Digital Badges at Scale: Statewide Micro-Credentials to Achieve Strategic Outcomes

MJ Bishop
mjbishop@usmd.edu
www.usmd.edu/cai/BEST

Cynthia Proctor
cynthia.proctor@suny.edu
www.suny.edu/microcredentials
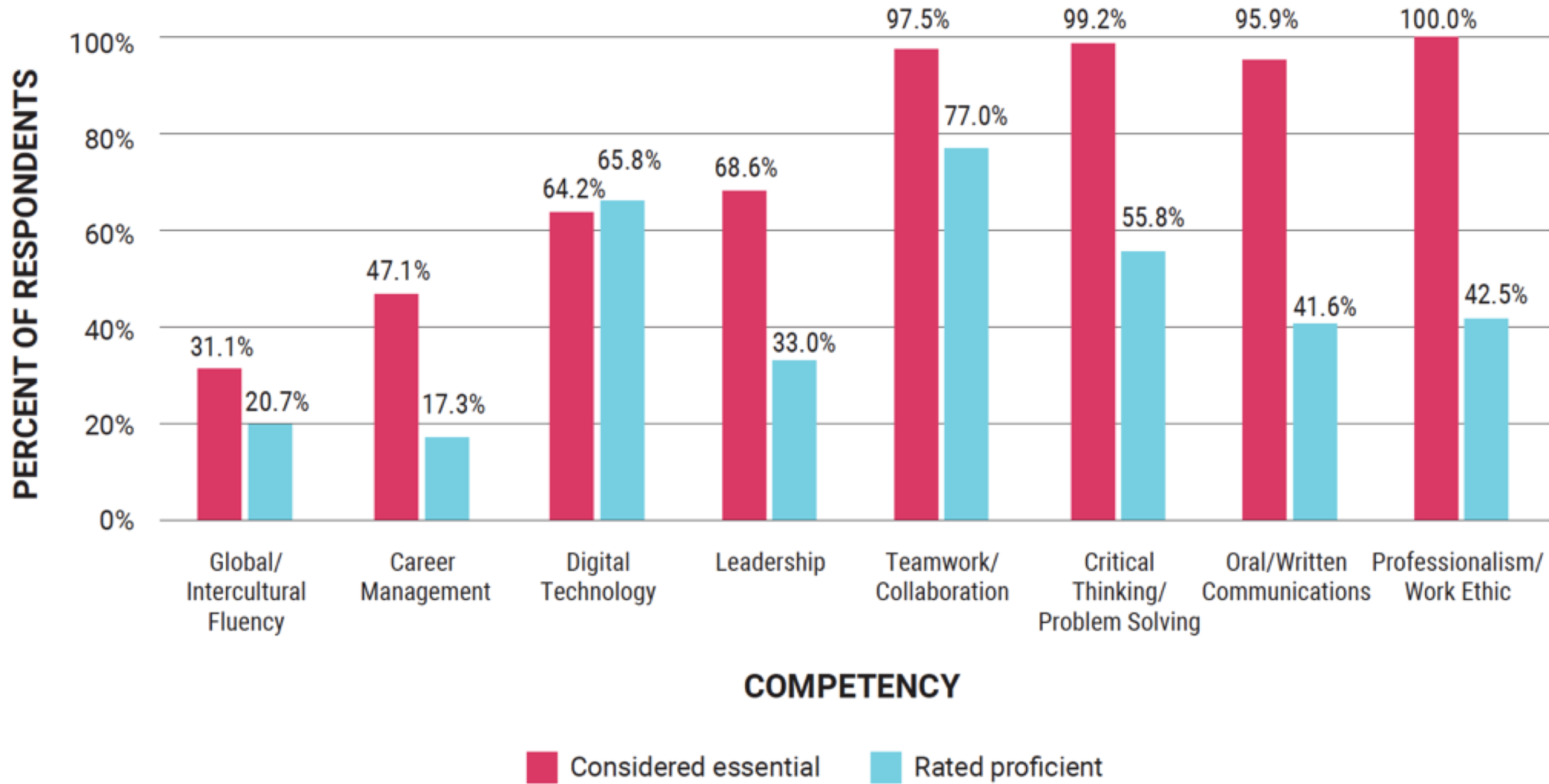
In a 2013 Gallup-Lumina Foundation poll of 623 business leaders, only 11% *strongly agreed* that higher education institutions were graduating students with the skills and competencies their businesses needed…

…17% *strongly disagreed* with this statement.

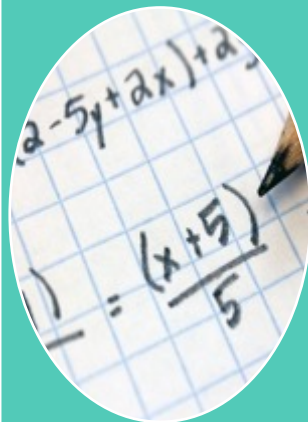**Need vs. Proficiency on Career Readiness Competencies, by Percent of Respondents**

Competency	Considered essential	Rated proficient
Global/Intercultural Fluency	31.1%	20.7%
Career Management	47.1%	17.3%
Digital Technology	64.2%	65.8%
Leadership	68.6%	33.0%
Teamwork/Collaboration	97.5%	77.0%
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving	99.2%	55.8%
Oral/Written Communications	95.9%	41.6%
Professionalism/Work Ethic	100.0%	42.5%

National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2017

Chemistry

Literature

Mathematics

Political Science

Psychology

Education

Economics

Career-ready Skills

Hypothesis

Students at our institutions are learning and developing essential "career-ready" skills all the time, both inside and outside the classroom. We need to help them:

1) see where the opportunities are

2) navigate their way through those experiences, and

3) demonstrate and articulate their development of those skills, supported by evidence.

