MEMORANDUM

TO: James Mower, Senate Chair
FROM: Havidán Rodríguez, President
DATE: April 9, 2019
SUBJECT: Senate Bill Approval

I am pleased to approve the following Senate Bill, which was recommended following approval by the University Senate at its meeting of March 25, 2018:

Senate Bill 1819-10: PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH MICRO-CREDENTIALING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Approved: 

Havidán Rodríguez, President
Proposed by: Graduate Academic Council
Undergraduate Academic Council
University Policy and Planning Council

Date: March 25, 2019

Proposal to Establish Micro-Credentialing Policy and Procedure

IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED THAT THE FOLLOWING BE ADOPTED:

1. That the University Senate approves the attached program proposal as submitted by the Center for Experiential Education and approved by GAC, UAC, and UPPC.

2. That this takes effect for the Fall 2019 semester.

3. That this proposal be forwarded to President Havidán Rodríguez for approval.
Micro-Credentials at the University at Albany
Developed by Dr. Debra Gelinas, Assistant Vice Provost for Applied Learning
Proposal Version 4.0, March 2019

The Lumina Foundation (2015) defines a credential as “a documented award by a responsible and authorized body that has determined that an individual has achieved specific learning outcomes relative to a given standard”. According to SUNY, micro-credentials verify, validate and attest that students have acquired specific skills and/or competencies. They are endorsed by the issuing institution, having been developed through established faculty governance processes and are designed to be portable, meaningful and high quality. Micro-credentials motivate students to persist toward degree completion, help learners prepare for careers and stand out to employers, stack toward larger credentials, and support lifelong learning through “upskilling” opportunities for professionals. They may be offered at the undergraduate and/or graduate level, to matriculated or non-matriculated students.

At UAlbany, micro-credentials are not certificate programs. Certificate programs must be registered with SUNY and the State Education Department. Micro-credentials at UAlbany will be developed and approved locally. Micro-credentials will be issued as an icon called a digital badge, not on the academic transcript, but on an online credentialing platform called Credly Acclaim (with whom SUNY has an existing relationship). Micro-credentials should be industry-aligned and may be comprised of academic assignments in identified courses, workshop attendance, internships or other experiential learning, and/or a variety of co-curricular experiences. Badges have become the industry standard for documenting digital credentials. They enable learners to track, display and articulate verified evidence of skill development. While digital credentials will not be academic credit-bearing at UAlbany, they will contain metadata, including information regarding the issuing institution, the date earned, the criteria required to earn the badge, and the associated evidence related to the awarded badge. Credly Acclaim badges are transferable and portable – they can be posted to a variety of online platforms, including LinkedIn, digital portfolios, websites, and resumes.

Three different types of micro-credentials will be offered at UAlbany:

1. **Professional Pathways.** Mapped to skills and competencies desired in a particular professional field, these pathways generally include academic courses and experiential learning. Often they will be interdisciplinary. Examples may include areas like artificial intelligence, arts administration, or climate action. Specific academic assignments will be identified in each course that map to the skills and competencies identified for the particular professional field.

2. **Skill Badges.** Offered to current students and complementing the curriculum, these are smaller badges that help earners obtain and demonstrate skills. These can include, for example, industry-recognized “hard” skills like a programming language or graphic design, or “soft” skills such as metaliteracy (already at UAlbany University Libraries) or critical thinking. These badges can be stand-alone or built into a course, but they are not academic credit-bearing opportunities.

3. **Continuing Education Badges.** Used for lifelong learning, professional training in collaboration with employers, or a smaller version of a larger graduate or certificate program (often as a way recruit individuals to enroll in those programs). For example, a licensed social worker may take a continuing education course
and participate in three related workshops to earn a badge. Schools or colleges may also partner with a company to offer a training program that leads to a micro-credential.

**Demand from Employers:**

Micro-credentials can help bridge the gap from college to career. While employers continue to acknowledge the importance of a college degree, they report that resumes and transcripts do not always show fully the skills new graduates bring to the workforce. They want potential employees to be better at articulating and demonstrating skills and competencies developed through courses, internships, and co-curricular experiences. In addition, individuals are also seeking opportunities for post-college lifelong learning in order to stay professionally relevant or change careers. According to a [2018 Northeastern University study](#), over 60% of employers surveyed have either “made a formal effort” or are “exploring and considering” moving toward a skills or competency-based hiring strategy. In addition, employers are increasingly using software with keyword filters that search for resumes with certain skills necessary for that job or field. Those who do not have those keywords listed on their resumes are filtered out by the software and never reviewed by a hiring manager. Credly Acclaim addresses this issue by collecting job postings from across the internet that list skills related to specific badges. Badge earners can then see job postings that include the skills and competencies listed in the badge’s metadata. Digital credentials offer a visual representation of skills that are validated by the university. Students who better understand and can articulate that they have these skills are better positioned for post-graduation professional success.

