINING MOMENTUM

On October 5, 2015, some 200 individuals representing nearly 170 organizations gathered in Washington, D.C., for a one-day summit on a critical issue: the need for change in our nation's fragmented system of credentialing. The National Summit on Credentialing was convened by three organizations – the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW), the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), and Lumina Foundation – on behalf of the Connecting Credentials partnership. The summit represented a first step in articulating a shared vision of a reformed credentialing system – one that will better serve the needs of today's students, employers and educators.

The organizations have many reasons to work together in this partnership. CSW has a 25-year history of partnering with government, business and community leaders to support the creation of good jobs and the development of highly skilled workers to fill them – with a special commitment to creating common language and standards for competency-based credentials to verify that an individual has the skills and knowledge to perform on the job. For more than four decades, CLASP has worked to develop and advocate for policies to strengthen families and create pathways to education and work. Lumina's role in the national credentialing dialogue is a logical extension of the Foundation's commitment to achieving Goal 2025 – that is, within 10 years increasing to 60 percent the proportion of Americans who hold degrees, certificates and other high-quality credentials.

The Connecting Credentials partnership aims to address problems in the current system that hamper students' efforts to attain high-quality credentials of all types. While today's diverse and dynamic credentialing marketplace offers skills-development opportunities to many individuals, the lack of trust, transparency and portability of many credentials is causing serious problems for students, employers, educators, the economy and the nation as a whole.

The Connecting Credentials partnership aims to address problems in the current system that hamper students' efforts to attain high-quality credentials of all types.

LESSONS FROM THE SUMMIT

OVERVIEW

The U.S. has a variety of pathways to higher education, ranging from four-year colleges and universities to employer-based training programs to coding boot camps and beyond, and each comes with a different type of **credential** representing postsecondary completion. Despite this vast and varied landscape of postsecondary credentials, there's no common language that enables users to compare and connect them; no system to assure credentials are of quality and relevant in the workplace; and no repository where users can easily obtain relevant information about credentials. The result is a fragmented, dysfunctional credentialing system that's out of sync with 21st century needs.

"Those hurt the most by the credentialing system are those who have the least."

Anthony P. Carnevale, director of Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce

The drawbacks from this dysfunction are severe – for learners trying to navigate the growing array of higher-education options, and for employers trying to find workers with the right skills and knowledge. What's more, the maze of postsecondary credentials disproportionately hampers those with the least social capital: low-income and minority learners who, without a clear pathway to a high-quality higher education, only fall further behind.

There's never been a more critical time to fix this problem. In the 21st century workforce, workers need more than a high school diploma to land most jobs, particularly jobs that lead to advancement. In fact, two-thirds of all jobs will require postsecondary education by the end of this decade, yet today only 40 percent of Americans have at least an associate degree. To encourage upward mobility and meet our nation's growing demand for talent, we must have a postsecondary credentialing system that works for the students and employers who use it.

No single solution or group can address this challenge; it will take a number of strategic efforts by groups working in concert. And it will no doubt take years to build a viable system for all learners. That's why organizations from across the country concerned with addressing the challenge have united behind **Connecting Credentials**. This coalition of sponsoring organizations – nearly 90 and growing – is working to build a national dialogue to encourage the creation of a better system. Connecting Credentials offers stakeholders a robust supply of information; helps them establish common goals and values; works to determine priorities for action; and offers direction to stakeholders so their reform efforts align.

In June 2015, Connecting Credentials launched a website that offers rich information about the challenge and a series of online and in-person

conversations to surface key issues. The effort gained momentum in October 2015, when Lumina Foundation, CSW and CLASP convened some 200 individuals representing nearly 170 organizations to explore the credentials challenge and determine the top priorities for action. In 2016, we'll broaden the coalition of stakeholders engaged in Connecting Credentials, and **we welcome your involvement.**

The document that follows provides additional background on the credentials challenge, the key principles of a reimagined system, the top issues vital to creating such a system (as identified at the October 2015 summit), and the next steps the Connecting Credentials partnership will take.

