The Michigan Center for Adult College Success

DAVENPORT UNIVERSITY

Partner Profile

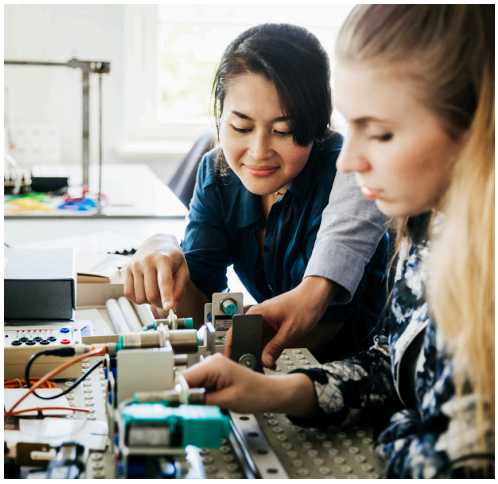
The Mission

Davenport University partnered with the Michigan Center for Adult College Success and Sova through the MI-LEARN Design Lab to expand flexible, workforce-aligned pathways for adult learners. The project centers on embedding industry-aligned, stackable microcredentials into degree programs while strengthening connections to credit for prior learning. Davenport's long-term goal is to integrate at least one microcredential within a degree program in each of its five academic colleges by December 2030, helping adult learners translate prior experience and newly acquired skills into meaningful academic and career progress.

Achievements

Davenport established a university-wide Microcredential Task Force with representation from all five academic colleges and key operational areas. The team developed a shared definition of microcredentials, examined multiple models for embedding credentials into curricula, established a phased implementation plan, and began identifying promising pathways in business, technology, health professions, urban education, and arts and sciences. Davenport also completed the CAEL Adult Learner 360 institutional assessment, launched the corresponding student survey, and incorporated microcredentialing expectations into discussions about the university's broader curriculum framework. To date, 4 of the 5 academic colleges at Davenport have met their goal of embedding at least one microcredential into the curriculum by 2030. However, some academic colleges have gone beyond their goal, embedding multiple stackable microcredentials within their programs.

> *The Design Lab helped Davenport move from exploring individual microcredential opportunities toward building a coordinated, university-wide strategy. The experience reinforced that successful microcredentials must be intentionally designed, validated by employers, accessible to adult learners, and clearly connected to larger academic and career pathways.*
>
> *Dr. Wayne Sneath*
> *Vice Provost for Academics*
>
> *Dr. Mathew Devereaux*
> *Assistant Vice Provost–Assessment*



Insights

The Design Lab reinforced that effective microcredentials must be more than shortened academic offerings or digital badges. They must respond to verified workforce needs, include rigorous assessment, carry recognizable value for employers, and connect (or stack) clearly to larger credentials.

Davenport's exploration also demonstrated that different disciplines may require different models. Some credentials may be completed within a single course, while others may span several courses or incorporate an external industry certification. This flexibility must be balanced with consistent institutional standards for quality, stackability, employer relevance, and credit recognition.

The work further highlighted the importance of engaging employers and advisory boards more intentionally. Traditional advisory-board structures do not always generate the specific, actionable feedback needed to guide credential development. Davenport is therefore exploring more structured methods of gathering industry input and validating market demand before moving new credentials into development.

Looking Ahead

Davenport will use the foundation established through the Design Lab to formalize institutional criteria for microcredential development, select high-potential programs, deepen employer and labor-market engagement, and move initial credentials through curriculum approval and implementation. The university will also continue connecting microcredentials with credit for prior learning so that adults who already possess relevant industry credentials can receive appropriate academic recognition rather than repeat learning they have already mastered.

By 2030, Davenport intends to offer clear, visible pathways demonstrating how short-term credentials can provide immediate workforce value while stacking into associate, bachelor's, and/or graduate degrees.

Leadership and Appreciation

Davenport University's Design Lab efforts were led by Dr. Wayne Sneath and Dr. Mathew Devereaux, working alongside a cross-functional team of faculty and university leaders. Davenport extends special thanks to Rohit Tandon, the university's Sova coach, for his thoughtful guidance, resource sharing, institutional connections, and continued support throughout the planning and design process.

