EXTENDING THE CREDENTIAL EMPOWERING THE LEARNER

parchment®

Turn Credentials into Opportunities.

Extending the Credential.
Empowering the Learner.

While the unemployment rate was a whopping 8 percent in 2013, those holding a B.A. degree found their unemployment rate hovering at only 4 percent, almost half the national average. What's more, millennial college graduates earn more—about $17,500—than those with just a high school diploma. Clearly, academic credentials have never been more valuable or more central to the life chances of learners and their families.

With this high-stakes status comes high-stakes challenges: the rising cost of college, mounting student debt, parents questioning high costs, and employers who want proof of hard and soft occupational skills that are part and parcel of academic achievement. At the same time, the importance of credentials has created an increasing number of non-academic education providers—boot camps and others—that are beginning to challenge the monopoly that higher education has over credentialing. Never before have colleges and universities been under so much pressure to demonstrate the value of their programs in terms of what their graduates know and can do.

> "Our learners and their potential employers are asking for more comprehensive credentialing."

Of all these challenges, perhaps none is more front and center than aligning learner outcomes with the job market. Today, the majority of undergraduate enrollments are in majors that connected to occupational fields—teacher training, nursing, engineering, marketing, accounting—providing the hard skills employers are looking for. But as any academic knows, higher education has never been about just majors, courses, grades and credits. Our colleges and universities offer a wealth of opportunities for students to extend their formal learning experience beyond the classroom, enabling them to build critical thinking, leadership, group collaboration and other soft skills. What the market wants is exactly what higher education does: preparing students for the workforce. Why then are we graduating our students without documenting these critical learning outcomes?

As Kevin Carey put so well in his 2015 New York Times article, "The standard diploma has roughly the same amount of information that prisoners of war are required to divulge under the Geneva Conventions." And therein lies our opportunity. Our learners and their potential

employers are asking for more comprehensive credentialing. The expectation now for higher education is not to simply generate a beautiful ornament to hang on the wall but to demonstrate outcomes, providing learners with currency that's going to help get them a job. With the great responsibility of educating our future workforce comes a pressing need for change. The time has come to further empower our learners by aligning credentialing with their digital and mobile culture to make educational outcomes more easily understood and actionable.

INTRODUCING THE CREDENTIAL INNOVATION FRAMEWORK

What does it mean to innovate academic credentials? If you think about the types of credentials that higher education issues, each has a role to play, aligned from highest level to the most detailed. Diplomas and non-degree certificates are mechanisms for verifying degree completion, and in many ways act as the learner currency most aligned with the labor market. While in some sense the transcript provides a deeper level of detail of what someone did to earn the degree, the reality is that the transcript has developed for a very particular purpose: to support transfer and graduate admissions or movement within or across schools and universities, where courses and credit hours are the lingua franca of student mobility. Recently, institutions have begun to think about ePortfolios not only as a formative learning technology but as a summative one, communicating evidence of learning.

While not perfect today, in many ways the transcript is the bridging document, providing deeper information about what someone accomplished and how well they accomplished it, while not overwhelming them with every little thing they ever did. However, the academic transcript, almost unchanged for decades, is not a complete inventory of the educative experience. As such, the traditional transcript is now beginning to evolve in both form and substance, from paper sent through the mail to electronic images or standardized data exchanged securely online and extended to document a lifetime of learning. We are at the beginning of seeing credentials really bring life to learner's online identities to help them get jobs and establish their professional identity.

Over the years, in product planning meetings, focus groups, surveys and at Parchment's annual user conference, we asked our members about extending the transcript and the future of credentialing. The result: our Credential Innovation Framework (CIF), five clusters of innovative activities that institutions—like Furman University moving transcripts from paper to paperless, Stanford University with its clickable transcript and the co-curricular transcript at Elon University—are performing as defined in the CIF to make their credentials more effective.

There are 5 activity clusters within the CIF to allow any institution the flexibilty to innovate to fit the needs of their learners and institutional goals.