THE CREDENTIALING CHALLENGE

The dizzying array of postsecondary credentials in the U.S. marketplace is driven, in part, by the greater demand for post-high-school education today compared with a half-century ago. Consider that in 1973 only 28 percent of all jobs in the U.S. economy required a degree or some other form of postsecondary credential. By 2020, labor economists predict, 65 percent of jobs will require an education beyond high school. Educational providers, both within and outside traditional higher education, have responded to the growing demand by expanding their programs or adding new educational offerings.

Each of these pathways offers a different type of credential, from college degrees and certificates to online badges to industry certifications. The result is a huge and diverse mix of credentials in the U.S. This diversity is a strength of the American system, but it also creates problems for learners, employers and educational institutions. We need to develop clear ways to help all stakeholders understand credentials' meaning and value for different purposes. Unfortunately, many credentials providers operate independently of each other. This siloed approach makes it difficult for students and employers to navigate the complex credentials landscape.

And this comes with painful and severe implications. Tens of thousands of potential learners struggle to obtain the higher education they need to find good jobs and forge viable career pathways. A wide range of learners experience this struggle, including: mid-career military veterans who need to apply their skills in the civilian labor force; dislocated workers who already have valuable skills they can use to build new careers; underrepresented students who need expanded opportunities; students of all ages who have acquired nontraditional forms of education, such as apprenticeships and experiential learning; and former college students who need a way to combine old credits with new ones to earn a credential.

In her October 2014 report, *Beyond the Skills Gap*, New America's Mary Alice McCarthy illustrates the learner's struggle with a poignant example of a woman in Michigan looking to upgrade her skills to enter the medical assisting profession. "According to the U.S. Department of Education's College Navigator, nearly 2,000 institutions of higher education offer

POWERFUL PANEL

The opening session of the National Summit on Credentialing – *Setting the Stage: Transforming Our Fragmented Credentialing System into One That Works Better for Students, Employers and the Nation* – examined the problems posed by the nation's credentialing system.

The session was moderated by **Jim Lehrer**, former executive editor and news anchor at *PBS NewsHour*. It featured a lively and substantive discussion among eight national experts on education and workforce issues. Some of their comments are reproduced in this document as display quotations.

The panelists were:

BRIAN AUGUSTE, managing director of Opportunity@ Work at New America

MOLLY BROAD, president of the American Council on Education

CHRIS BUSTAMANTE, president of Rio Salado College

ANTHONY CARNEVALE, a research professor and director of the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University

JOHN ENGLER, former governor of Michigan and president of the Business Roundtable

JAMIE MERISOTIS, president and CEO of Lumina Foundation

ERIC SELEZNOW, deputy assistant secretary of the Employment and Training Administration for the U.S. Department of Labor

ELIZABETH SHULER, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO

The session was videotaped and may be viewed in full at: *www.connectingcredentials.org/summit-recording/*

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE

The demand for post-secondary credentials has exploded, along with the variety of ways to meet that demand. Consider the following facts:

- From 1983 to 2011, enrollment in colleges and universities grew from 10.8 million to 18.1 million.
- Just since 2002, the number of associate degrees held by Americans has doubled.
- In 1980, career and technical education programs accounted for only 6 percent of all credentials; today they represent 25 percent.
- In the last three decades, the number of postsecondary certificates awarded has increased by more than 800 percent.
- Employers spend $590 billion annually on training – $177 billion on formal training and $413 billion on informal, on-the-job training.

certificate programs in medical assisting in the United States, 59 in the state of Michigan alone," McCarthy writes. "But no two programs are the same, and the differences among them can have significant consequences for students." The report then details the vast differences in cost, credits, financial support and program duration among five of the certificate options in the state. It also points out that the programs examined don't even include those leading to an associate degree. McCarthy concludes: "That's a lot of difficult decisions to make before starting training for a job with an average annual salary in Michigan of $27,000 – or about $13 an hour."

