



For Immediate Release

Analysis of U.S. Education and Training Landscape Identifies Over 738,000 Unique Credentials

Unprecedented "credential count" more than doubles previous estimates; report urges greater transparency into cost and value of credentials

September 25, 2019 (Washington, DC) – National nonprofit Credential Engine today released the results of the largest and most comprehensive count of secondary and postsecondary credentials in the United States. In doing so, the organization provides the best estimate to date of credentials across 17 categories—including both traditional degrees and certificates as well as non-traditional offerings such as badges and apprenticeships—at a time when individuals and employers are turning to nontraditional training programs in record numbers.

The report's foreword, authored by former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, calls for greater investment in national and state-level systems to help consumers make better informed decisions in an era where "we still know very little about the full range of credentials offered across the country and their current—and potential—impact on economic mobility."

While surveys suggest that as many as one in four Americans now hold a non-degree certificate, there has never been as definitive of a count of the number of credentials offered in the U.S. The report, "Counting U.S. Postsecondary and Secondary Credentials," estimates that there are 738,428 unique credentials in the United States, with almost half of those provided by non-academic organizations.

"What we still don't know is whether we have enough—or too many—credentialing programs for a country of our size or if we have the right mix of programs to meet employer needs across the country," Bush and Duncan wrote. "This report is a first step in answering those questions and provides a rich database for policymakers, employers, educators and workers to advance our collective goal of a thriving economy that works for everyone. We don't have a minute to waste."

The organization's latest estimate, which is based on computational research conducted by the Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness and the George Washington Institute of Public Policy, more than doubles its preliminary estimate of 334,114 credentials. That estimate, which included far fewer non-academic credentials, was released in April 2018.

"This new estimate gives us a much clearer picture of the vast credential landscape—but it also suggests that we need far better tools and information to navigate the daunting number of credentials available today," said Scott Cheney, executive director of Credential Engine. "Critical information, such as costs and outcomes that reveal the relative value, must be more transparent in order to make good on the promise and potential of educational investments."

The report provides a comprehensive estimate of the number of credentials offered in the U.S., including high school diplomas, postsecondary degrees and certificates, registered apprenticeships, certifications, licenses, alternative degree programs, and skills training "bootcamps." According to the report, higher

education institutions now offer more than 370,000 unique credentials. Non-academic organizations—such as employers, associations and other training providers—offer more than 315,000 unique credentials.

To date, 15 states and regions, and hundreds of individual entities are leading the work of credential transparency by stepping up and publishing data about education and training programs in the open-source Credential Registry, created in 2017 by Credential Engine.

“For too long, students and consumers alike have had to fly blind when it comes to making choices about education and training options,” said Eleni Papadakis, executive director of the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board in Washington State and chair of the Credential Engine board of directors. “By participating in and leveraging the Credential Registry, state leaders are now taking bold steps to provide a greater degree of information—and ultimately control—to education and workforce stakeholders.”

For more information on Credential Engine and the complete findings of the report, view the full report [here](#).

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[Credential Engine](#) is a non-profit whose mission is to create credential transparency, reveal the credential marketplace, increase credential literacy, and empower everyone to make more informed decisions about credentials and their value. Credential Engine receives support from Lumina Foundation, JPMorgan Chase & Co., Walmart, Northrop Grumman Foundation, ECMC Foundation, and Microsoft.

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