B.E.S.T

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM of MARYLAND
COLLABORATOR

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM of MARYLAND
COMMUNICATOR

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM of MARYLAND
CRITICAL THINKER

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM of MARYLAND
GLOBALIST

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM of MARYLAND
INTERCULTURALIST

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM of MARYLAND
LEADER

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM of MARYLAND
PROBLEM-SOLVER

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM of MARYLAND
PROFESSIONAL

![BADGING ESSENTIAL SKILLS for TRANSITIONS]

USM Institutional Badge Earning Pathways

Institutions "curate" badge earning pathways created out of curricular offerings and/or co-curricular activities. Institutions may also build in an option for students to propose their own badge earning pathways

Evidence-Based Dimensions and Criteria

Assessment criteria will be predetermined and include rubrics to assess evidence that a badge earner met the criterion

Career-Ready Digital Badges

COLLABORATOR

COMMUNICATOR

CRITICAL THINKER

GLOBALIST

INTERCULTURALIST

LEADER

PROBLEM-SOLVER

PROFESSIONAL

Competencies based on skills identified by employers as critical for career success *(aligned to NACE Career Ready Skills Framework)*

USM "Meta-Badge"

A badge that signifies the earner has demonstrated proficiency in all of the career-ready skills within the B.E.S.T. initiative.
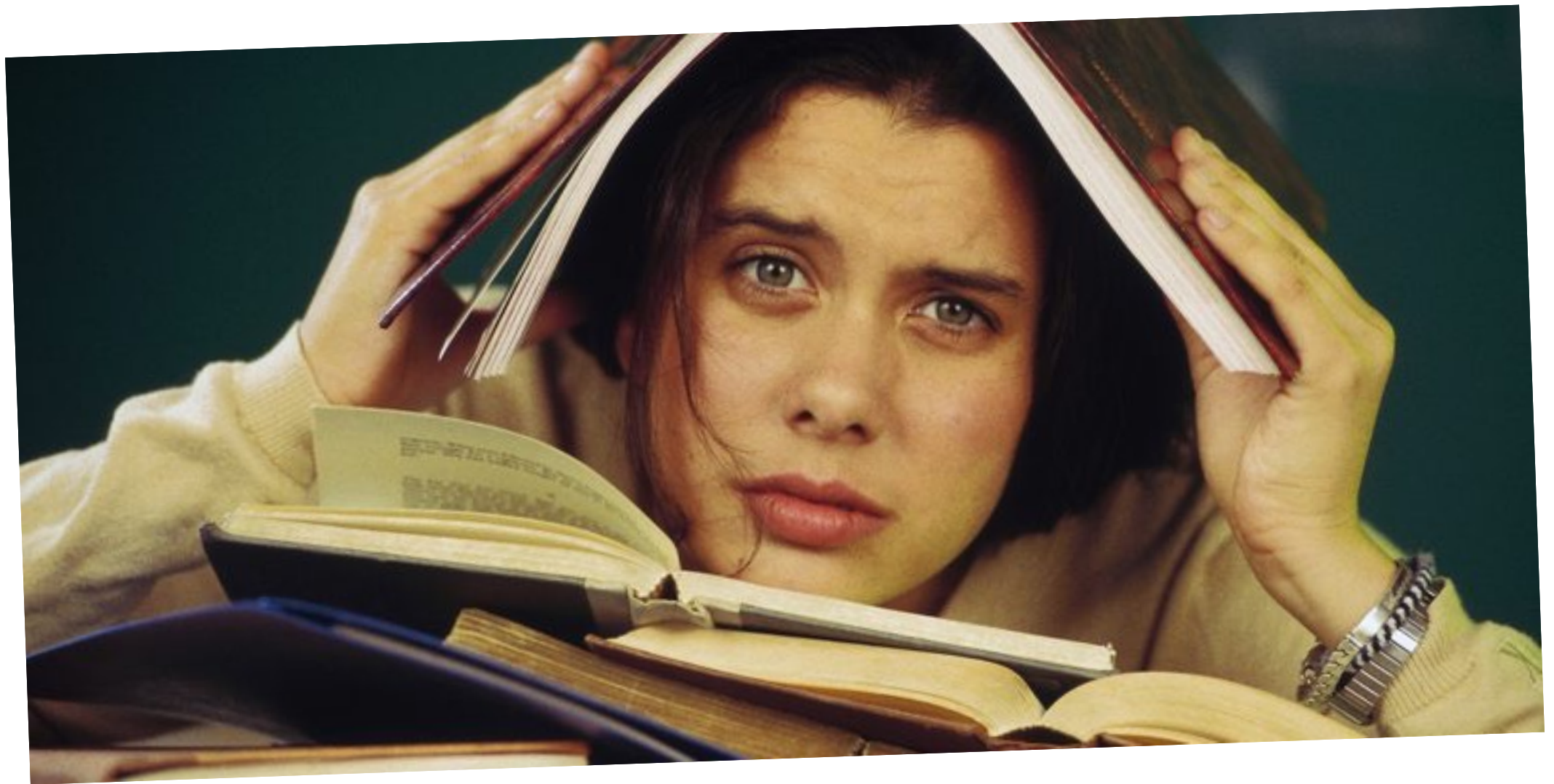
entangled.solutions

Key Questions

We investigated a number of key questions in our insight gathering and interview phase:

What are key company hiring trends and practices?