Employers share in this struggle. Though prospective hires bring an array of credentials to the table, it's difficult for the person charged with hiring to determine what skills and knowledge are associated with each credential because their meaning is so often unclear. As a result of this, many employers default to what they see as the best proxy for job qualification – a bachelor's degree – even though the skills and knowledge obtained through that degree may not be the best fit for the job. This helps create a troubling mismatch between the number of jobs available and the number of workers who clearly demonstrate the skills and knowledge needed to fill them. So despite nagging unemployment and workers dropping out of the labor force, the U.S. faces a major skills gap, as data show:

- 76 percent of CEOs of companies in the Inc. 5000 say that finding qualified people is a major concern for their companies.
- In a survey of 126 CEOs of major U.S. companies conducted by the Business Roundtable and Change the Equation, 97 percent of respondents cited the skills gap as a problem, and 62 percent reported trouble finding applicants for jobs requiring information technology and advanced computer knowledge.
- In another recent survey, only 11 percent of business leaders said they considered college graduates to be prepared for the workforce, while 96 percent of colleges' and universities' chief academic officers did.

To address these challenges, the U.S. credentialing system must be revamped into one that works for everyone – especially the learners and employers who depend on it.

A 21st CENTURY SYSTEM

Two key questions must drive the credentials reform effort: What would a better system of postsecondary credentials look like? And how do we get there?

Through input from diverse stakeholders, a vision is emerging of a high-functioning, thriving and relevant credentialing system. Any such system must be all of the following:

- ***Centered on learning.*** Part of the challenge with today's system stems from the fact that various metrics are used to track progression toward

different credentials. Colleges and universities that confer degrees calculate students' accumulation of credit hours. Many other programs rely on students' demonstration of skills or competency. Across every higher education program, we need to track students' progression toward their credentials based on mastery of knowledge and skills – and define credentials **according to the knowledge and skills** that students obtain. Such a system also would make it easier for learners to transfer their credentials from one education pathway and/or job to the next.

• ***Equitable.*** We are all hurt by credentials that aren't connected, but those who are hurt the most are those who have the least. We must connect systems so we have flexible pathways that allow **all** students to earn quality credentials with labor market value.

• ***Dynamic.*** Our economy is constantly changing, and the demands of the labor market shift in line with these changes. Yet the knowledge and skills conveyed through our higher education system – the primary vehicle for equipping workers for the labor force – too often are out of sync with workforce needs. We need to ensure the credentials system is **dynamic** so that the credentials awarded are relevant in the job market and can adapt to changing demands in real time. Students' records of learning – often thought of in terms of transcripts – also must be adaptable so they can reflect learning that students gain from an array of pathways and experiences, including higher education, the military, community service and on-the-job experience.

• ***Transparent.*** It's critical for students to be able to understand the value of different credentials and decide the best pathway accordingly. It's equally important for employers to understand the value that various credentials bring to their companies. For both of these things to happen, we must have a system that is **transparent** about credentials' meaning, in which there is common understanding of value and a way to identify the knowledge and skills that credentials confer.

• ***Scalable.*** The sweeping nature of the U.S. credentialing system demands that solutions be **scalable** so system-wide change can be achieved. This might involve pilot-testing an innovation in one market but ensuring it can be replicated to serve many more users throughout the system. It may also require changes in institutional, state and federal policy to create incentives and supports for improved practice.

• ***Supportive of innovation.*** It's clear the old way of doing things in the credentials marketplace isn't working. We need to create the right conditions and incentives so that innovators, some driven by market forces and some by policy forces, can develop and execute **entrepreneurial ideas** for social change in a way that benefits students and employers.

"There wouldn't be 4 to 5 million unfilled jobs today if degrees worked. We have a complete mismatch. People are getting training for jobs that don't exist or aren't open, and skilled jobs are sitting unfilled."

John Engler, president of the Business Roundtable

FIVE VITAL STEPS

1. Develop a common language
2. Use technology
3. Assure quality
4. Engage employers
5. Build pathways

MAKING IT HAPPEN: FIVE FOCUS AREAS

Connecting Credentials was launched to begin a national dialogue aimed at creating a better credentials system. Throughout the early months of the initiative, stakeholders explored a number of critical issues related to the credentialing challenge. More than 200 individuals from credentialing, education, policy, research and industry organizations and institutions participated in 12 e-conversations and more than a dozen in-person meetings to share diverse perspectives. These pre-summit discussions focused on the following six themes:

- Building trust in the assessment and validation of competencies represented by different kinds of credentials.
- Improving portability of credentials within education, within labor markets and across both.
- Informing learners' decision-making about credentials.
- Assuring the labor market relevance of credentials.
- Creating pathways to quality credentials for low-income, low-skill learners.
- Informing employers' decision-making about credentials.

