

Credentials in a Digital Era

PARCHMENT SUMMIT

ON

INNOVATING ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS

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When we talk about innovating credentials to make them relevant, what we are really saying is that we want our students to be successful throughout and beyond their degree. In order for that to happen, we need students to understand the relevance of their educational experience, and to see how their experiences within and beyond the classroom has helped them develop the skills and competencies to be successful in their next steps—whether it be further studies or a career. The academic transcript has traditionally been limited in its reflection, where the course code, name, and grades provide a glimpse into students' learning. Coupled with this, students often struggle to identify and articulate the transferable nature of their learning. This limited reflection and challenges in articulating relevancy has led to concerns about the value of a post-secondary education and concerns about a job skills gap.

This has in part led to the question about how institutions can reimagine credentials in order to provide a more robust reflection of students' learning and devel-

opment. With this, Joellen Shendy and Mark Leuba discussed in [Making Credentials Portable](#) that it is also an important consideration to ensure that credentials are accessible and transparent to “easily offer up indicators of students' knowledge, skills, and abilities.” Institutions across the world are grappling with this issue, and experimenting in various ways to explore how to innovate credentials in a digital era—including badges, e-portfolios, enhanced transcripts, and Co-Curricular Records.

UC SAN DIEGO'S INTEGRATED STUDENT RECORD

At the University of California San Diego, there were a number of parallel conversations at the institution, which were focused on how to help students develop and articulate the skills and competencies that they were developing at our institution. Instead of picking one innovative method, we decided to take the best of all and launch a suite of [Engaged Learning Tools](#) (ELTs), which would provide a comprehensive set of tools that would help students discover, capture, review and share their curricular, co-curricular, and profes-

sional accomplishments. The overarching purpose of this suite of tools is to encourage engagement, help students reflect on and articulate competencies developed, and share a holistic picture of students' learning and accomplishments at UC San Diego and beyond.

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ENHANCED ELECTRONIC TRANSCRIPT

Two of the ELTs include UC San Diego's expanded, integrated student record: the Enhanced Electronic Transcript and the Co-Curricular Record. The Enhanced Electronic Transcript (E2T) embeds contextual curricular information into the academic transcript. Through clicking hyperlinks embedded in the transcript, end users can read the course description, instructor name and contact, and grade distribution for the course section. As a proof of concept, UC San Diego, utilized its unofficial Academic History transcript to embed contextual data and received a positive response from internal end users. In the future we plan to include Instructor Bio, Course Syllabus and Dissertations.

CO-CURRICULAR RECORD

Effective September 1, 2016, students can print their official UC San Diego [Co-Curricular Record](#) (CCR) with their enhanced transcript. Printed on transcript paper with the Registrar's signature and institutional

seal, the CCR is a validated record of students' involvement in opportunities beyond the classroom and the competencies developed. Each opportunity highlighted on the record has been reviewed by the CCR Evaluation Committee, and validated by an approved staff or faculty member.

Highlighted on the record is the opportunity name, position held, short description of opportunity, and up to three of competencies developed from a pre-determined list of [competencies](#)—which includes critical thinking/problem solving, research ability, leadership, and innovation/entrepreneurial thinking.

The two primary purposes of the record are to 1) encourage engagement, and 2) act as an official record and reflective tool. By having the CCR printed with the transcript, UC San Diego is saying that we value student involvement beyond the classroom and that it should be part of students' experience here at the institution. This is an important message for students, their parents and families, employers and staff and faculty at the institution. We encourage students to use their record when applying for jobs, graduate/professional programs, and for awards—either submitting the record where appropriate, or using the record as a reflective tool to help identify and articulate competencies developed.

UC San Diego has worked with Parchment so that students are able to request their e-Transcript or e-Transcript with Co-Curricular Record.

ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO

While the Enhanced Electronic Transcript and the Co-Curricular Record are the official outputs of a student's time at UC San Diego, [Portfolium](#) allows stu-

dents to highlight deliverables and accomplishments through an online platform. They can upload course projects and assignments; highlight a co-curricular event they planned, and extracurricular and professional work outside of the institution. Students can also upload documents, including their integrated student record. This electronic tool allows for portability and a more in-depth look at students’ deliverables and work.

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

The strength of these credentials is in using them together. The goal in innovating credentials is to encourage students to engage with the institution, and to help them reflect on and articulate their holistic learning and development. Having an expanded integrated record that includes an Enhanced Electronic Transcript and Co-Curricular Record demonstrates our commit-

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ment to a holistic student experience, and to providing students with the toolset that will help them succeed in their next steps. In addition to an integrated record and an electronic portfolio, the fourth tool is the [Research Experience Applied Learning \(REAL\) Portal](#), which provides a platform to help students discover research opportunities, global experiences, service, and

internships within and beyond the university. Used together, these tools help students [discover, capture, review, and share](#) experiences and skills developed.

However, the creation and implementation of such a suite of tools requires commitment and resources from the institution. The Teaching + Learning Commons, Registrar’s Office, and Career Services work closely together to deliver this comprehensive suite of tools; and, the institution has committed resources to having an Engaged Learning Tools Coordinator to help implement and maintain the tools. With this, large numbers staff, faculty, and students are involved in developing these tools—whether it is through sitting on a committee, adding opportunities, acting as a validator, or promoting the tools through their networks.

Driving this initiative has been the overall commitment from the institution. The development of the Engaged Learning Tools (ELTs) was outlined in the Education Initiative and [Chancellor’s Strategic Plan](#), where Goal 1 calls to: “Create a new Student Record System that provides integrated academic and co-curricular information and clearly communicates students’ achievements to graduate and professional schools and prospective employers.” This initiative led to the development of a series of committees that focused on the commitment to teaching and learning, and the need to reimagine the way we deliver “an educational and overall experience that develops students who are capable of solving problems, learning, and innovating in a diverse and interconnected world.” Having the institutional support and the commitment to devote resources to the development and implementation of this suite of tools has been at the core of its success.

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

While there has been significant support for the ELTs at UC San Diego, we are not nearly done. As we move forward into the academic year, we want to continue to grow and expand the Co-Curricular Record, brainstorm ways to further add information to the Enhanced Electronic Transcript, and build stronger ties between the integrated student record and Portfolium.

Along with further implementing the tools, our goal is also to become more engaged in the conversation

around innovating credentials. There are a number of initiatives that are driving this conversation forward, including the [Parchment Summit](#), AACRAO, NASPA, and Lumina Foundation's [Comprehensive Student Record Project](#), and the Lumina Foundation's [Connecting Credentials](#) network. We want to continue to grow and learn from our colleagues across the nation and beyond, and welcome you to connect with us so we can explore how to innovate credentials together.



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As Interim University Registrar at the University of California San Diego, Cindy plays a key role in implementing the Engaged Learning Tools and has worked collaboratively with stakeholders across and beyond campus to help implement the new integrated student record. UC San Diego has been on the cusp of re-envisioning how it delivers and documents education, and the Registrar's Office has played a central and collaborative role in moving this forward.



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As the Engaged Learning Tools Coordinator in the Teaching + Learning Commons at UC San Diego, Kimberly works closely with the Registrar's Office, Career Services, and other campus partners to implement and coordinate efforts of the suite of Engaged Learning Tools. Previously, Kimberly implemented the CCR at the University of Toronto, co-founded the national Canadian CCR Professionals Network and conducted research on the CCR for her master's thesis.