What are the pain points employers experience as they hire talent?

What do employers find valuable in a badging initiative?

What do employers need and value in a badging initiative that would inspire adoption?

Pain Points? Shared Language in the Hiring Process

	Cary — Recent Graduate	Chrissy — HR Professional	Aaron — Hiring Manager
NEEDS	Synthesize and package disparate curricular and cocurricular experiences and learning for employers.	Quickly extract polished information that reveal a candidate's hard and soft skills, as well as their deeper career passions and interests.	Quickly, yet thoughtfully, select a candidate for their team from a vetted list from HR.
GOALS	Obtain a job after graduation that supports his financial, professional and personal goals and interest.	Meet the growing and constantly shifting hiring demands of her company.	Build his team's expertise and efficiency with talent that provides immediate value & works well with others.
CHALLENGES	• Articulate his "story" and his skills in ways that resonate with employer needs	• Quickly identify evidence of a candidate's hard and soft skills • Match a candidate's skills with Hiring Manager needs	• Compare similar candidates vetted by HR • Assess candidate materials and match them with team needs

entangled.solutions

14

Pain Points? Gaps in Industry Acumen among Recent Graduates

Job Responsibilities

Employers believe recent graduates lack a deep understanding of what a role actually entails and requires.

Enthusiasm & Confidence

Employers perceive a lack of excitement and confidence from recent graduates at critical points in the hiring process.
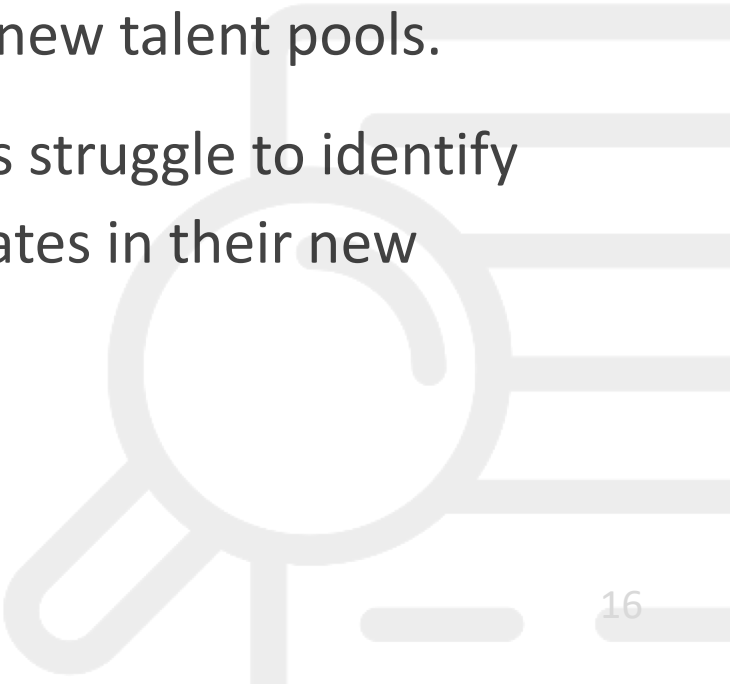
Communication Misalignment

A disconnect in communication styles and preferences is perceived by employers as a lack of reliability and professionalism.

Packaging Accomplishments

Employers value when candidates showcase their accomplishments. Recent graduates lack tools to synthesize and package these accomplishments.

entangled.solutions

Pain points? Accessing Unique Talent Pools

- Most HR departments struggle to identify and attract enough qualified candidates for growing capacity needs.

- Increased competition for talent has resulted in a greater need for employers to generate brand awareness directly on college campuses, and search for new talent pools.

- Simultaneously, employers struggle to identify the skill profiles of candidates in their new and existing talent pools.

entangled.solutions

16

Key hiring trends?
Employers are looking for unique talent pools

Tools

- **Social Media** platforms, such as LinkedIn and Facebook, are increasingly being leveraged
- **Keyword search tools** are inconsistently used, primarily for technical skill searches
- Employers are **directly contacting professors** to identify top students
- Recruiters search for **selective on-campus events** that showcase unique student groups

Signals

- "The **resume** is the only artifact that students will use for the entirety of their career" (Lyft Recruiter). Resumes remain to be the main signal of ability and accomplishment to employers
- **Portfolios** are gaining traction, especially for technical skill assessment
- **Soft skills** are important but generally assessed *after* candidates have passed initial hiring screens (i.e during interviews). This is especially true at large companies

entangled.solutions

What do Employers Value About Digital Badges?