GO DIGITAL

DO WHAT
PAPER CAN'T

CREATE
PATHWAYS

MAKE IT
ACTIONABLE

COMMUNICATE
MORE CONTENT

The CIF identifies five activity areas that institutions can undertake depending on their goals. Activities range from an eTranscript exchange with an institutional focus to more learner-focused activities that include an extended credential with added functionality, experiential and competency-based data, and sharable, actionable content. Here are the clusters in a nutshell:

1.   Go digital. Begin with the eTranscript and expand to all credential types: diplomas, non-degree certificates, verifications and even digital diplomas.

2.   Do what paper can't. Take the digital form beyond just an image of its paper counterpart with clickable, visual and machine-readable data for added functionality.

3.   Create new pathways. Enhance credential exchange to support the diverse pathways learners take across institutions on their way to an academic degree, ensuring portability of courses and credits to maximize degree completion and learner success.

"Where you begin and end within the framework is based on your institutional mission..."

4.   Communicate more content. Add competency-based and experiential, or co-curricular, data to show the full impact of a postsecondary education.

5.   Make it actionable. Align with our digital and mobile culture, enabling learners to store credentials in one place where information can be easily displayed in online profiles, such as professional or social networking sites.

Which innovations you choose to explore within the framework will be based on your institutional mission and depends on the degree of innovation that works for you today—and tomorrow. It is a catalyst for a new digital palette on which to innovate, a blueprint for a new era of credentialing that must start now. Because as the data show, it's what both registrars and learners want.

SURVEY SAYS!

To learn more about what registrars and learners are thinking and doing about the status quo, extending the transcript, sharing credentials and the future of credentialing, Parchment conducted two surveys: one for over 500 postsecondary graduates, the other for more than 100 registrars.

Of the registrars surveyed, 43 percent said they are "somewhat to very likely" to offer all of their credentials digitally within the next 5 years. For learners, the survey reveals the type of information or experiences they feel are "somewhat to very useful" to include in that digital credential: internships, student employment, academic performance, and academic undertakings. In addition, 46 percent of learners polled feel that the current transcript offered only "somewhat reflects the value of their education," indicating that an expanded credential is needed.

The First Cluster: Making Your Paper Transcripts Digital

The most prevalent activity in this cluster is taking your paper transcripts and making them digital, which is nothing new to academia. In fact, the first white paper about electronic transcripts was published by AACRAO/SPEEDE in 1997. After launching in 2004, it took Parchment until 2010 to process 1 million credentials per year. Today, we process 1 million credentials every month.

eTRANSCRIPTS

By implementing Parchment eTranscripts, Furman University was able to decrease processing time from 4 to 6 hours daily to only 30 minutes, a savings of 87 percent. "Furman is far from leading edge when it comes to technology," explains Brad Barron, associate dean and registrar at Furman University. "But we jumped right in as the wave started, and we're prepared to ride it for a long time."

Moving request and fulfillment from paper to digital provides more value than just cost savings. At Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Michael Rendon, university registrar used Parchment analytics, like order volume and PDFs versus paper, to understand results and benefits. "I'm a data nerd, so I want to be able to look at the data to parse and understand it," says Rendon. "Parchment analytics lets you do just that, slicing and dicing the data in as many ways as you can think of. While we may know this information anecdotally, I now have the ability to look at the data and know for sure."

> "I'm a data nerd, so I want to be able to look at the data to parse and understand it."
> - Michael Rendon, Registrar
> Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi

eTranscripts are being adopted across South Carolina and nationwide. For the Citadel and others, security features, such as an authenticity statement and direct download of PDFs from Parchment, bring peace of mind for both senders and receivers. Today, paper transcripts are a thing of the past at The Citadel. "Our customers are extremely pleased with the online service, and we believe a satisfied customer is a well-served customer," says Registrar Sylvia Nesmith. "Excellent service is what we strive for, so Parchment has greatly contributed to this endeavor."

Indiana University of Pennsylvania offers its students various levels of service for ordering transcripts, including the option of requesting eTranscripts with Parchment. According to Jeannie Brosky, associate registrar for student records, numbers show that students who were getting free paper transcripts are willing to spend a few dollars for the ease of going online, whether they live two blocks away or across the globe. "Students are buying convenience with electronic transcripts," she says.

