

Open Academy Microcredential Process Overview
 ESF will be the 52nd SUNY campus to adopt Microcredentials

Prior to January 2024	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Governor Hochul focuses on workforce development. 2. ESF calls for the creation of Microcredentials in the Strategic Plan (Pillar 1, Theme 1, Goal 8; Pillar 1, Theme 2, Goals 1 and 2; Pillar 2, Theme 2, Goal 3). 3. Open Academy awarded funds to develop ESF’s Microcredentials Program. 4. Goal: accelerate the success of our students and campuses by developing a set of initiatives (microcredentials) geared toward advancing our commitment to economic development and upward mobility
Summer 2024	Weekly meetings with SUNY System Admin to develop ESF’s Microcredential Policy and Proposal forms; provide guidance as we develop the microcredential program.
	Policy and Proposal forms created and sent to AAC for review and vote
	Business and Industry partners established and consulted.
	With faculty and industry leading the way, the following microcredentials are in development:
	Immersive Technology (non-credit) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cybersecurity Fundamentals 2. Data Science and Knowledge Discovery 3. Machine Learning and AI 4. Digital Modeling, Serious Games, and Metaverse Technologies
	Sustainability Management (credit-bearing) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainable Design: LEED Foundations and Exam Prep Course 2. Foundations of Sustainability and Systems Thinking 3. Data and Systems Analysis in Sustainability 4. Spatial Data Analysis
	Writing Program (credit-bearing and non-credit options) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Professional Communication Skills 2. Grant Writing Fundamentals
	Environmental Resources Engineering (non-credit) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fundamentals of Engineering Exam Prep Course
	Sustainable Resources Management (credit bearing) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intro to Green Building 2. Essentials of Construction Management
	Environmental Studies (credit-bearing; graduate level) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Environmental Consensus Building and Decision Making
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational Processes established in partnership with ESF’s offices and SUNY • Intake and Registration • Platform for delivery (credit vs non-credit) • Billing • Evaluation • Credly (digital badging) • Focus 2 (career planning and support service for microcredential learners)

Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow window for recruitment efforts to support fall and/or spring 2025 launch. • Policy and Proposal forms to be reviewed and voted on by AG. • Tied to enrollment and revenue generating numbers • Campus decision makers to develop/support a non-credit to degree pathway.
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Some common questions we have received about Microcredentials and our answers are below:

What is the impetus for ESF to put this into practice?

- *In 2018, SUNY became the first university system to establish a policy for microcredentials, leading to rapid program growth.*
- SUNY microcredentials are recognized for their academic rigor, strong ties to business and industry, and their stackability towards certificates and degrees.
- These credentials are developed in collaboration with industry partners to address regional and state priority occupations, ensuring they provide the skills needed for employment or career advancement.
- They are designed to be flexible, innovative, and portable, often serving as steppingstones to further education or career opportunities.
- Successful completion is marked by a digital badge and transcript notation.

What do we mean by “stackability”? What is an example?

Microcredentials serve as great on-ramps to existing degrees and certificates. Therefore, effort and consideration should be made to create microcredentials that are stackable to existing degree and certificate programs when possible.

- An example of a microcredential stacking to a degree or certificate program follows: A department may look at the required courses for their degree program and decide to bundle those courses into four groups of two or three courses each. Each bundle of courses would be one microcredential. If a learner completed all four of those microcredentials, that learner could then be eligible for a degree in that program if they meet any other requirements as determined by the department. The graduate certificates in the Environmental Studies department are a great example of this.
- Note: it is not required that any department create multiple microcredentials that stack into a full degree. Even offering just one microcredential in a department would serve as a valuable on-ramp to the program for learners who might have otherwise thought a degree was out of their reach.

What are SUNY’s reasons for pursuing microcredentials?

- The SUNY Transformation Funds were launched as a proactive initiative by the Governor and Chancellor to rapidly enhance student and campus success. These funds are

designed to support the development of microcredential programs, which are focused on fostering economic growth, providing pathways for career advancement, and addressing urgent educational and training needs in high-demand and emerging fields across various regions.

- **For SUNY campuses like ESF, which faces budget deficits, microcredentials offer a pathway to increase enrollment and financial recovery while maintaining academic quality.**

ESF:

- **Our initiatives aim to develop and enhance degree programs, stackable credentials, and microcredentials** to address high poverty rates in Syracuse and NYS by closing the income gap and meeting local employers' skill needs. We are establishing pathways for participants to earn industry credentials, that promote advancement in high-demand industries.
- **Focusing on Industry Credentials and Green Careers, we plan to serve a diverse learner population**—from high school students to professionals—interested in environmental sustainability or career changes. Our efforts align with New York’s Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, requiring expanded education and training in renewable energy, green building science, environmental science, geospatial analyses, statistics, and data science.
- **Microcredentials will provide flexible, targeted education** that meets the needs of current students, prospective students, adult learners, alumni, industry partners, and K-12 partners.
- **Currently all the microcredentials in development will be offered online expanding our footprint.**

Is there a dollar amount we have from SUNY to implement microcredentials and time frame?