University Validated

Digital badges represent a unique data point for employers to investigate as they are University-validated and assessed for accuracy, unlike other application materials such as LinkedIn pages and resumes.

Digitally Accessible

The digital format of badges allows employers to quickly scan it alongside other application requirements. It's "embed-ability" and expandability fits the rapid workflows of hiring professionals.

Interactive

Employers can click on various aspects of the Portfolium page to quickly and easily digest key candidate skills and accomplishments. More information is expandable, if needed, but not overwhelming to employers.

What do Employers Value About Digital Badges?

Signaling Tool & Proxy

Badges identify students that have gone above and beyond to pursue interests and achieve goals. In this way, badges proxy for persistence and grit during the hiring process, especially for students that may be "on the fence" in hiring processes.

Storytelling & Interview Tool

Digital badges mediate behavioral interviews by serving as inspiration for hiring managers to generate questions. Students use badges to support the synthesis and articulation of past experiences.

"Selling" Capability

Because digital badges create a more holistic view of applicants, they can be used by HR professionals to "sell" a candidate to hiring managers that need evidence and examples of their skills and abilities.

Employer Misconceptions

- The majority of interviewees had no working knowledge of digital badges
- Of those that had some knowledge, they believe it is easy to earn a badge (i.e "badges for participation")
- One employer believed that badges were restricted to showcasing University-related experiences or skills

entangl**e**d.solutions

What do Employers Need in a Badge?

These features are important to employers in any tool, initiative or program they integrate into their hiring process to evaluate candidates:

Specific

Employers need to understand the specific steps a student took to earn a badge, and on what metrics they were evaluated. Additionally, the definition of the soft skill needs to be clearly defined in the artifact.

Rigorous

Significant time must be required by students to earn the badge, and evaluation metrics must be rigorous. For employers, rigorous evaluation metrics mean assessments or robust project work.

Selective

Badges must differentiate and identify a selective group of students. Levels or tiers of competency are valuable to employers: beginner, intermediate, expert.

Impact Focused

Employers care about impact and quantifiable outcomes. Badges must communicate the specific impact a student has created in the language of employers (i.e outcomes focused, accomplishments).

Accessible

Given the volume of applications, badges must be quickly found under "Education" sections of resumes & LinkedIn. Evidence needs to be easily viewed and quickly consumed.