AND BEYOND

Transcripts are just one type of academic credential, when all are about to go digital: diplomas, non-degree certificates and verifications. Today, we are in the early days of digital diplomas, with certificates sure to follow. A 2012 Census Bureau report revealed that more than 19 million, or 9 percent of U.S. adults held an educational

certificate apart from an academic degree. This includes 4.5 million who were high school graduates and 4 million with a bachelor's degree.

"In this report, we've been able to measure for the first time how many people take another route to a productive career: holding an alternative educational credential independent of traditional college degrees. It turns out that millions of people have taken this path," explains demographer Stephanie Ewert.

A Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce report, also published in 2012, said that "while certificates currently aren't counted in many measures of postsecondary attainment, often they provide the outcomes that degree-seeking students are looking for gainful employment." Today, that trend continues. Despite rapidly growing enrollments in continuing and executive education programs, non-degree certificates are often printed and handed out on the last day by local departments, with no ability to track them online.

Institutions who conquer the first cluster not only issue their transcripts digitally but also all their market-value credentials.

Cluster 1 Case Study: Go Digital!
Begin with the eTranscript and expand to all credential types: diplomas,
non-degree certificates, verifications and even digital diplomas.

Cluster 1 In Action: Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi

GOING DIGITAL TO IMPROVE STUDENT SERVICE

Customer service is top of mind for TAMU-CC Registrar Michael Rendon. But with a transcript request fulfillment timeline of 3 to 5 business days, his office didn't even come close to meeting students' turnaround expectations. On top of that, Rendon faced low staff productivity, a lack of meaningful data analytics and the inability to leverage a revenue stream with the complex, manual process.

The solution for getting the university's transcript request processing on track was to start sending transcripts electronically. Today, transcripts are ordered and fulfilled in just minutes, staff members are more

efficient, and Rendon gets the information he needs to measure results. Plus it's easy to collect payment from students online, creating significant revenue for the school.

"Taking our transcripts digital enabled us to accept student requests 24/7 and deliver certified eTranscripts that look the same as my paper ones, from the watermark to my signature," says Rendon. "And we reduced our turnaround time to just minutes for a certified PDF, enabling us to provide the kind of customer service we've always wanted to."

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
CORPUS CHRISTI

PRIOR TO GOING DIGITAL:
- • Lost requests, lost transcripts, lost productivity
- • 3 to 5-day order fulfillment
- • Lack of data for analysis
- • Inability to easily collect processing fees

AFTER GOING DIGITAL
- • Secure, eco-friendly electronic transcript option
- • One day (or less) order fulfillment
- • Easy-to-use analytics
- • Automated fee collection

The Second Cluster:
Using Digital Content to Do Things Paper Can't

"We need to take what now exists as a dumb, static document and turn it into a richer, update-able, more connected record of a person's skills, expertise and experience," says LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman. "And then we need to take that record and make it part of a fully networked certification platform."
Just like a movie is more than filming a play, transforming the credential is more than taking a picture of something that was paper. The next cluster of activities is about taking advantage of that digital form to do things paper credentials can't do and includes:

- • Making your transcript clickable to access course descriptions or connecting a diploma to an ePortfolio to see evidence of learning

- • Presenting content in dynamic and visual ways, like a competency vs. courses-taken view, a timeline of achievement, or a pie chart of subject matter

- • Issuing credential sets tied to the credential account

- • Providing machine-readable data for communicating the two-page transcript in a more efficient way as well additional information that employers and admissions offices can filter using their enterprise systems

Case in point: Stanford University, who offers a clickable digital transcript. Receiving the transcript in electronic format, the reader can click on any course listed and go right into the catalog description of the course. Clicking further leads to the syllabus. From the student perspective, clicking even further leads to an ePortfolio and, depending on the program and what the student has done, shows actual evidence of the learning inside that classroom.

Stanford University Registrar Thomas Black, who pioneered the use of embedded links, explains. "I'm a record keeper… I'm supposed to capture the academic record, your experience at Stanford," he says. "That's my job, to capture the whole breadth of that—not to get it distilled, but to capture it accurately… we can be more descriptive about these things and reference them as well."

> "Just like a movie is more than filming a play, transforming the transcript is more than taking a picture of something that was paper."

