Credential Confusion: New Report Identifies More Than One Million Credentials Offered in the U.S. Across a Maze of Nearly 60,000 Providers

Latest analysis from the nonprofit, Credential Engine finds that non-academic providers such as apprenticeships and bootcamps now account for more than half of all credentials offered nationwide

Washington DC (December 7, 2022) -- National nonprofit Credential Engine today released their fourth count of secondary and postsecondary credentials in the United States. This year's Count of U.S. Postsecondary and Secondary Credentials report identified 1,076,358 credentials, from specialized certificates to bachelors degrees to PhDs. For the fourth time, Credential Engine conducted a comprehensive analysis with the goal of identifying the total number of credential providers in the U.S.. That analysis revealed a maze of non-degree credentials, such as digital badges, certificates, certifications and apprenticeships - more than half of which generally sit outside of traditional institutions of higher education.

"Today's education and training landscape is vast, complex and only continues to grow. That presents both massive opportunities - and profound risks - for individuals deciding where to spend their educational time and money," said Scott Cheney, CEO of Credential Engine. "This work is all about transparency. Transparency for individuals trying to make sense of that market, employers trying to understand and quantify skills, and policymakers working to invest in the development of pathways to economic mobility."

Now in its fifth year, the increased accounting of the total number of credentials reflects an improved methodology, better data and increased participation from governors who are actively supporting Credential Engine's work to document the number of credentials issues within their states.

"A reliable and transparent understanding of credentials is absolutely essential to build an equitable, inclusive state economy that is responsive to the needs of an increasingly diverse population," said Eleni Papadakis, executive director, Washington Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. "In Washington, we view building a shared credential language as critical to eliminating the skills mismatch often experienced by our employers. Credential transparency is about

better data integration across our education and workforce data systems - and putting powerful information in the hands of learners."

Since its founding in 2016, Credential Engine has launched partnerships with 29 states and regions, and across 2 regional consortia. The organization's work is advanced by expert advisory groups which draw from academics, employers and think tanks focused on education technology, equity, quality assurance, and occupational licenses.

"Investing in credential transparency is important to help people understand the various education and training pathways that lead to economic mobility," said Dr. Barbara Gellman-Danley, chair of the Credential Engine board and president of the Higher Learning Commision. "As the credential landscape continues to evolve, Credential Engine is committed to ensuring the education, workforce, and economic development needs of states and communities are being met."

You can read the report here.

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About Credential Engine: Credential Engine is a nonprofit whose mission is to map the credential landscape with clear and consistent information, fueling the creation of resources that empower people to find the pathways that are best for them. Credential Engine's Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL) is the clear standard for richly describing credentials, competency, quality, outcome, pathway, and other essential information as linked, open, interoperable data on the semantic web. Learn more about Credential Engine at credentialengine.org.