



## Academic Credit Micro-Credentialing Implementation Proposal

### **Background Information:**

#### **What are micro-credentials?**

Micro-credentials refer to a set of coherent learning experiences that are non-degree bearing but are credentialed (*i.e.*, there has been a validation process that skills/competencies have been earned). Micro-credentials can be credit or non-credit and sometimes are equated with the concept of digital badges. They tend to be offered in shorter or more flexible periods and designed to meet a specific need required in the workplace. They tend to focus on a skill or competency and thus are frequently multidisciplinary in nature. They can be offered online, on-ground or a hybrid of both.

#### **What are the opportunities?**

Individuals interested in earning micro-credentials are likely to substantially grow in the coming years. This includes a variety of potential audiences, including current students, former students (both completers and non-completers), industry/community partners, current faculty/staff (*e.g.*, onboarding, professional development), as well as adult learners. Kent State University is well positioned to offer micro-credentials as the colleges already offer a large number of non-degree experiences (*e.g.*, workshops, short-term courses, teacher licensure programs), and there is great interest by faculty to start offering credit-bearing micro-credentials. In addition, business partners have been reaching out to Kent State University to have their employees take advantage of these experiences.

#### **What is the immediate problem?**

First, Kent State does not have a university-wide academic process for the development and approval of curricular proposals for credit-bearing micro-credentials. Thus, academic units that want to offer a credit-bearing micro-credential cannot do so, and students are not in a position to have such a program recognized by the university (via a transcript or digital badge) for having demonstrated a skill or competency through a credit-bearing micro-credential. The current proposal addresses this problem by developing an approval process for credit-bearing micro-credentials. The scope of this proposal and approval process is limited to bundling academic courses that previously have been approved through the curricular approval process at Kent State University.

## **Rationale for implementing a micro-credential strategy:**

As Higher Education continues to evolve and with the onset of the Covid-19 realities, Kent State is positioned as a public university to better serve the needs of the community through the development of micro-credentials. Through a multi-campus system, the ability to cultivate credit-bearing micro-credentials situates Kent State to meet the unique and quickly changing needs of Northeast Ohio, the State and beyond.

Micro-credentials are flexible and shorter options to engage those interested to expand their knowledge, skills and experiences. This working document provides the guiding principles and recommendations to implement a Kent State credit-bearing micro-credential strategy.

The creation of credit-bearing micro-credentials will strengthen Kent State's ability to develop and enhance academic and industry partnerships; graduate a future workforce that is uniquely prepared and ready; and, increase Kent State's mission as a public university to offer accessible educational opportunities.

The guiding principles outlined below represent the Vision and Mission of Kent State University and will guide the work of the creation of credit-bearing micro-credentials at Kent State University.

### ***KENT STATE VISION***

To be a community of change agents whose collective commitment to learning sparks epic thinking, meaningful voice and invaluable outcomes to better our society.

### ***KENT STATE MISSION***

We transform lives and communities through the power of discovery, learning and creative expression in an inclusive environment.

### **Guiding principles:**

#### **1. Ensure Academic Quality**

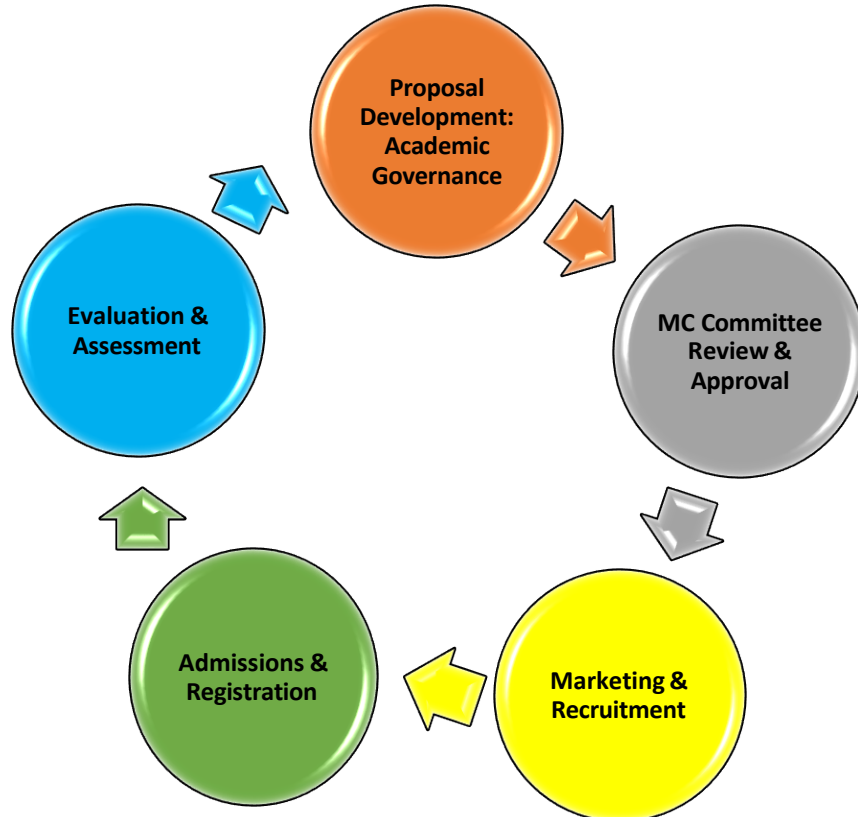
- a. Build upon existing high standards of academic quality as appropriate for micro-credential learning experiences
- b. Establish learning outcomes tied to each learning experience
- c. Demonstrate a distinctive curricular experience (apart from undergraduate degree programs)