As far back as 2009, Black also foresaw digital transcripts that convey the entire student experience. "You say, well, there are probably some activities that students engage in, particularly honors activities or major service projects that are not reflected on the transcript but ought to be. So we can be more descriptive about these things and reference them as well," he says.

Those mastering the second cluster are using clickable transcripts, visual content, machine-readable data and credential accounts to do exactly what Reid Hoffman suggests in his discussion of certification as a platform. He believes that "with certification as a platform, not just a product, the feedback loops between all parties will tighten, enabling education providers to track what employers are looking for, students to have more explicit guideposts to help them transition more successful into the workforce, and employers to use certification as a finding mechanism, not just a screening mechanism."

Cluster 2 In Action:

MAKING THE MOST OF FREEDOM FROM PAPER

Transforming the transcript is more than going digital. It's also taking advantage of that electronic form to add functionality like convenient online ordering, notification of request status in real time or automatic document import and indexing. These three schools are representative of the benefits any sender or receiver of electronic credentials enjoys.

Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) now offers students the option of requesting eTranscripts with Parchment. According to Jeannie Brosky, associate registrar for student records, statistics show that students who were getting free paper transcripts are willing to spend a few dollars for the convenience of going online, whether they live two blocks away and across the globe. To her, that indicates that more than anything, students are interested in the convenience that electronic brings.

With electronic transcripts, a single administrator at King University can manage all of their transcript requests, cutting processing time by more than half and freeing staff to focus on higher-lever activities. "With faster turnaround time, we can provide better customer service," says Registrar Jessica Swiney. What's more, the university can also meet the increasing demand for electronic delivery by receiving institutions.

Ball State University (BSU), is also benefitting from electronic transcripts by automating the receipt and indexing into their Imaging System: Banner Document Management System. Automation saves time, money and even office space. "We were constantly pushing paper and looking for files," says Brad Hostetler, associate director of admissions. "Now we've eliminated file cabinets. Everything is online, at our fingertips."

PRIOR TO GOING DIGITAL:
- • Inability to meet student demand for electronic transcripts
- • Time-consuming manual processing of paper documents
- • No tracking of order status, triggering more student phone calls
- • Lost productivity, lost requests, lost transcripts

AFTER GOING DIGITAL
- • Secure electronic transcript option
- • Fast, convenient online ordering 24/7
- • Automatic notification of transcript fulfillment and delivery
- • Streamlined operations for enhanced student and staff satisfaction

The Third Cluster:
Creating New Pathways Through Credential Exchange

According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, one-third of all students change institutions as some point in their academic life with 25 percent of those transferring more than once. And there are emerging education options as well, such as MOOCs and badges. As student pathways for higher education change and evolve, so must the pathways for sharing digital content between institutions, creating a portable online credential history that allows learners to make the most of what they have acquired on their educational path.

Arizona State University (ASU) is partnering with Parchment to work with a number of community colleges so that students, while they're still at their home base of the two-year institution, can have their transcript data sent to ASU and put through a degree-audit program to make sure that the courses they're taking are going to maximize their transfer and completion on time to that four-year degree. This requires an institution-to-institution exchange of machine-readable data around courses, grades, and similar information. To print and mail that information and then open, scan and index it would be absolutely unscalable. The process for both sending and receiving institutions is fast and easy with Parchment.

In Colorado, a statewide Reverse Transfer Program, one of the first in the country, is the direct opposite: the ability for students to leave the two-year program without having an associate's degree. In their four-year program, on the way to a bachelor's degree, if students earn enough credits to get that two-year degree, they will earn an "associate's in passing," which means that even if they don't ultimately complete the four-year program, they will still have that foundation of a two-year credential. With Parchment, the institutions can easily collaborate and exchange student records and student performance information in machine-readable format.

With the activities in this third cluster, institutions are helping students maximize the value of their credits and courses to decrease time to completion and increase graduation rates.

The Fourth Cluster:
Innovating What You Are Communicating

Today's postsecondary students are learning in more ways than ever before, challenging academic administrators to document a more complete educative experience. To meet this need, forward-thinking colleges and universities are beginning to communicate the leadership experiences and competency achievements, along with the academic accomplishments resulting from their programs.

