CITEL's Badging System

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KEEPING TRACK OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

You've Been Badged!

Professors at Reinhardt University who attended the Spring 2020 Workshop with Dr. Leslie Gordon received an email notifying them that they had been awarded a CITEL badge. In this brief white paper, the CITEL badging system is explained along with an introduction to microcredentials with the intent of inspiring Reinhardt faculty to investigate micro-credentialing in programs and courses.

Three Levels of CITEL Badges

As part of CITEL's assessment strategy, CITEL has adopted the Kirkpatrick Training Evaluation Model. The Kirkpatrick model proposes four tiers of assessment data: reaction, learning, behavioral, and results (Kirkpatrick, 1985). CITEL's implementation of this model is slightly modified to include five tiers of evaluation: attendance, reception, learning, behavioral, and institutional indicators of change. For each program that CITEL provides, data sources are adopted to track items relating to these tiers. For example, the sign-in sheet for the Spring 2020 workshop helps track attendance data. The survey distributed at the conclusion of the workshop helps track reception and learning for the event. The sign-up sheet for the discussion group allows identification of professors interested in making behavioral changes in their teaching, i.e. change a course syllabus to include ePortfolios. Participation in the discussion group and the associated white paper requirement is evidence of organizational change.

To track this assessment data in a public and sharable manner, CITEL has established a three-tiered badging system. This badging system helps track the impact and reach of CITEL programming.

- **Level 1 – Learning.** Level 1 badges are awarded to participants in CITEL programming that demonstrate learning through their attendance.
- **Level 2 – Behavioral Change**. Level 2 badges are awarded to faculty and staff who submit evidence that participation in a CITEL program has resulted in concrete changes in their courses. Evidence can be the submission of a Canvas course, syllabus, or other appropriate indicators of innovation.
- **Level 3 – Institutional Change.** Level 3 badges are awarded to faculty and staff who have shared their innovations with the university at large or who have helped others innovate courses and programs.

Reinhardt's CITEL is not alone in establishing a badging, or micro-credentialing system. After brainstorming the three levels of badges, research uncovered several other schools that have similar systems. Indiana University uses a three-tiered badging system with a catchy tag line, "know it, do it, teach it." Their system awards basic badges for faculty who have engaged with their CITL and learned new technologies. A proficient badge is awarded to professors who implement the new training in their courses and share their results with peers. An advanced badge is awarded to practitioners who have demonstrated a more broad implementation, or who have been recognized by a formal peer review (Hart, 2015). Texas Wesleyan University has a similar model with a level 1 "Learn stuff," a level 2 "Apply/Do stuff" and a level 3 "Evaluate/Share stuff" (2015).

Example of CITEL Badges

In October of 2019, CITEL presented a workshop on the Canvas Course Evaluation Checklist, a tool that assists professors in designing the online content for a course in the Canvas LMS. Three badges were designed to recognize faculty as they encountered, incorporated, and extended their knowledge of this tool. The Level 1 Badge serves as documentation for all participants who demonstated learning at the workshop. The Level 2 badge will be awarded to professors who submit evidence that they have created a Canvas Course that fulfills a subset of requirements on the checklist. These professors will have applied what they have learned in the workshop to a specific course, thereby indicating the workshop has influenced their behavior. A Level 3 badge is awarded to professors who gain certification of an online course through a third party accrediting agency like the Online Learning Consortium, Quality Matters, or the Open SUNY Course Quality Review. Professors receiving this badge will have had an impact on the University inasmuch as the third party accreditation lends a certain amount of prestige that can impact marketing efforts. The three badges are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Three levels of the Checker of Lists Badge.

Microcredentials and Higher Education

Microcredentials document acquisition of specific skills that may not be apparent in diplomas and certificates. Microcredentials are similar to Boy Scout or Girl Scout badges in that they recognize successful completion of a particular task or skill. Microcredentials can give incremental proof of learning and skills when life events might delay the earning of a degree, empowering students to leverage the skills they have gained and for which they have paid (Rimland & Raish, 2019). Digital badges are a graphic, electronically sharable icon of a micro-credential.