#### **2. Prioritize A Student Focus**

- a. Cultivate micro-credential experiences that are flexible in offering; nimble to meet community and market needs; and, transferable to meet a variety of institutional requirements and opportunities
- b. Offer in various formats (time to complete, online, F2F, hybrid, etc.)
- c. May complement or supplement an existing degree program

- d. May use as a step towards an existing certificate or degree program
  - e. Engage multiple audiences (alumni; parent and family members; adult and K-12 learners) to increase skills, knowledge and competencies
3. **Driven by Faculty**
    - a. Determine faculty oversight, shared governance and involvement
    - b. Ascertain value, buy-in and assessment
  4. **Cultivate Multidisciplinary & Innovative Learning Experiences**
    - a. Develop multidisciplinary content that reflects the University's academic strengths
    - b. Develop content that meets community and market needs / interests in alignment to a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce and demand
    - c. Elevate Kent State strengths as a public university
    - d. Create new opportunities for faculty innovation
  5. **Build Strategic Partnerships**
    - a. Ability to create academic and external partnerships with industry, corporations, non-profit sectors and other community-based agencies
    - b. Positions Kent State to meet local, regional and potentially global needs

**Academic Credit Micro-Credentialing Proposed Process:**



## **Proposal Development: Academic Governance Processes:**

Given the rich expertise and breadth of knowledge held throughout the university system, proposal development should be governed by the following considerations:

- Faculty generate an idea for a micro-credential.
- Interested parties complete the *Micro-credential Proposal Form*.
- Proposals should link to industry, workforce or related community-based needs; focus on multidisciplinary and University strengths; distinguish itself apart from existing programs, certificates or other existing learning opportunities at the University; and include clearly articulated outcomes. Proposals should also include how the offering will stand alone or thread into other paths.
- Proposals need to be signed by the department chair(s) or school director(s), College Curriculum Committee(s), and corresponding Dean(s) after consultation with the appropriate faculty advisory council(s) or curriculum committee(s). Where appropriate, external corporate or industry partners should provide input. In addition, a multidisciplinary area may be designated to coordinate, review and approve multidisciplinary proposals.
- Once the proposal form is complete with all appropriate signatures, the proposal is forwarded to the Micro-Credential Approval Committee (MC Committee), a subcommittee of EPC, for review and approval or denial.
- A submission and approval timeline will be established.
- Proposals approved by the MC Committee will appear as information items for the EPC, with the right of the EPC to pull an item for further review.

## **Micro-credential Approval Committee Review & Approval:**

The Micro-credential Approval Committee, a subcommittee of EPC, is made up of members from:

- The Provost Office
- The Division of Enrollment Management
- Curriculum Services
- The Lifelong Learning Unit
- A Kent campus-based department chair, school director, or program lead from a college without departments or schools
- A program director or lead, College of Applied and Technical Studies
- A Faculty Senate member
- Additional full time faculty members chosen by the EPC to ensure that the committee is majority faculty

- The Charge of the MC Approval Committee will be to determine approval or denial of MC proposals.
  - All academic governance approvals must be secured prior to submitting proposal to the MC Approval Committee (see Academic Governance process above).
  - Supporting documentation may be provided in addition to a completed and approved MC proposal form.

### **Marketing & Recruitment:**

- Marketing will be centralized through the LifeLong Learning Unit
  - A website will be created, housed on the Provost's Office website devoted to KSU MCs. This will include information and resources for students and faculty regarding the process to register for a MC, catalog of offerings, staff contact information, MC proposal form, criteria and guidelines, *etc.*
- Recruitment for enrollment in MCs can be driven by academic program areas as well as have a centralized campaign to kickstart MCs at KSU.

### **Admissions & Registration:**

- The LifeLong Learning Unit will manage the admissions applications and registration for MCs and serve as a point of contact for students interested in registering for MCs.
- A process for currently enrolled students to register for MCs through existing course registration processes will be developed in collaboration with the Division of Enrollment Management
- Faculty contact for those interested in teaching or submitting proposals for MCs will be through the LifeLong Learning Unit.

### **Evaluation & Assessment:**

- Centralized under the LifeLong Learning Unit
- Develop a timeline and process for MC assessment
- Return on investment and value will be considered
- Continual review of opportunities for MC development
  - Assess market and community needs
  - Work with regional partners, businesses, organizations to identify opportunities for future MCs