

The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

Proposal 11-24

(Voting Units: Academic)

Defining Digital Badges

Primary Contacts

- Chad Arney, Registrar's Office
- Alex Guth, Provost's Office

Background

Digital badges are a type of digital credential that are housed in an online system. This allows for portability and display of specific achievements or competencies to interested parties including potential and current employers, educational institutions and their faculty and staff, or other learners. The power of these digital credentials is that they include the learning objectives assessed by the issuing agency.

This proposal is informed by lessons learned from the ongoing pilot projects outlined in [the committee report](#) that was submitted to the Provost's office in March of 2020.

Rationale

Digital badging offers opportunities to bridge the gap between a higher education degree and employment. It provides a simple method for a learner to demonstrate specific competencies¹. Badges provide students an opportunity to highlight and further articulate skills that may not be directly evident on an official transcript which could increase their ability to distinguish themselves from other job applicants and enhance employability.

Badges also offer opportunities for people already in the workforce, including our own faculty and staff, to engage in professional development and demonstrate in-demand skills. Badges can enable career enhancement through small educational sequences that result in a portable, digital, credential.

As described in [the committee report](#), there is no consistent definition of a badge at the national level. Due to this, it is critical that badges be operationally defined so what a "badge" means at Michigan Tech, and to both our students and their employers, is clear and consistent.

¹ Credly, (2018). [Digital Credentials are the Future of the Workforce](#).

Proposal

Michigan Tech will offer digital badges as a learner credential.

Official badges awarded by Michigan Tech will be:

- competency-based.
- assessed for student learning.
- defined by learning objectives that are directly aligned with the badge name/title.
- representative of about 20 hours of learner engagement with course material.
- non-credit offerings (but may be earned as part of a for-credit course).
- fee-supported.
 - as part of a badge proposal, units can propose the distribution of fee revenue above the per-badge rate collected to support the badging platform and its administration.
- awarded through the badging platform adopted by Michigan Tech.
- represented using a standardized visual identity.
- reviewed, approved, and managed jointly by the Provost's office and Registrar, and their designees.
 - interdisciplinary badges will be approved by all involved units

The responsible offices will provide an annual status update to the University Senate regarding the use of badging across campus.

At this time it is not the intention that badges will stack towards transcriptable credits or credentials (e.g., courses, certificates, degrees).

Start-up Costs

First year costs for the selected badging platform would be between \$10,000-11,000 due to the included cost of software setup and integration. Years two and three would be \$2,600 each, which would allow awarding 1,000 badges per year. The three-year average cost to issue a badge would be approximately \$5 per badge.

As badges would exist outside of the normal tuition structure, a nominal per-badge fee to support the adopted platform would be implemented. Additional fees to support the delivery of the badged content would be at the discretion of the offering unit/faculty.