> *"Digital badges or micro-credentials are virtual representations of a skill or knowledge, typically a granular one."* **(Rimland & Raish, 2019, pg. 7)**

Universities are adopting badging systems at the course, program and university level. Course level badges document specific skills tied to learning outcomes for the course. Program level badges can document discipline-specific competencies that accumulate throughout the program's curriculum, and as is the case at Coastal Carolina University, serve as an assessment vehicle. Coastal Carolina has Implemented a program-wide badging system aligned with student learning outcomes in English Composition, creating consistency across multiple sections while preserving instructor autonomy. University level badges can document skills and competencies that include the general education core. To create a sense of credibility to external agencies, it is crucial to outline the requirements, level of performance, and assessment protocols (Stefaniak & Carey, 2019). One form of badging called *open badging* lets outside agencies verify the issuer, requirements, and in some cases the actual student work that demonstrates the skill, by including that information in the meta-data associated with the badge (Carey & Stefaniak, 2018).

In terms of motivation and incentive, there are mixed opinions about badging. The general advice is that badges need to be tied to an assessment benchmark to be perceived as legitimate by the recipient. In other words, "participation" or "completion" badges are not valued by the student. Though extrinsic forms of motivation are discouraged by pedagogues, the incremental progress toward larger objectives can provide learners with the small wins along the way that keep them engaged with a course (Carey & Stefaniak, 2018, p. 1212).

Personal Experience

I have implemented a badging system in Class Piano 3 (MUA 213) and Class Piano 4 (MUA214) tied to specific assignments. Students who score 90% or better in designated assignments receive the badge. The badges are awarded using a badging platform called Badgr that integrates with Canvas.

Badgr serves as the central hub for badges, documenting details about the issuer, the badge, the requirements to earn the badge, and recipients of the badge. Badgr badges are tied to Canvas modules with specified module requirements. Only one badge can be associated with a module, so it may be necessary to create badge modules that holds only the assignment being evaluated and the external tool (the Badgr LTI) necessary to award the badge. The module requirements are set to a minimum grade on each badge assignment, usually at 90%. Then, the Badgr LTI in Canvas awards badges automatically once scores on the assignments are entered into the grade book.

In addition to badges based on assignment grades, special distinction badges are awarded to the best performance of solo repertoire at the 5-week, 10-week, and Final exam. Awarding these badges involves the creation of an assignment that is worth 1 point but not included in the final grade calculation. Then, the student with the best performance is awarded a score of 1, and the grade on that assignment for other students is left blank. Students appreciate that this badge is difficult to earn, and recipients of the badge express feelings of accomplishment.

Probably the most difficult part of implementing a badging system is the creation of the digital graphic associated with the badge. Badgr has some rudimentary design options, but in my opinion, these graphics are generally unsatisfying. I use Adobe Illustrator to create badges. Once created, new badges are easily designed by replacing just a few elements on a badge template.

TheNounProject.com is an immensely helpful resource in designing badges. The Noun Project is an online repository of thousands of icon images that are easily searched and browsed. These icons can be downloaded in SVG format and are easy to incorporate into badge designs in Adobe Illustrator. An annual membership fee of $10.00 allows unlimited downloads for use without attribution. Free use of the images are allowed if properly attributed.

Conclusion

CITEL badges are not just fun graphics distributed for grins; they are markers of activity in professional development that are recognized by the Reinhardt University Provost and Deans. Further, they are an assessment vehicle for CITEL itself, as the number and level of CITEL badges awarded each year will be a measure of CITEL's effectiveness. As Reinhardt continues to innovate in the face of the changing higher education landscape, micro-credentials could be one way to document student successes up to and beyond graduation. Imagine a Reinhardt Certified Public Speaker credential, or a Reinhardt Certified Collaborative Worker credential. Microcredentials like these might feature prominently in professional accounts such as Portfolium and LinkedIn.

If you are interested in creating badges for your courses or program, CITEL is available for workshops and consultations.

References

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