Immediate Value

Recruiters spend an average of 6-12 seconds on an applicant. Badges must provide immediate value in the form of relevant information about a student's abilities and accomplishments to sustain employer engagement.
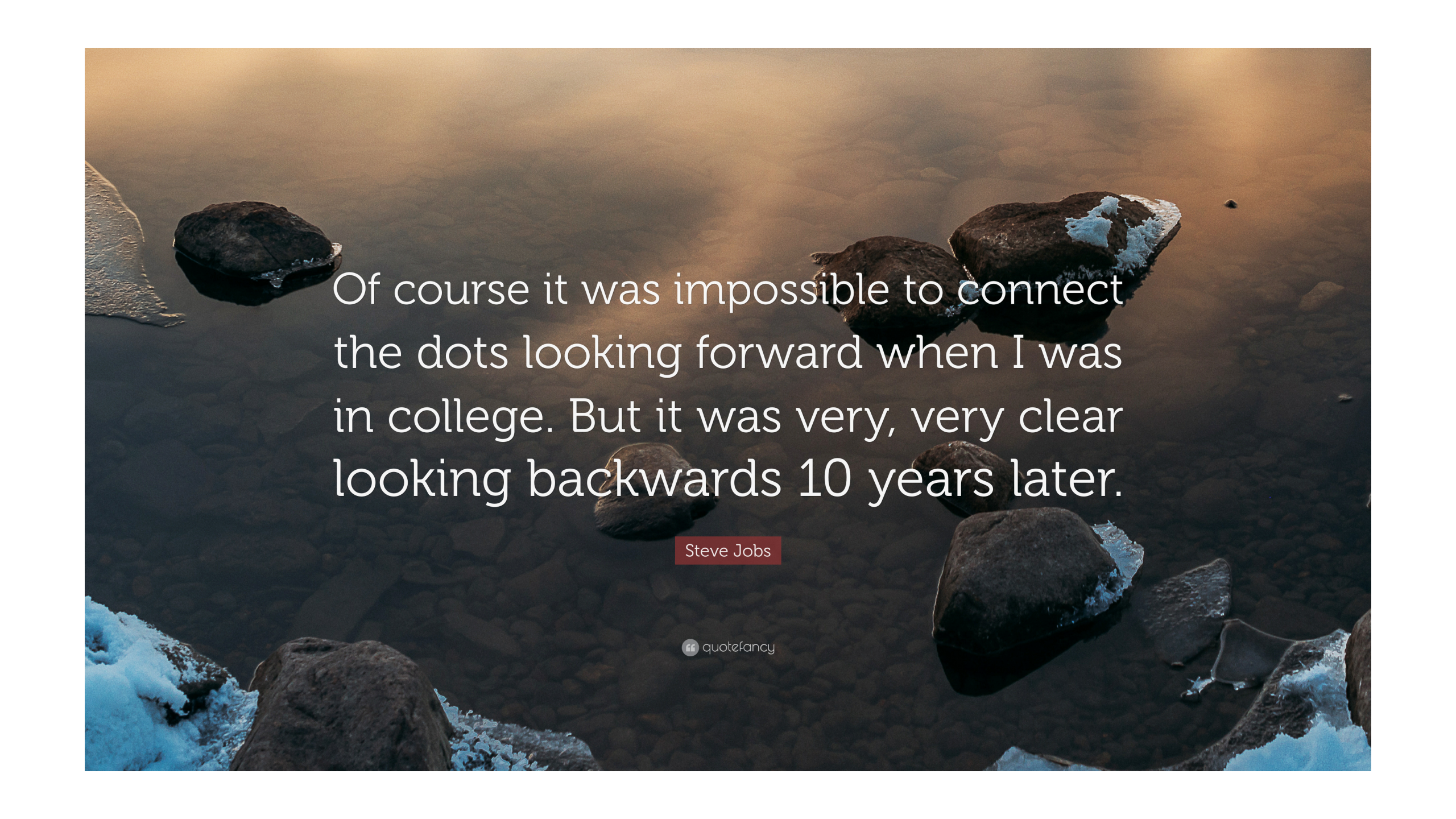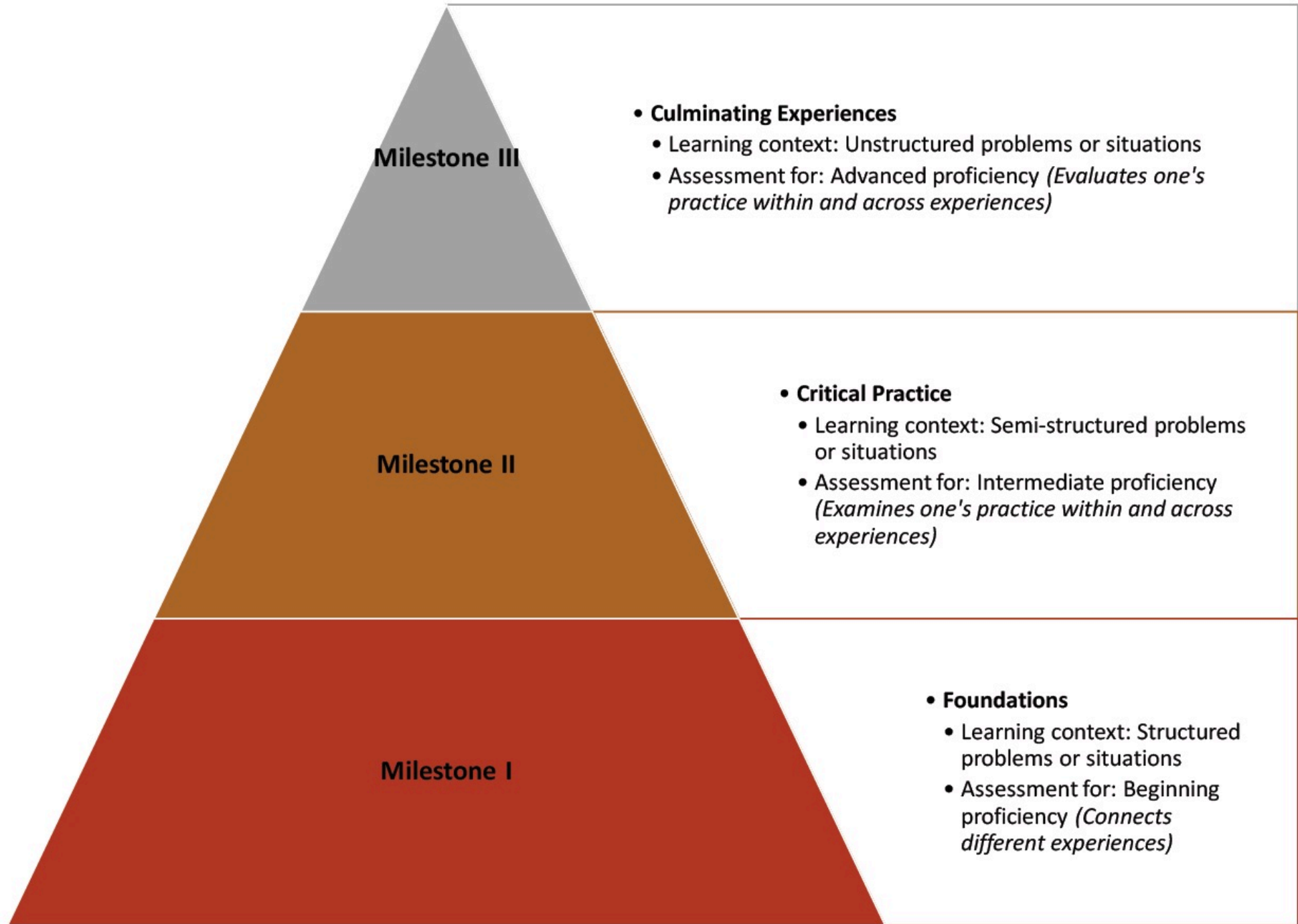
entangled.solutions

Phase 2 Goals:

1. Present the "landscape" of badge earning opportunities.

2. Design the parameters for achievement of three "milestones" in the badge-earning process.

3. Develop three milestone assessments that ask students to
   - reflect on their growth,
   - articulate the skills they have developed and areas for improvement,
   - and support their claims with evidence.

