

The Challenge

Today's labor market selects for skill sets reaching beyond the academic. Success in today's competitive professional environment requires life and career skills that have been acquired through experiential learning. Abilities ranging from career management, personal branding, leadership, and team-work skills as well as the development of intercultural fluency-- all contribute to students adapting and thriving as members of the global workforce.

Today's job applicants must also have the ability to navigate an increasingly more complex and competitive labor pool. Students need to have greater mobility when applying for work, traveling internationally for career advancement, or when transferring to schools and graduate programs. Doing this effectively requires their ability to prove they've earned the skills they claim with credentials that are secure, trustworthy, highly portable, and that thoroughly attest their earned competencies and qualifications.

Solution

Lehigh has launched an initiative comprised of the following interrelated elements:

- Identifying and teaching the most critical life and career skills required for professional success in a 21st-century labor market.
- Creating an experiential educational infrastructure with objectively defined competencies centering on career and professional development as well as on building global/ intercultural fluencies.
- Enabling students to stack blockchain anchored credentials that are easy to store, share, and have their validity verified by potential employers, consulates, and other universities.

In support of this effort, the University's Center for Career and Professional Development has partnered with Hyland Credentials (formerly Learning Machine) to develop and leverage a blockchain ecosystem that brings significant value to students, universities and potential employers alike. This is achieved through the issuance of verifiable digital credentials called Blockcerts that are anchored on the blockchain and that highlight the learning outcomes required to earn the credential - all based on Lehigh University criteria, NACE competencies, and feedback from employer partners. Wherever Lehigh students go, Blockcerts help to create a dynamic portfolio of their accomplishments and ongoing education.

Learning Impact Outcomes and Return on Investment

One of the most salient aspects of the program is the ROI it brings to an entire education-to-employment ecosystem, encompassing students, universities, and employers. Examples of this all-inclusive value proposition include:

- Defining critical skills in collaboration with employer-partners and then exposing students to experiential opportunities to learn and practice them, creates an actionable and effective bridge from university to labor market. Students learn precisely the life and career skills that they will need and, with Blockcerts, will have a verifiable way to prove it to employers.
- Once their Blockcert credential is issued, students own and can store it in their wallet app for life. This takes away the need for the issuing institutions to reissue credentials every time a student needs one, thus, reducing the cost, time and labor-intensive process of a re-issuance.
- Verification of the validity of these credentials occurs with the highest level of security and certainty through an online verification portal. The verification process is instant, vendor-independent, and free for everyone: Students, employers, and educational institutions. Unlike traditional PDF records, these digital credentials are self-attesting, meaning that employers, schools, and governments can instantly verify them without needing to check with the issuing institution.

This process reduces the expense of Admissions to verify external records, as well as the time students wait to have credentials verified for potential employers. The effortless verification step reduces friction in the hiring process for students, the University, and for potential employers. An additional value of the use of Blockcerts credentials includes tamper-evidence as well as the ease for potential employers to indisputably determine the credentials' issuing origin and validity through the use of public keys and the online verification portal.