With these themes as a starting point, participants at the October 2015 summit discussed potential actions that could be taken based on their feasibility, potential impact and scalability. Working from a long list of potential actions, participants identified **five top focus areas** for advancing the credentials effort and creating a coherent, connected and clear system that works for all students. These focus areas provide a roadmap for action for the Connecting Credentials initiative. A description of each focus area follows.

1. Develop a common language. We must have a common way of explaining credentials in terms of the competencies – the knowledge and skills – that each represents. This language would effectively break down the silos that currently make it difficult, if not impossible, to understand how credentials compare and connect. And it would advance the goal of having a system that's centered on learning as the key outcome. The positive outcomes of creating a common, competency-based language are many:

- Learners could see clearly the knowledge and skills that a particular credential would give them, which would enable them to make better decisions.
- Employers could readily ascertain what knowledge and skills prospective hires bring to the job market.
- Educators would have a basis for developing new and better credentials for today's job market.
- Governmental agencies could more easily navigate the system in awarding financial aid.

We need a common language about competencies to help education providers, employers, learners, accreditors and assessors/test providers gain a common understanding of the problems we seek to address, collect evidence of emerging solutions and create a dynamic, transparent credentialing marketplace.

The goal of this effort is not to standardize credentials, but to create a "universal translator" to help make sense of the many different credentials and connect them by competencies. Several tools are being developed to serve as this type of translator. These tools need to be vetted to see if a critical mass of stakeholders will support their use. If so, they could serve as important building blocks for a common credentialing language.

2. Use technology and real-time data. With a common language established, we must use technology and real-time data to empower credential users – including learners, employers and advisers – to make informed decisions about credential options, pathways to them and their value in the labor market. Today, users are making decisions with limited and often outdated information, resulting in a high cost to all involved.

The power of technology is twofold. First, it involves the behind-the-scenes technical effort of translating common language into a universal digital form (using meta data). One example of this is the Open Badge Standard, which could be adapted and expanded to include all credentials, not just badges.

With this digital hub for credentials language in place, it would be possible to move on to the second step of creating technological interfaces, such as websites or mobile applications that learners and employers could use to obtain information about credentials. One example of how this might work is Yelp, which helps restaurant-goers navigate the cost, quality and proximity of various eating establishments. Imagine a similar system for credentials that would allow users to see their options broken down in an accessible way, using the common language to compare and connect credentials. Applying this to the scenario about medical assisting that Mary Alice McCarthy outlined in her report, a learner would have at her fingertips all of the key information about various program options and could readily compare them using a computer or smartphone. Employers would also benefit from this information when seeking to understand the qualifications of prospective employees.

Some of the work ahead on this front involves thinking through what data are needed to support informed decisions about credentials and determining how to overcome the limitations of current data-collection efforts. Data gaps clearly exist; for instance, information about graduates' employment and earnings is spotty at best.

3. Create nimble quality-assurance processes. It's not enough to simply increase the number of people who hold credentials. We must ensure that the credentials they earn are of high quality so that: 1) workers enter the workforce prepared to thrive and 2) all stakeholders trust the validity of the credentials being used.

Under the current system, quality assurance varies widely based on the type of credential. These processes are cumbersome, making it hard for providers to respond to changing needs of learners and employers. These processes also fail to assure credential quality. For instance, most of the

FOCUSED FACILITATION

The following individuals played a critical role at the October 2015 summit by facilitating focused discussions.