Milestone III

- **Culminating Experiences**
  - Learning context: Unstructured problems or situations
  - Assessment for: Advanced proficiency *(Evaluates one's practice within and across experiences)*

Milestone II

- **Critical Practice**
  - Learning context: Semi-structured problems or situations
  - Assessment for: Intermediate proficiency *(Examines one's practice within and across experiences)*

Milestone I

- **Foundations**
  - Learning context: Structured problems or situations
  - Assessment for: Beginning proficiency *(Connects different experiences)*

Design Principles

The opportunities we will "highlight":	The support learners will be provided:	The way learners will be assessed:
• Authentic contexts aligned to dimensions of badge. • Active learning experiences that create opportunities for foundational skill-building, critical practice, and culminating experiences. • A variety of opportunities from simple/well-defined to complex/ill-defined. • Result in sets of artifacts (at least one per activity) that are submitted as evidence.	• Insights into how to trace a path through acquisition of the dimensions required for badge. • Scaffolding that encourages students to take a path that builds their efficacy to tackle increasingly complex, unscripted problems or situations. • Opportunities to see others' journey (modeling). • Coaching (through the platform, from advisors, etc.).	• Assessment will require reflection and articulation with evidence (in the form of artifacts from experiences). • Artifacts from experiences can be assessed either individually (as part of the culmination of a particular experience) or holistically (as part of the milestone).

Of course it was impossible to connect the dots looking forward when I was in college. But it was very, very clear looking backwards 10 years later.

Steve Jobs

SUNY Micro-Credential Policy

Supporting Access, Completion & Success
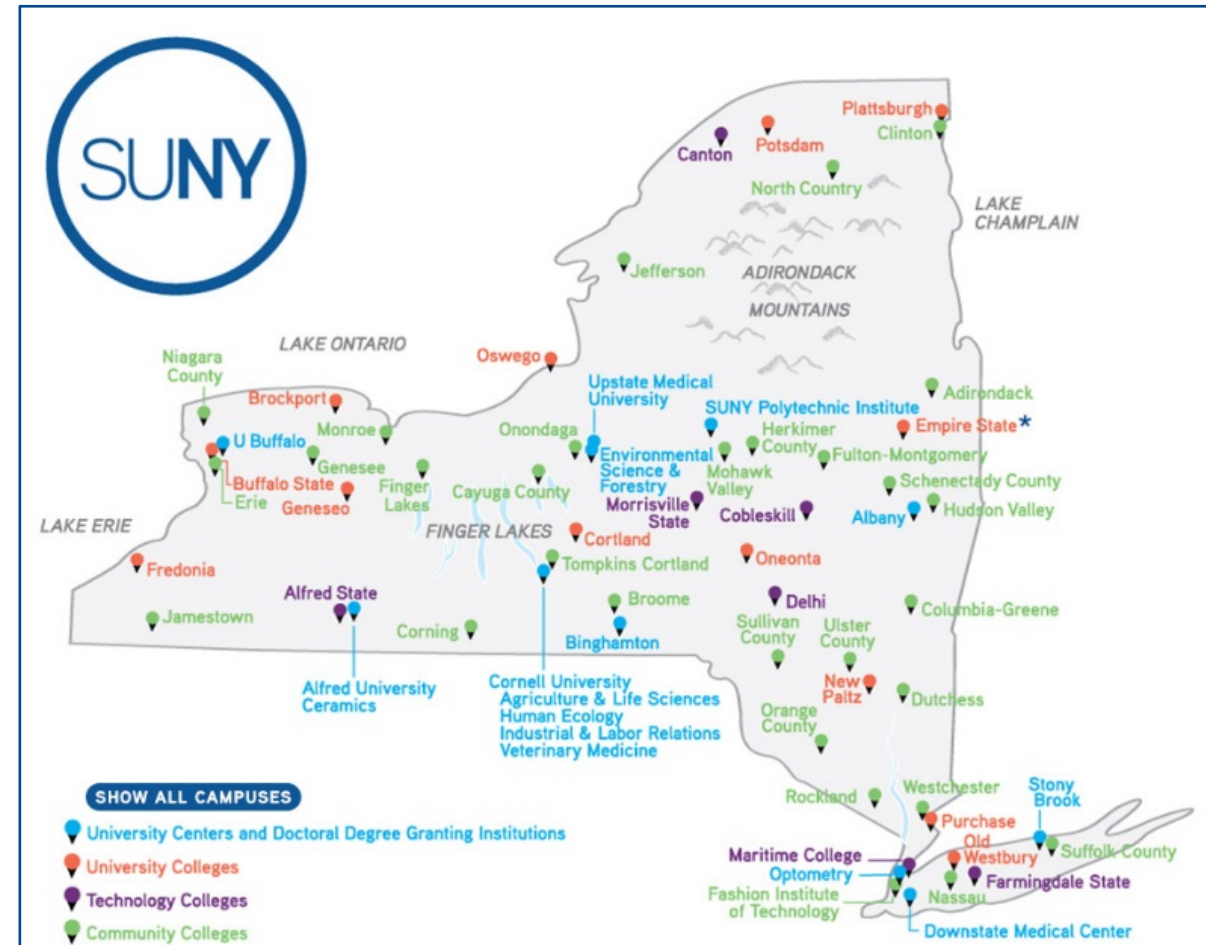
Questions: cynthia.proctor@suny.edu