**Pricing and Financial Aid:**

Students will be charged standard tuition rates for any academic credit-bearing courses included in micro-credentials. Courses taken as part of a micro-credentialing program at UAlbany must fit into the student’s program of study in order to be covered by financial aid.

As with continuing education courses, UAlbany schools and colleges currently have the discretion to charge a fee for badges that do not include credit-bearing courses since there is no standard tuition charged for participation. This is not required and in many cases charging students may not be a good strategy. There is no standard pricing for micro-credentialing and pricing often depends on what the market for a particular field dictates. Traditional financial aid programs do not cover the cost of micro-credentials or continuing education courses.

**Evidence of Learning:**

Students are awarded a micro-credential based on their ability to demonstrate that they have obtained certain competencies and skills. This is made tangible through evidence that will be uploaded to the digital badge on Credly Acclaim. Students only earn the micro-credential if they submit that evidence. In the case of micro-credentials built into courses, one of the designated competency-based assignments may be used as evidence. Those who plan to offer skills or continuing education badges not built into courses should outline how participants will create physical evidence of skill/competency obtainment and a plan for assessment.

Please note: Materials or assignments related to a micro-credential may be embedded into an existing course and students may be required to complete that work as part of a course. However, since Credly Acclaim is an outward facing platform and the evidence required to earn a micro-credential must be posted online, students should be
given the opportunity to opt out of submitting the evidence necessary to earn the micro-credential. Students who do not submit the evidence will not earn the micro-credential or the associated digital badge, but will earn credit in the course for completing the assignment.

Examples of evidence from other institutions, include:

**Western Michigan University / Hawthorn College of Business Badge**
For each badge, students may compose a written reflection paper, set up an online photo album of their experiences or post a YouTube video where they discuss what they learned. This evidence should relate to the badge experience.

**Illinois State University / Honors Program “Discovering Dimensions” Badge**
Students are expected to create infographics that capture connections between course content and interviews facilitated with professionals. This evidence is evaluated by Honors Mindset Seminar instructors. Students who submit evidence earning an "excellent" or "exceptional" rating are issued badges.

**Approval Process:**
Faculty and/or departments will develop micro-credentials through a proposal process centralized in the Center for Experiential Education (CEE), which will convene a committee of faculty and staff to review and approve them. The CEE will report approved micro-credentials to the Graduate Academic Council (GAC) for those at the graduate level, and to the Undergraduate Academic Council (UAC) for those at the undergraduate level. The review and approval process will allow the university to catalogue micro-credentialing opportunities and provide an efficient and consistent mechanism for tracking and managing badges on Credly Acclaim. Any new courses created in the process of developing a micro-credential must go through the normal course approval process.

**Implementation Process:**
The unit offering the micro-credential will be required to track student progress toward earning the credential, assess student learning, and collect evidence of skill obtainment. With the support of the Center for Experiential Education, departments will be able to issue approved micro-credentials on Credly Acclaim. Departments are responsible for marketing their micro-credentials to potential participants and advising students about the programs, as they would with other programs offered by their department.

Micro-credentials are flexible with regard to how issuers create them, define their use, and develop their criteria. While there is no minimum or maximum number of hours or experiences required for a student to earn a micro-credential, they must be of high-quality, meaningful, and competency-based. For example, if the experience can serve as a single bullet point description on a resume, it is likely not complex enough to be a micro-credential.

The Center for Experiential Education provides the following resources to departments wishing to issue micro-credentials:

- Support designing and creating the digital badge that will be posted on Credly. Design criteria will be developed as part of the Credly implementation process.
- Assistance developing micro-credentials, including connecting faculty to employers.
• Maintaining institutional catalogue of university micro-credentials and university-wide website about UAlbany’s micro-credentialing program.

Other SUNY Programs:

Micro-credentialing is increasingly common and has become a priority for SUNY. The three other SUNY university centers are already awarding micro-credentials. All use Credly Acclaim to issue digital credentials.

Stony Brook University
Stony Brook offers micro-credentials in several departments across campus, but the most significant program is within School of Professional Development and this program offers oversight and direction to the smaller programs.

University at Buffalo
The University at Buffalo has created an Office of Micro-Credentialing, housed within the Office of the Provost, specifically to address the micro-credentialing needs of the university. Ten micro-credentials are currently being offered, with plans to add more in the future.

Binghamton University
The Thomas J. Watson School of Engineering and Applied Science has built badges into their continuing education offerings. They also offer digital badges to faculty and staff through the University Center for Training and Development.