JOHN COLBORN, director of Skills for America's Future, Aspen Institute

WENDI COPELAND, senior vice president for strategy and advancement, Goodwill Industries International

KIMBERLY GREEN, executive director, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium

MONICA HERK, vice president for education research, Committee for Economic Development

STEPHANIE KRAUSS, senior fellow, Forum for Youth Investment

DANE LINN, vice president, Business Roundtable

MARY ALICE McCARTHY, senior policy analyst, New America

B. DENISE ROOSENDAAL, executive director, Institute for Credentialing Excellence

MARTIN SCAGLIONE, president and CEO, Hope Street Group

LOUIS SOARES, vice president of the Center for Policy Research and Strategy, American Council on Education

ANDY VAN KLEUNEN executive director, National Skills Coalition

approximately 26,000 U.S. postsecondary providers that offer certificates are accredited, but the accreditation process is designed to indicate institutions' operational capacity more than their instructional quality or the labor market relevance of the credential awarded. Of the 4,000 industry and professional organizations awarding certifications, fewer than 10 percent are reviewed or accredited by a third party to assure the relevance of the competencies being assessed or the quality of the assessment process.

We must develop a system that features quality-assurance processes at all stages of credential development and use – from conceptualization to delivery. Efforts to envision such a system are in the nascent stages, but they center on the critical question of **how to assess learners' progress.** Key issues to resolve in this area include:

- What weight should be given to assessments of students' learning that are made by individuals or entities other than their instructors?
- Who verifies the authenticity of competencies and the validity of assessment?
- How do we understand local, regional and industry differences that influence determinations of quality?
- How do we capture the knowledge and skills gained through informal learning?

To move this work forward, we should consider developing innovative pilot efforts that could focus on learning outcomes and demonstrate what's possible. It's also worth exploring whether marketplace feedback and rating-system models have a role to play in assuring the quality of credentials. For instance, we could think about testing a social media model that would gather feedback on what works from both employers and students.

4. Develop scalable ways of engaging employers. To ensure that credentials are relevant in the workforce, we must engage employers in the creation and use of those credentials. It is essential that employers be able to offer timely and relevant feedback on the types of skills and qualifications they're seeking and the types of credentials they can use in their human resource practices so that providers of credentials can adapt accordingly. Though critical to creating a dynamic credentials system, this is a difficult issue to tackle. Many groups and organizations are pioneering good work on employer engagement, but these efforts are small-scale, mostly one-on-one efforts with individual companies. To achieve a systemic shift, we must find ways to develop broader collaborative models between and among employers, education providers and economic-development entities. These collaborations can occur in several ways: within industries, across industries, within regions, and nationally.

Central to this effort will be managing relationships and networks. Equally important: encouraging employers to be visible and engaged at multiple stages along the talent-development pipeline. Credentials and competencies must be used as part of an overall talent strategy that includes, but is not limited to, hiring. We also need to examine how companies could rethink tuition-aid policies, which too often are limited

"Serving underserved populations requires more supports, creative use of technology and ensuring all learning counts for credit. Sometimes we have to fight our own systems to ensure the pathway continues beyond our own institutions."

Chris Bustamante, president of Rio Salado College

to degree-based programs. Finally, in addition to in-person collaborations, technology can be unleashed to inform users and providers of credentials – in real time – about the evolving need for specific skills and positions.

5. Build credentialing pathways to increase equity. Postsecondary credential attainment and resulting economic success is substantially lower among students of color. And even among those who attain postsecondary credentials, students of color obtain a disproportionately large share of "dead end" certificates that carry little labor market value or opportunity for progression in education.

With a connected credentials system, it's possible to link quality credentials to meaningful career pathways. Across the country, pathway models that weave together college and non-college credentials, credit for prior learning, apprenticeships and other work-based experiences, are being developed.

These pathways show learners the options, opportunities and consequences of pursuing various career avenues. We need to ensure credential information is embedded into these pathways so students can make informed choices about which credentials to pursue. And we need to ensure these pathways are supplemented by other critical support, such as guidance counseling, public awareness campaigns, and efforts to remove stigma from postsecondary options other than four-year degrees, such as career and technical education. These efforts are important for all students, but they're especially key to the effort to increase attainment among first-generation and minority students. These efforts can lead to greater societal equity and better outcomes for those who haven't been well-served by our higher education system.

WHAT'S NEXT

The five focus areas provide a framework for collective, concrete action that will take shape in 2016. The Connecting Credentials initiative is in the process of establishing work groups that, beginning in January 2016, will delve further into each of these five areas. In spring of 2016, we will share the actions that the work groups recommend for realizing these visions for change. This action agenda will be just a starting point; we expect it to continually evolve, based on deeper engagement of people in the field and lessons being learned from ongoing work.