SUNY The State University of New York

About the State University of New York (SUNY)

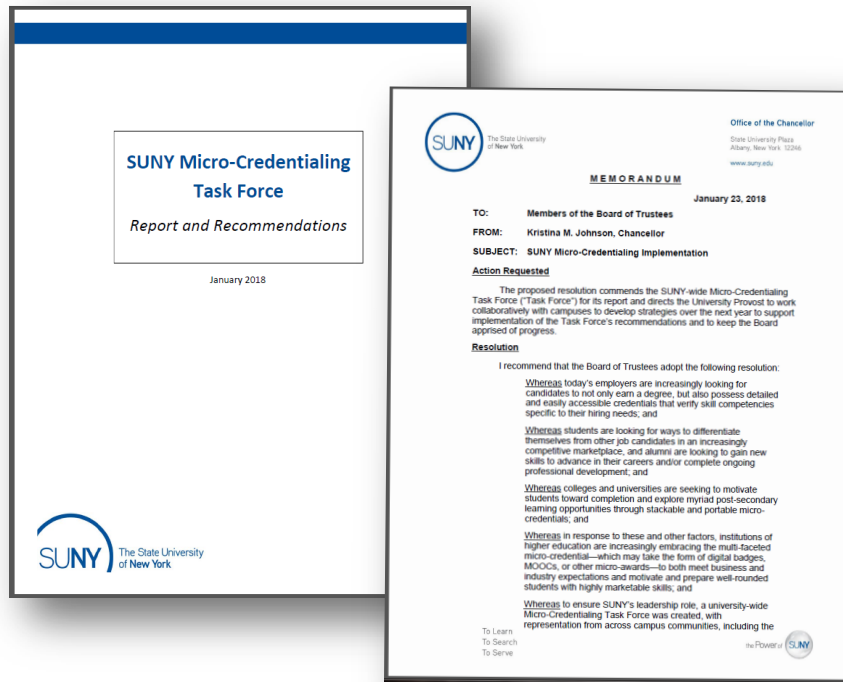**SUNY is the largest comprehensive system of higher education in the United States**

- 64 campuses

- 425,000 students (fall 2018)

- 1.4 million students (2017-18)

- 7,500 degree & certificate programs

- 3 million alumni

www.suny.edu/microcredentials

SUNY Micro-Credential Policy

✓ **Adopted by the SUNY Trustees Jan. 2018**

✓ **Endorsed the Work of a U-Wide Task Force**

www.suny.edu/microcredentials

SUNY Micro-Credential Policy

Key Components of Policy Framework

1. SUNY Guiding Principles

2. SUNY-Specific Definition & Taxonomy

3. Accommodating Multiple M-C Types

4. Local Approval, Local Governance Process

5. Collaborative Development

6. Transparency & Effective Communication

www.suny.edu/microcredentials

SUNY Micro-Credential Policy

1. Guiding Principles

Academic Quality is Paramount

Faculty Governance Participation Required

Consistent with Campus Mission

Informed by Market Data

Aligned with Field/Industry Standards

Flexible and Innovative

Portable and Stackable

Maximizing Partnership Opportunities

www.suny.edu/microcredentials

SUNY Micro-Credential Policy

SUNY Micro-Credentials:

1	**Verify Skills and Competencies Learned**
2	**Carry the Endorsement of the Issuing Campus**
3	**Were Developed through Faculty Governance**
4	**Are Meaningful and of High Quality**

www.suny.edu/microcredentials

SUNY Micro-Credential Policy

SUNY-Specific Definition – Part II

More Narrowly Focused

Shorter or More Flexible Timespans

Online, in the Classroom, or Hybrid

Non-Credit AND Credit

Stand-Alone Value AND Stackable

Designed to Provide a New Lens Into Student Work (Meta Data, Evidence)

Stackable from Non-Credit to Credit

Stackable to Broader Micro-Credential(s)

Stackable to a Degree, Certificate or Minor

www.suny.edu/microcredentials

SUNY Micro-Credential Policy

3. Accommodates Multiple M-C Types

Motivating Existing Students to Persist

Complementary Skill-Sets to Differentiate Students in the Marketplace

Serving a Changing Student Population / Serving the Adult Learner

Meeting the Demand for Life-Long Learning

Business/P-12/Community Partnerships

www.suny.edu/microcredentials

SUNY Micro-Credential Policy

4. Local Approval, Local Governance Process

5. Collaborative Development

6. Transparency & Effective Communication

www.suny.edu/microcredentials

SUNY Micro-Credential Policy

Micro-Credentialing Task Force 2015-2018

Key Components of Policy Framework

1. SUNY Guiding Principles

2. SUNY-Specific Definition & Taxonomy

3. Accommodating Multiple M-C Types

4. Local Approval, Local Governance Process

5. Collaborative Development

6. Transparency & Effective Communication

www.suny.edu/microcredentials

Where We Are Today

www.suny.edu/microcredentials

Offering or Planning to Offer?

