

## Luzerne County Community College Microcredential Program

The availability of micro-credentials has grown tremendously in the last five years. Micro credentials are flexible, accessible, customized, and timely instructional modules that focus on a particular skill and / or specific content. According to a recent [Inside Higher Education](#) article, there are over one million short-term trainings available in the United States, a 300% increase from 2018 (D’Agostino, 2023). One source, Best Colleges, approximates a 200% increase just in one year, between 2021 and 2022 (Welding, 2024). Equally mind boggling is that Credential Engine estimates that there are almost 60,000 credential providers with less than half of those providers being academic institutions (Weissman, 2024).

All that said, the above statistics should not be that surprising. Over three fourths (78%) of adults who responded to a survey conducted jointly by Straighterline and University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA) said that being able to complete a micro-credential that could be used toward completing degree increased the interest to earn that degree. On the other hand, seventy percent of organizations that were hiring new employees indicated that microcredentials improve workforce quality and are a viable alternative to four-year degrees (Hess, 2023).

Given the popularity of these targeted and specialized short-term trainings, Luzerne County Community College (LCCC) recently developed 32 microcredentials. These inexpensive 15-18 clock hour microcredentials will start to be offered in Spring 2025. There are several reasons for the College’s investment for these homegrown LCCC microcredentials although the market abounds with micro credential providers.

First, students are increasingly looking at accessible, flexible, and streamlined instruction to gain new skills or improve on existing competencies. As President John Yudichak observed, *“The microcredential Certification Program at LCCC represents our steadfast commitment to a new Go Here, Go Fast, and Get Anywhere educational model that helps students find the most accessible, most efficient pathway to career success.”* The microcredentials are offered in a variety of formats including instructor led or self-paced, project-based, and team taught. Delivery is also varied: online, hybrid (mixed online and in person instruction), in person. Again, flexibility and access were key considerations in each micro credential design.

Second, the College has a vast repository of talent as the faculty, administrators, and staff have extensive education, training, and professional experience in the disciplines they teach. In essence, the College leveraged that expertise to provide high quality, precisely delivered, and internally controlled instruction. The content of the microcredentials was also informed by the input of over 900 LCCC employers, alumni, students, and parents.

Third, students earn credit for at least one class when they “stack” or successfully complete one or two additional LCCC micro-credentials. This is the case for all but three of the

currently offered LCCC microcredentials. Additionally, almost two-thirds (65.6%) of the micro-credentials, if successfully completed, can lead to licensure or certification. Therefore, students do not have to commit to a semester, 15-week long class, but have the flexibility to earn credit for a class in smaller and more manageable portions.

Fourth and most importantly, Eighty-six percent of employers indicated that a completed credential strengthened a candidate's job application (Coursera, 2023). Given that many employers in the LCCC service area are medium-sized companies that are homespun, LCCC is relying on its reputation as the largest and most trusted post-secondary institution providing relevant instruction to the community for almost 60 years. With that reputation, the LCCC microcredentials will be more attractive than those offered on a website by an unknown entity.

These thirty-two microcredentials fall into four main categories:

1. Advanced Manufacturing/Skilled Trades
2. Business & Small Business Applications
3. Computer Applications & Programming
4. Digital Design & Marketing

These categories represent the sectors with the largest number of high priority occupations (HPOs) in Luzerne County, regionally, and / or nationally. They also represent emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Cloud Computing adopted and in use by many local companies.

In sum, The focus of the LCCC microcredential program is to ensure the viability of Northeast Pennsylvania and surrounding counties. In part, this is accomplished by helping companies attract qualified employees that can add value to that organization as soon as they are hired. The microcredentials also represent the skills and competencies most sought by local and regional employers. Additionally, those microcredentials are easily accessible, flexible, and amenable to the hardworking residents of Northeast Pennsylvania.

For more information visit Luzerne County Community College's microcredential website: <https://www.luzerne.edu/coned/microcred/>.

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