Many efforts are underway to advance credentialing change – by employers and industry, educational providers, state and federal government, and philanthropic entities. Connecting Credentials' preliminary review of the credentialing landscape showed there are more than 100 projects to better connect credentials, ensure their quality and/or keep them up to date.

FEEDBACK FROM THE SUMMIT

Nearly half of those who participated in the October 2015 summit shared feedback on the one-day event. Here are some of the key issues that arose for survey respondents:

- Need to eradicate the stigma sometimes associated with non-degree credentials.
- Need for improved data systems to measure non-degree credentials and the learning outcomes associated with them.
- Need to build trust in the process for assessing and validating competencies.
- Need for greater transparency so credentials can stack and connect across education and industry.
- Need to foster employer buy-in and build consensus.
- Need to overcome the traditional model of awarding credentials solely for seat time.
- Need for a clearinghouse of quality, meaningful credentials that can be used across systems and sectors.
- Need to address consumer-protection issues, especially among low-income and traditionally underserved students.

Information about change efforts is available on the Connecting Credentials website *(www.connectingcredentials.org)*.

In the near future, the website will launch a searchable database about credentialing efforts that will be continually refreshed and expanded to reflect the growing credentialing reform movement.

We're equally encouraged by the robust engagement in the work that we've seen from early stakeholders, as evidenced by the number of organizations that have joined as co-sponsors (more than 90 and counting) and the robust attendance at meetings and events, both online and in person. We are expanding the national dialogue to an ever-broader group of stakeholders with additional e-conversations, convenings, enhancements to the Connecting Credentials website and a new e-newsletter that will launch early in 2016.

At the same time we continue to strengthen the infrastructure needed to support a more connected credentialing system by field-testing and refining the Connecting Credentials Framework, prototyping a credentials registry, developing new-look student transcripts that reflect the competencies gained through co-curricular learning, and developing metrics to measure progress in improving the credentialing marketplace.

"The fundamental problem is that all of our systems and structures don't connect and don't talk to each other. This is the biggest hurdle we have to get over."

Jamie Merisotis, president and CEO of Lumina Foundation

Underlying all of this work is the clear understanding that **no one group can reshape the nation's credentials system.** Many groups, working together, will need to be involved. Connecting Credentials plays the role of orchestra conductor: relaying key information and finding and coordinating talented players to create the music. The Connecting Credentials initiative needs thousands of musicians: allies and on-the-ground partners across geographies, sectors and issue areas, working together to create a high-quality system.

We need you to get involved and invite other stakeholders and partners to plug into Connecting Credentials. Here are some ways to do that:

- ***Join the dialogue.*** Connecting Credentials' central hub for the dialogue, *www.connectingcredentials.org*, is an online repository of key information and resources. Visit the website to join the dialogue. There you also can register for our e-newsletter and find links to follow us on social media to stay connected to the ongoing conversation about credentials.

- ***Become a co-sponsor.*** If you are interested in having your organization become a co-sponsor of the national dialogue on credentialing, contact Larry Good at CSW *(lagood@skilledwork.org)*. Co-sponsors play a leadership role in advancing the dialogue. No commitment to any specific action is required.

- ***Participate in interactive webinars.*** These webinars will feature examples of credentialing innovations already underway and discussions about lessons being learned and their implications for credentialing system reform. We need engaged and thoughtful leaders to bring bold thinking and new ideas to the dialogue. You can do this by registering for an interactive webinar and contributing to the conversation that will help shape the emerging action plans.

• ***Contribute to the Landscape Review.*** The *Landscape Review of Innovations in the U.S. Credentialing Marketplace* was released at the summit, highlighting more than 100 credentialing projects that are already underway. Learn about these diverse and creative efforts on the website, and contribute additional ones to this working document.

• ***Connect with peers.*** Part of the value of Connecting Credentials is bringing peers together so they can collaborate and more effectively develop solutions. By tapping into the website, the e-conversations and other meetings – virtually or in person – you can connect with others working in the field and leverage the resources of a large network of individuals and organizations working toward a common goal.