- **ESF received \$422,000 in SUNY Transformation funds with a timeline of two years**, to implement a microcredential program, with a planned launch for fall 2024 to meet agreed-upon deadlines and outcomes. Given our tight timeframe, we must execute these offerings in the spring 2025 semester.
- **Additionally, a second proposal has been submitted for \$700,000 to expand this initiative.** The successful launch of this program is crucial to secure both current and future funding opportunities.

What information and data have been gathered in support of microcredentials through ESF?

- **ESF will be the 52nd SUNY campus to adopt Microcredentials**
 - 221 online, 190 in-person, 119 hybrid
 - 159 non-credit, 371 for credit
 - 82% of current offerings available to non-matriculated students
 - 73% “stackable” to degree programs at their respective campus

- ESF is positioned to meet the evolving regional needs for high-demand skills/workforce development.
- Construction management, sustainability, and green building jobs are rapidly growing. A projected 8% national growth rate and a 17% growth rate in NYS over the next decade will add nearly 2,000 jobs annually in NYS with a median wage of \$126,150. ESF's microcredentials address some of these demands by training students to build energy-efficient, sustainable buildings. Recognizing that not everyone can study in Syracuse, NY, we will offer targeted courses and credentials for those already trained in construction who seek a deeper focus on sustainability and green building practices.
- These positions offer high pay, with a national median wage of \$98,920 and an even higher median wage of \$111,330 in NYS. By expanding our micro-credentials in green technology and related fields, as well as our Construction Management and Sustainable Energy Management programs, ESF will equip students and learners to tackle the critical environmental challenges of our time.

This might relate to strategic goals, might generate revenue, and other good things, but is this what ESF needs to focus on right now?

- ESF calls for the creation of microcredentials in the Strategic Plan (Pillar 1, Theme 1, Goal 8; Pillar 1, Theme 2, Goals 1 and 2; Pillar 2, Theme 2, Goal 3).
- Revenue from microcredentials is expected to begin in Spring 2025, with a launch of 15 microcredentials. These will be a mixture of credit and non-credit options. We are anticipating 10 enrollments for most courses, and a total enrollment for the semester of 185. This would result in the generation of \$122,400 in revenue.
- By Fall 2025, we expect limited growth (since most microcredentials would be entering the 2nd course in their sequence toward completion), and thus would anticipate a total enrollment of about 225 registrations, which would generate approximately \$166,800 in revenue. With anticipated instructional costs of only \$30,000, this would result in a net positive of \$136,800 for the College. This amount would be enough to allow for reinvestment and sustainability of the microcredentials as a program and provide additional revenue for ESF's overall budget.
- While there would be natural fluctuations based on course offerings, our current projections indicate that the microcredential program could net ESF over \$1 million by the end of Spring 2028.

What is the impact on faculty? Is this "another" thing for them to find time to do?

We are looking at how current course offerings can be bundled to create credit bearing microcredentials minimizing the impact on faculty. Faculty will be asked to complete the microcredential proposal form, which includes showing industry support. They might need to revise a course to make sure it includes some kind of "shareable artifact" that

shows mastery and offer a section of their course online. Individual departments retain agency in determining course load for instructors.

How will these microcredentials fit into current programs regarding their individual assessment and assessment of the overarching programs? Is that under the department or Open Academy? Do degree programs need to be updated to include new pathways from these microcredentials?

- Individual assessment and programmatic assessment would remain with the department (consistent with the policy), essentially, they should assess the same way they do for all their courses and their program.
- The programs should not have to be updated to include pathways as the credit bearing MCs would be built from existing credit bearing courses in the program. On the other hand, pathways should be built for the non-credit MCs, a process ongoing amongst stakeholders.

Is there a mechanism for registration?

- Non-matriculated students will use Microsoft Forms for intake, a process currently being piloted with fall visiting students and progressing well. Matriculated student registration will be managed through a new form created by the Registrar's Office. Enrollment confirmation for non-matriculated students in both credit and non-credit microcredentials will follow the existing process for visiting students, which has been effective. Discussions are ongoing about registration for non-credit microcredentials.
- Credit microcredentials will be delivered via Blackboard, while non-credit microcredentials will use Teams, starting with courses managed by Dr. Blower's team.
- Billing will be through the traditional process with the Bursar for credit, and through our Transact platform for non-credit.
- Course evaluations for both credit and non-credit microcredentials will follow the same process as regular course evaluations during the academic year and summer semester.

In summary, ESF's adoption of the SUNY Microcredential program as the 52nd campus will play a crucial role in addressing Syracuse's poverty crisis, meeting the regional workforce demands driven by high-tech industries like Micron, and expanding the college's reach beyond its traditional boundaries. By offering targeted, online microcredentials in areas such as Semiconductor and Green Careers Education, ESF not only addresses these pressing societal needs but also positions itself for increased enrollment and financial recovery, all while maintaining its commitment to academic excellence.