Now

13 +

Planning

25

A Sampling of Micro-Credentials

Alfred State College
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
State University of New York

suny Ulster
Ulster County Community College

MVCC
MOHAWK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Stony Brook University

UB University at Buffalo
The State University of New York

Addressing Public Health Disparities

School of Dental Medicine

https://www.buffalo.edu/micro-credentials.html

Program Description

The Addressing Public Health Disparities micro-credential is comprised of a series of digital badges. The micro-credential includes one course combined with a local, national and international outreach experience. This micro-credential is open to licensed health care professionals, students (both undergraduate and graduate) and faculty teaching health profession programs, who are interested in gaining a perspective on public health and participating in collaborative practice outreach missions. Your experiences in this program will enable collaboration with non-profit organizations, educators, students and practitioners to function as part of a multi-disciplinary team to provide screenings, education and direct patient care to those that need it most.

The School of Dental Medicine is happy to offer this micro-credential in collaboration with the School of Nursing, the School of Public Health and Health Professions, and the Community for Global Health Equity.

For More Information and to Register

Program Contact

Joseph Gambacorta
325 Squire Hall
Buffalo, NY 14214
Email: jeg9@buffalo.edu
Phone: 716-829-5787

University at Buffalo
The State University of New York

LEVEL
- **Graduate**

WHO IS ELIGIBLE
- **Both UB and Non-UB students**

CREDIT OR NON-CREDIT
- **For Credit**

INSTRUCTION METHOD
- **In Person** *(no courses offered online)*

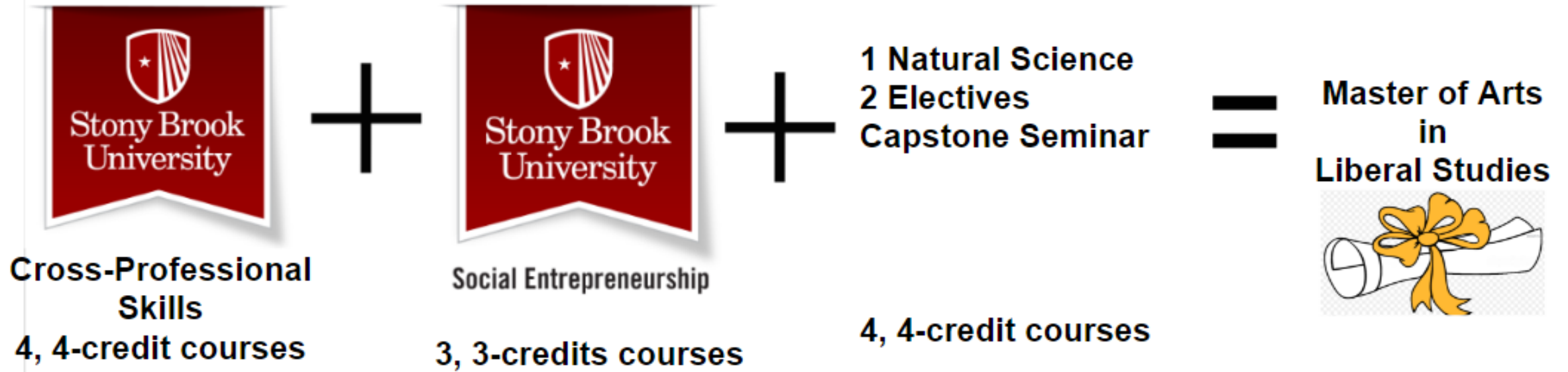TIME TO COMPLETION
- **Two Semesters**

SKILLS OBTAINED*
- **Critical Thinking/Problem Solving**
- **Global/Intercultural Fluency**
- **Leadership**
- **Professionalism**
- **Teamwork/Collaboration**

Stacking Micro-Credentials: Business Go-Getter

Cross-Professional Skills
4, 4-credit courses

+

Social Entrepreneurship
3, 3-credits courses

+

1 Natural Science
2 Electives
Capstone Seminar

4, 4-credit courses

=

Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

A Student Can Stop at Any Point or Continue on to the Larger Credential

Implementation Teams

1. Data Collection and Reporting Team

2. Transferability & Portability Team

3. Removing Policy Barriers / Financial Aid Team

4. Readiness & Assessment Team

www.suny.edu/microcredentials

Strategic Opportunities

- **System-ness**: Seeking ways the system can add immediate value through scale.

- **Partnerships**: Opportunities to serve business, P-12, community partners in new and different ways.

- **Empowerment**: Students understand and can better articulate to employers what they know and are able to do.

- **Responsiveness**: Leveraging micro-credentials and badges to meet immediate and life-long education needs and changing workforce needs.

Key Challenges

- **Communication:** To students, faculty, campus leadership, business/industry.

- **Engagement:** Neither are mandatory programs. How do we establish the "value proposition?"

- **Rigor:** How do we ensure badges mean something?

- **Scale:** What processes do we need to take this to roll this out to more students? Who will do the work?

MJ Bishop
mjbishop@usmd.edu
www.usmd.edu/cai/BEST

Cynthia Proctor
cynthia.proctor@suny.edu
www.suny.edu/microcredentials

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM of MARYLAND

SUNY The State University of New York