• ***Reach out to your colleagues and/or membership.*** Communicating with others about the Connecting Credentials initiative, this report, social media, the *Landscape Review*, and other documents extends the reach and effectiveness of this collaborative venture.

• ***Collaborate with us.*** We welcome opportunities to co-sponsor or participate in credentialing events or studies as they relate to credential system reform. If you are interested, contact Larry Good *(lagood@skilledwork.org)*.

• ***Take action.*** Whether it's launching a new effort to address the credentialing challenge, building or strengthening an existing effort, or sharing valuable information and data to help bolster others' work, there's a role you can play to better connect credentials. By becoming an engaged stakeholder, you can learn more about what's being done and how your work plugs into the effort.

"Degrees matter less. Skills and competencies matter more."

Eric Seleznow, deputy assistant secretary of the Employment and Training Administration for the U.S. Department of Labor

NOW IS THE TIME

There's never been a better time to drive change toward creating a connected system of postsecondary credentials in the U.S. The pieces are in place, with awareness among key stakeholders, core groups working on various issues and momentum for driving systemic change. **Now we need you.** There is much work to do in broadening the coalition and building momentum, critical steps to propelling dramatic change. But we know it's possible and believe great things can be done with a critical mass of stakeholders invested. Together, we can create a system that works for learners and employers, and builds a brighter future for everyone.

ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED AT THE SUMMIT

Some 200 individuals representing nearly 170 organizations participated in the summit on credentialing held in Washington, D.C., on October 5, 2015. Those organizations are listed here, grouped by category.

Accrediting, Certifying and Standards Organizations (20)

- Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges Western Association of Schools and Colleges
- American National Standards Institute
- Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors
- Council for Higher Education Accreditation
- Council on Licensure Enforcement and Regulation
- HR Certification Institute
- Institute for Credentialing Excellence
- (ISC)^2
- Middle States Association of Colleges/Schools
- National Coalition of Certification Centers (NC3)
- National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators
- National Heathcareer Association
- National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE)
- National Institute for Metalworking Skills
- New England Association of Schools & Colleges
- Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council
- Project Management Institute
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges
- WASC Senior College and University Commission
- World Education Services: International Credential Evaluation

Business and Industry (24)

- Aerospace Industries Association
- American Health Information Management Association
- American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute
- American Welding Society
- Best Western International
- Business-Higher Education Forum
- Business Leaders United
- Business Roundtable
- Center for Energy Workforce Development
- Committee for Economic Development of the Conference Board
- Crossfit, Inc.
- Food Marketing Institute
- Goodwill Industries International
- International Association of Business Communicators
- Interstate Renewable Energy Council
- Manufacturing Institute
- National Association of State Workforce Agencies
- National Network of Business and Industry Associations
- National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation
- National Retail Federation
- National Retail Federation Foundation
- UNITE-LA/Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation
- Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

Colleges, Universities and other Education Providers (13)

- Antioch University
- California Community Colleges
- El Paso Community College
- Empire State College
- Kentucky Community & Technical College System
- Indiana University at Bloomington
- Ivy Tech Community College
- Macomb Community College
- Rio Salado Community College
- Rutgers University, The State University of New Jersey
- StraighterLine
- University of California, San Diego
- University of Wisconsin-Extension

Education Organizations and Associations (20)

- 50,000 Degrees
- American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
- American Association of Community Colleges
- American Association of State Colleges and Universities
- American Council on Education
- Association of American Colleges & Universities
- Association of Colleges & Research Libraries
- Association of Community College Trustees
- Association of Private Sector Colleges & Universities
- Association for Career & Technical Education
- Council of Chief State School Officers
- EDUCAUSE
- Midwestern Higher Education Compact
- NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
- National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium
- New England Board of Higher Education
- Southern Regional Education Board
- State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
- The Graduate! Network
- Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Foundations and Philanthropic Organizations (14)

- AARP Foundation
- ACT Foundation
- AT&T Aspire
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- DC Trust
- Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation
- Joyce Foundation
- JP Morgan Chase & Co
- Kresge Foundation
- Lumina Foundation
- National Fund for Workforce Solutions
- The Philanthropy Roundtable
- Siemens Foundation
- USA Funds

