

# **Assessing Short-Term Credential Value**

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# **Section 1** Contextualizing Value

# Value Metrics

- Low debt-to-earnings ratios
- Earnings greater than if only a high school diploma
- Living wage

+ *stacking*



# Texas Reskilling and Upskilling through Education TRUE Credential Program

## Characteristics

- Can be completed in less than 6 months
- Can be completed through non-credit workforce continuing education courses, credit career technical education courses, or a combination of non-credit and credit courses
- Is tied to an occupation with starting pay of at least \$26,380
- Is relatively low-cost for students (program costs \$3,000 or less to complete)

Source: 2021 TRUE Credential Inventory



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# Texas 2023 Living Wage for 1 Adult



	1 ADULT			
	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children
<b>Living Wage</b>	\$16.79	\$33.92	\$42.81	\$55.98
<b>Poverty Wage</b>	\$6.53	\$8.80	\$11.07	\$13.34
<b>Minimum Wage</b>	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25

Source:  
[livingwage.mit.edu](http://livingwage.mit.edu)



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Providing information on the typical earnings outcomes, borrowing amounts, costs of attendance, and sources of financial aid – and providing it directly to prospective students in a salient way at a key moment in their decision-making process – would help students make more informed choices.

--Dept of Education,  
Financial Value Transparency and Gainful Employment





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## **Section 2** Assessing Value

# Research Fellows Project

## Research Questions

1. What features of short-term credential programs can be associated with improved student outcomes?
2. To what extent are TRUE credentials being developed with promising features?

## Methodology

1. Literature Review
2. Expert Feedback





# Expert Feedback

Lindsay Daugherty, Ph.D. (Mentor)

Rand Corporation

Martha Ellis, Ph.D.

Texas Success Center

Andres Alcantar, M.P.A.

Texas Success Center

Iris Palmer, M.P.P.

New America Foundation

Nan Travers, Ph.D.

SUNY Empire State

Michelle Van Noy, Ph.D.

Rutgers University



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# Promising Features – Program Design

	FEATURE	POTENTIAL MEASURE(S)	POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES
	<i>Program Design</i>		
1	<b>Credential is built to stack with other educational programs in the same college</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedded in an associate’s degree (i.e., vertical stacking opportunities)</li> <li>• Shared coursework with other certificates (i.e., horizontal stacking opportunities)</li> </ul>	<i>Program reporting form/survey, higher ed agency data</i>
2	<b>Credential is built to stack with educational programs in other colleges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bilateral or statewide articulation agreement in place</li> </ul>	<i>Program reporting form/survey, higher ed agency data</i>
3	<b>Credential is aligned with industry certifications/credentials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student is prepared for an industry certification or license upon program completion</li> </ul>	<i>Program reporting form/survey</i>
4	<b>Credential provides opportunities to build on prior learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program offers prior learning assessment (PLA)</li> <li>• Program builds on continuing education (CE)</li> </ul>	<i>Program reporting form/survey</i>



# Promising Features – Student Experience

	FEATURE	POTENTIAL MEASURE(S)	POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES
	<i>Student Experience</i>		
5	<b>Credential stacking opportunities are transparent to students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>College website clearly presents a program map that shows how credentials stack with other credentials</li> <li>Students are aware of stackable opportunities</li> </ul>	<i>Program reporting form/survey, website scan, marketing materials, student interviews or survey</i>
6	<b>Delivery modalities and schedules facilitate participation by diverse learners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Courses are offered online</li> <li>Courses are offered on nights and/or weekends</li> </ul>	<i>Program reporting form/survey, IPEDS/state reports</i>
7	<b>Credential labor market outcomes are presented to students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>College website clearly presents data on jobs associated with credential and earnings data for those jobs</li> <li>Students are aware of job and earnings outcomes</li> </ul>	<i>Program reporting form/survey, website scan, marketing materials, student interviews or survey</i>
8	<b>Advising and learning supports are the same as for degree-seeking students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-degree students receive an ID number and are tracked in the student information system</li> <li>Students in the program can receive tutoring</li> <li>Students are assigned an adviser</li> </ul>	<i>Program reporting form/survey</i>



# Promising Features – Completion Outcomes

	FEATURE	POTENTIAL MEASURE(S)	POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES
	<i>Outcomes</i>		
9	<b>Credential completion leads to livable-wage employment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Job most associated with credential has annual living wage (MIT LWC)</li> </ul>	<i>Program reporting form/survey, dept of labor state agency data</i>
10	<b>Credential completers go on to earn other credentials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least X% of credential completers go on to earn another credential within Y years</li> </ul>	<i>Program reporting form/survey, higher ed agency data</i>
11	<b>Credential contributes to equity in postsecondary credential attainment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historically underrepresented students are represented in greater percentages among credential (of value) completers than their representation among all postsecondary credential completers</li> </ul>	<i>Program reporting form/survey, higher ed agency data</i>



Expert feedback consistently identifies integrated, metrics-aligned data collection as critical to assessing the value of short-term credential pathways, from non-credit programs to credit-based programs to labor market outcomes.





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# Section 3 Mapping Value

# TRUE Inventory of Short-Term Credentials

541 programs self-reported as meeting TRUE criteria ( $N=530$ )

- 57% include stacking ( $n=304$ )
- 47% include expanded employer support ( $n=255$ )
- 51% non-credit only ( $n=269$ )
- 38% credit only ( $n=203$ )
- 13% both credit and non-credit ( $n=68$ )

Self-reported data from Texas Community Colleges in 2021



# Non-Credit Course Stacking by Industry

		No	Yes	Total
<i>Industry</i>	Advanced Technology & Manufacturing	18	6	24
	Aerospace, Aviation, & Defense	2	1	3
	Agriculture	1	1	2
	Biotech, Life Sciences, & Health	50	22	72
	Construction and Skilled Trades	31	8	39
	Energy-Traditional & Renewable	1	1	2
	Information Technology	3	6	9
	Other	36	8	44
	Professional, Financial, & Business	34	10	44
	Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics	22	8	30
<b>Total</b>		<b>198</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>269</b>





# Course Type by Industry

		Both Non-Credit and Credit	Credit Only	Non-Credit Only	Total
<b>Industry</b>	Advanced Technology & Manufacturing	9	13	24	46
	Aerospace, Aviation, & Defense	1	1	3	5
	Agriculture	1	5	2	8
	Biotech, Life Sciences, & Health	9	22	72	103
	Construction and Skilled Trades	32	28	39	99
	Energy-Traditional & Renewable	1	1	2	4
	Information Technology	2	53	9	64
	Other	2	22	44	68
	Petrochemical	1	2	0	3
	Professional, Financial, & Business	9	51	44	104
	Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics	1	5	30	36
<b>Total</b>		<b>68</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>540</b>



Missing data . . .

Do all Texas community colleges have access to earnings data for students who complete short-term credentials?



# Selected References

Daugherty, L., Kramer, J., Anderson, D., & Bozick, R. (2020). *Stacking Educational Credentials in Ohio, Pathways Through Postsecondary Education in Health Care, Manufacturing and Engineering Technology, and Information Technology*. RAND Corporation Research Report. <https://doi.org/10.7249/RRA136-1>

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**Thank You!**

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