Now your transcript is digital, and the digital medium has made it more effective and functional. The next set of activities enables us to innovate what we are communicating in that digital transcript. Documenting experiential (co-curricular) and competency-based learning shows the complete educative experience: campus life, service learning, study abroad, internships, research projects and more. Students live much of their lives online, where they are establishing professional identities and getting jobs. A number of initiatives in the higher education community have successfully generated some momentum and adoption for expanding the transcript and putting it online.

One great example is Elon University's electronic experiential transcript that documents student participation in leadership development, service learning, internships, study abroad and undergraduate research programs. The university has offered its Elon Experiences Co-Curricular Transcript (EET) since 1994. In 2013, Elon became the first college to tie together the electronically released co-curricular transcript with the academic transcript. "Students should not have to go multiple places to obtain documents that paint a full picture of their academic experience, and the secondary transcript gives us the ability to record more detailed information regarding the signature experiences of studying at Elon," Registrar Rodney Parks explains.

> "In 2013, Elon became the first college to tie together the electronically released co-curricular transcript with the academic transcript."

Elon University also integrated the EET and academic transcripts into one certified PDF, revising both transcripts to have a similar look and feel, with appropriate legends on the back of each transcript (second page of the PDF). Similarly, Elon needed to differentiate the two transcripts to provide clarity to receivers. To do this, they elected to use different colored transcript paper for each of the two transcripts, academic in maroon and experiences in gold.

Upon surveying the employer or postsecondary school recipients of these transcripts, the university found that 85 percent of respondents view candidates with an experiential transcript more favorably, while 36 percent said an experiential transcript improves an applicant's chance of employment or admissions. A majority also believe that receiving the information was helpful to the hiring or admissions process and was used in making a hiring or admissions decision.

To document their achievements at the University of Pittsburgh, learners participate in the nationally-recognized RealWorld Action Program, which emphasizes campus, community and global engagement. The program recognizes the development of key attributes – leadership, involvement, service and teamwork – that complement their academic studies. Students receive a co-curricular transcript that enables them to confidently articulate their out-of-class experiences to prospective employers and graduate schools, demonstrating that they have become well-rounded and marketable.

Northern Arizona University (NAU) produces a competency report that defines specific competencies and what it means for students to master them. For example, a Liberal Arts major, competencies to master include working in a team structure, working with diverse populations and analyzing complicated materials. What's more, like our utility bills and bank statements, competency reports can include graphical content, like bar graphs and pie charts, transforming dry inventory of data to a more informative visual presentation.

Elon University, University of Pittsburgh, NAU and others who master this third cluster are documenting the complete educative experience, articulating the value of postsecondary learning for employers and admissions offices.

> Cluster 4 Case Study: Communicate more content
Add competency-based and experiential, or co-curricular, data to show the full impact of a
postsecondary education.

Cluster 4 In Action: Elon University

GIVING STUDENTS A COMPETITIVE EDGE

Education today is about more than courses, grades and credits. Pioneering institutions, like Elon University, understand that co-curricular experiences are just as important as classroom academics. In fact, Elon has offered an experiential transcript for over 20 years. What Registrar Rodney Parks did was to make it digital— with the help of Parchment.

"There has been a growing demand to paint a fuller picture of what the student experience is over the course of four years that the current transcript doesn't fully describe," Parks explains. The Elon Experiences Transcript (EET) makes it easy for students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and abilities in the context of five core Elon experiences: global engagement, service, leadership, internships and undergraduate research.

Elon was able to combine its academic and experiential transcripts into a single validated and certified PDF

WHAT EMPLOYERS THINK OF EET:
- • 85% felt the EET painted a more positive picture of the student
- • 63% wanted applicants to include a document similar to the EET
- • A majority noted that receiving the information was helpful in the employment/admissions process and decision making

with a consistent look and feel. Together the EET and Academic Transcripts capture the complete postsecondary learning experience and articulates its value to employers and graduate schools (who have responded quite favorably). And students can even download and share their EET by email and through social media and networking sites.

"Students at Elon love this," Parks says. "They can easily order the EET online via Parchment and immediately upload it to LinkedIn. So whomever is looking at it can see the student has an Elon degree and some experiences associated with that degree. This is a pretty exciting piece that we've added."