Labor Organizations (3)

- AFL-CIO
- North America's Building Trade Unions
- American Federation of Teachers

Policy, Research and Change Management Organizations (46)

- Achieve
- Achieving the Dream
- American Institutes for Research
- Aspen Institute's Skills for America's Future
- Black Point LLC
- Business/Education Partnerships
- Cengage Learning
- Center for American Progress
- Center for Law and Social Policy
- Center for Workforce Development
- Community College Research Center
- Complete College America
- Corporation for a Skilled Workforce
- Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
- Digital Promise
- E^3 Engage Educate Employ
- Education Strategy Group
- Educational Policy Improvement Center
- EP Consulting
- Forum for Youth Investment
- Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce
- George Washington Institute of Public Policy
- HCM Strategists, LLC
- Hope Street Group
- Innovate + Educate
- Institute for Evidence-Based Change
- Institute for Higher Education Policy
- Jobs for the Future
- Key Links Inc.
- Management and Training Corp
- MetaSkills Consulting Group, Inc.
- MDC
- National Academy Foundation
- National Center for Higher Education Management Systems
- National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
- National Skills Coalition
- New America
- Office of Community College Research and Leadership
- Opportunity@Work
- RTI International
- SOLID, LLC
- Span Learning
- T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center
- University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center on Wisconsin Strategy
- Workcred - an affiliate of the American National Standards Institute
- Workforce Data Quality Campaign

Government and Quasi-Governmental Entities (10)

- Colorado Department of Higher Education
- Federal Reserve Bank Atlanta
- Indiana Commission for Higher Education
- Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
- Ohio Department of Higher Education
- National Academy of Sciences
- National Center for Education Statistics
- Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
- Office of Employment & Training, U.S. Department of Labor
- Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education

Student Organizations (2)

- Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society
- Young Invincibles

Technical and Data Services and Communications Providers (12)

- AcademyOne, Inc.
- ACT, Inc.
- Badge Labs
- Burning Glass
- Collective Shift
- Credly
- Education Design Labs
- Education Testing Service
- IMS Digital Credentialing
- National Student Clearinghouse
- Parchment
- Pearson

Veterans Organizations (1)

- American Legion

The Connecting Credentials team

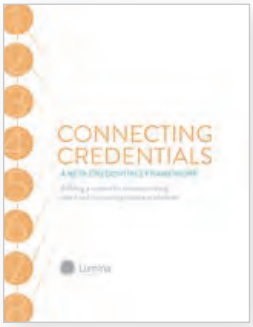
The following individuals have been instrumental in developing the Connecting Credentials partnership. From the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW): Keith Bird, Michele Forte, Larry Good, Katie Hall, Susan Lupo, Mimi Maduro, Audrey Theis, Nan Travers and David Wilcox. From the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP): Evelyn Ganzglass. And from Lumina Foundation: Amber Garrison Duncan, Christine Marson, Dewayne Matthews, Dave Powell and Holly Zanville.

More on the website

Much more about the Connecting Credentials effort is available online, including copies of the three publications described below. Visit *www.connectingcredentials.org*, download these documents, review other helpful resources, and join the national dialogue.

The "making the case" document describes the problems with the nation's current system of education credentials and lays out basic criteria for a reimagined system.

The Landscape Review is a working document that describes and categorizes more than 100 projects underway nationally to improve aspects of the credentials system.



The Beta Credentials Framework uses competencies – what a learner knows and is able to do – as common reference points to help users understand and compare the levels and types of knowledge and skills that underlie all types of credentials.

Lumina FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 1806
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1806
www.luminafoundation.org

© 2016 Lumina Foundation
All rights reserved.

Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation committed to increasing the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees, certificates and other credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Lumina's outcomes-based approach focuses on helping to design and build an accessible, responsive and accountable higher education system while fostering a national sense of urgency for action to achieve Goal 2025.

As a private foundation, Lumina Foundation does not support or oppose any legislation.
Lumina provides educational information, nonpartisan research and analysis to advance Goal 2025.