Recommended Policy/Procedure for Micro-Credentialing at UAlbany:

Micro-credentials at UAlbany are a collection of courses and/or experiences that help students develop and document professional skills and competencies. The University at Albany will offer three types of micro-credentials: Professional Pathways, Skill Badges, and Continuing Education Badges. Micro-credentials will be issued as an icon called a digital badge. They will not appear on the academic transcript, but on an online credentialing platform called Credly Acclaim. Students will earn a micro-credential based on tangible evidence of competencies and skills that they will upload to the digital badge on Credly Acclaim.

Faculty and/or departments will develop micro-credentials through a proposal process centralized in the Center for Experiential Education (CEE), which will convene a committee of faculty and staff to review and approve them. This committee will include a current member of the Undergraduate Academic Council (UAC) and a current member of the Graduate Academic Council (GAC). The CEE will report approved micro-credentials to GAC for those at the graduate level, to UAC for those at the undergraduate level, and all approved micro-credentials to the Senate Executive Committee.
When submitting a program proposal please submit this form to indicate the resource implications of the proposal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal Title:</th>
<th>Micro-Credentialing Policy and Procedure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College or School</td>
<td>Academic Affairs Department Office of the Provost/CEE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Director or Sponsor</td>
<td>Debra Gelinas Email <a href="mailto:dgelinas@albany.edu">dgelinas@albany.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Category</td>
<td>□ Program Proposal □ Other (describe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Type</td>
<td>□ New □ Revision □ Deactivation □ Other (describe)</td>
</tr>
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Does this proposal include any space resource implications? Approx. sq. ft. needed: ____________

Does the Office of Financial Aid identify this as a Gainful Employment Program (GEP)? □ Yes □ No

**Brief Description of Proposal:** (attach additional pages if necessary)

The attached proposal describes micro-credentialing at UAlbany. The proposal includes a recommended micro-credentialing policy, which has been amended based on a discussion (and vote) during the February 11, 2019 Senate Executive Committee meeting.
Is there an impact on other service units? Please attach documentation that you have consulted with each unit listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>ITS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>University Libraries</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Scientific Core Facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Other services (i.e., advisement, parking, facilities, security), please list:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is there an impact on other academic programs? Please list all academic departments consulted regarding impact and attach documentation.

The purpose of this proposal is to establish a policy and procedure that will allow departments to offer micro-credentials if they wish. The only concrete cost associated with the initial launch of a micro-credentialing program campus-wide is a contract with the digital credential platform, Credly Acclaim. That is funded, in part, by a planning grant from SUNY, with the remainder funded by the Center for Experiential Education budget. ITS has agreed to be involved with implementation of the platform. Chairs and/or Deans will be asked to sign off on proposals to establish individual micro-credentials and will be asked to

Faculty and Staff (attach additional pages if necessary)
(a) Describe new faculty hiring needed during the next 3 years
(b) Explain how program will be administered for the purposes of admissions, advising, course offerings, etc. Discuss the available support staff.

Departments offering micro-credentials will be responsible for marketing and advising students about these opportunities. The Center for Experiential Education will host an online catalogue all of UAlbany micro-credentials.
Program Expenses

List all resources that will be engaged specifically as a result of the proposed program (e.g., a new faculty position or additional library resources). If they represent a continuing cost, new resources for a given year should be included in the subsequent year(s), with adjustments for inflation or negotiated compensation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Expense Categories</th>
<th>Expenses (in dollars)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prior to implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Personnel (including faculty and all others)</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) Library</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) Equipment</td>
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<td>(d) Laboratories</td>
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<td>(e) Supplies</td>
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<td>(f) Capital Expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>(g) Student stipends or scholarships</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(h) Other (specify):</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sum of Rows Above</td>
<td>$0</td>
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Explanatory Notes (add additional pages as needed):

Central administration of a campus-wide micro-credentialing program will be housed in the Center for Experiential Education (CEE), which is part of the Office of the Provost. $5,000 is for the Credly Acclaim platform.

Version 2.0 03/23/18
Department Chair: Debra R. Gelinas

2/28/19

Date

Dean

3/4/19

Date

UPPC Chair

Date

- It is the sponsoring department’s responsibility to request and attach all required documentation and to obtain all required signatures (with the exception of the chair of UPPC’s) before presenting the documentation.

- Completed forms should be sent to the Office of Undergraduate Education, the Office of Graduate Education, or both as appropriate.

- When the Chair of UPPC has received the proposal from the appropriate office(s), s/he will notify you that it has been placed on the UPPC agenda and invite you to attend the meeting.