ELON
UNIVERSITY

BENEFITTING ELON UNIVERSITY:
- • Co-curricular transcript articulates student achievements at Elon and gives learners a competitive edge
- • Academic and co-curricular transcripts combined in single file for easy download and distribution, including on social media
- • Awarded first place in 2014 PESC Annual Best Practices Competition for EET and integration into academic transcript

The Fifth Cluster:
Making Credentials Truly Actionable for the Learner

According to Kevin Carey in the aforementioned New York Times article, open credentialing systems allow people to control information about themselves— what they learned in college and what they learned everywhere else—and present that data directly to employers. "In a world where people increasingly interact over distances, electronically, the ability to control your online educational identity is crucial," says Carey.

Thus, the activities in the fifth cluster are all about rethinking the traditional barriers to what we can do with credentials, including storing credentials in one place, online, where they can be easily shared. Today, every university fills up a database with degree completion information that is verifiable. Online profiles are where learners today are establishing their professional identity. Why not just give graduates a secure, electronic diploma, so when employers sees it they know it's true and valid.

Additional results from the Parchment survey show that 78 percent of registrars think that students sharing their digital credentials is inevitable. So it's not surprising that safety and security are key concerns, along with fraud and transcript alteration. "Students will post this without giving a thought to identify theft," shared one registrar.

## 78% of registrars think that students sharing their digital credentials is inevitable.

Further, 28 percent of learners said they already store scanned or digital transcripts on a cloud-based server (like Google Drive, iCloud, and OneDrive). In addition, 43 percent of students have shared information about academic and co-curricular accomplishments on LinkedIn, with 38 percent posting the same on Facebook. And 26 percent of students believe it's acceptable to share a copy of their credential and display it publicly online through social working sites.

While students may be sharing unofficial transcript information today, 60 percent are excited by idea of displaying official or verified credential on a digital or social site, while 62 percent believe would be useful. And 71 percent said marketability to potential employers is leading reason for doing so. The takeaway: Students are going to share their credentials, online and socially, doing what they have to do to be marketable. But they want to do so with the institution's seal of approval.

Conquering the fifth cluster enables registrars, concerned with student safety and data security, meet their students' need for digital credentials.
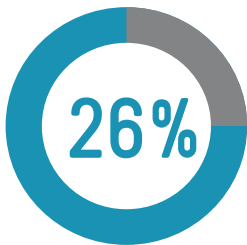
MORE THAN 550 RECENT GRADUATES TOLD PARCHMENT:
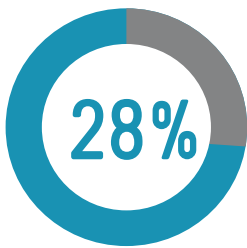
28% of learners store transcripts on a cloud-based server.
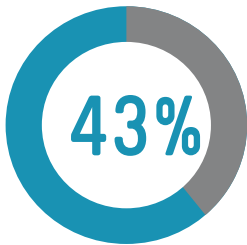
43% of learners share academic and co-curricular accomplishments digitally. (38% posting on Facebook)

26% of learners believe it's acceptable to share a copy of their credential and display it publicly online through social sites

60%

are excited by the idea (and believe it would be useful) of displaying official or verified credential on a social site.

71% said marketability to potential employers is leading reason for doing so

THE BOTTOM LINE: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE LEARNER

By extending the traditional academic credential beyond courses, grades and credits to show the full impact of a postsecondary education, your college or university can give your students what they need and their potential employers what they want. With the Credential Innovation Framework as their guide, institutions are moving from paper academic diplomas to extended digital credentials stored in one place—online—where they can be easily displayed. So learners can quickly show what they know and discover education and career opportunities that put their credentials to work. And employers can get information to make informed decisions about job candidates.

Giving students the ability to take their higher education credentials and combine them with other types of credentials over their lifetime is a way to both promote your institution and enable students to make the most of the education that they've earned there. Sharing their diplomas or certificates online is amazing social validation for your college or university that raises awareness and drives more interest back to the home institution. And most importantly, your learners are empowered, more marketable and ultimately more successful.