

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

NC State Is With You for Your Life

Re-Envisioning Lifelong Education and Credentialing

Strategic Planning Task Force Report, July 2020

Introduction

As the land-grant “people’s university,” NC State plays a pivotal role in serving and educating individuals throughout the state of North Carolina and beyond. In addition to its undergraduate and graduate programs, NC State continues to advance its lifelong education and credential offerings that truly span a lifetime. These programs provide exceptional value to North Carolinians, as well as those outside the state, whether it’s youth camps and K-12 programs, career preparation and skills enhancement, or simply fulfilling an individual’s desire to never stop learning.

The landscape of higher education continues to change and broaden, providing additional opportunities for NC State to serve a greater number of individuals in their pursuit of knowledge and skills. We recognize that for many generations, colleges and universities have proven the value of bachelor’s, master’s, and doctorate degrees. However, over the last few decades, new forms of credentials - from certificates to digital badges to micro-credentials - have allowed institutions of higher education to expand traditional methods of recognizing educational achievement. These credentials, driven by the need to provide timely and subject-focused instruction, allow us to provide educational value to individuals across a lifetime.

The idea of lifelong education has become more important than ever. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics [suggests](#) that individuals have more than 12 jobs over the course of their careers. Providing a form of credentialing is needed to show their additional acquired expertise, allowing them to advance within their current environment or change their environment altogether.

The opportunity is great.

NC State is already a trusted partner in lifelong learning, and the opportunity to enhance and expand our footprint in this space is an important one. Demographics, coupled with an increased interest in continuing education and spurred in large part by the need for the workforce to stay current with a dynamic and fast-changing workplace, ensure large and eager cohorts of future lifelong learners are looking to enhance their personal and professional lives. Add to that recent and future technological advances that hold the promise of new and engaging modes of content delivery, and the picture of a large, vibrant, and dynamic lifelong learning enterprise becomes clear.

In this report, the task force explores what the future of lifelong education could look like at NC State.

Notes:

- For the purposes of this report, the task force used the following working definitions:
 - Lifelong education: Providing flexible, just-in-time education that meets the changing needs of an individual throughout their lifetime - including professional development to get ahead in their multiple careers, as well as personal enrichment opportunities.
 - Alternative credentials: Include certificates, micro-credentials, digital badges, or micro-certificates that signal specific competencies, certification, and sometimes licensure, that support learners throughout their lifetime.
- In order to make informed decisions regarding lifelong learning and credentialing, the task force examined other institutions of higher learning, including Northeastern University, Harvard University, UC-Irvine, Washington State University, University of Washington, Northwestern University, Arizona State University, Rutgers University, University of Wisconsin - Madison, and Georgia Institute of Technology.
- To reflect thoughts and opinions from key stakeholders across campus, the task force created a “Re-envisioning Life-Long Education and Credentialing Questionnaire.” The responses can be found [here](#).
- Supporting documents used by the task force to create this report can be found [here](#).

The Challenges

NC State is not alone in envisioning the very promising future of lifelong learning. Continuing education and lifelong learning are historically associated with a mix of both in-person and online instruction. Recent events show that while interest in in-person learning remains strong, online learning also presents unique benefits and opportunities — even for “local learners” in geographic proximity to the provider. The current environment has accelerated acceptance and adoption of online learning; innovation has abounded, workarounds have been created, and barriers have been broken down.

Technological advances will continue to make online learning more attractive - and competitive - with in-person delivery. Therein lies the root of the challenges to achieving NC State’s lifelong learning goals—global opportunities for lifelong learners will be numerous, varied, and attractive, and competition for learners will be keen. As we know, an educational enterprise without sufficient students has a bleak future.

In order to provide valuable education that spans a lifetime, we must remember that alumni engagement must be far more holistic than focusing primarily on alumni giving. To that end, we should make an effort to thoroughly understand what our alumni are seeking from the university. Our large and engaged alumni base wants to feel valued by their alma mater throughout their lifespan - and providing lifelong education to this constituency is key.

To remain a viable and attractive alternative for lifelong learners, NC State must be prepared to compete with other institutions looking to tap into the same market. We must deliver more value than competitors like Wake Tech, UNC-Chapel Hill, and a host of other universities who will also heavily target the same population looking to enhance their knowledge and skillset through lifelong learning and credentialing.

As we examine these possibilities, we have two key questions to consider: How can NC State be price-competitive? And, if we cannot be price-competitive, what is our unique selling proposition to warrant the higher price tag?

To meet these challenges, we must offer content that lifelong learners and their employers want and need—and deliver it when and how they want and need it. We must be responsive to the pace of business and industry while learning how to incorporate and adopt an agile culture and practices. We must ensure that content is delivered efficiently and effectively with an eye to both learner costs and sustainable economic models. Additionally, we must ensure that prospective lifelong learners are aware of our offerings through creative and targeted marketing.

To this end, we have identified four primary challenges:

1. Marketing and advertising
2. Creation and delivery of relevant, timely, attractive, and effective content
3. A flexible-funding model that enables NC State to be competitive in a global market of lifelong learners
4. Creation of an agile, coordinated infrastructure that enables all these processes and decisions

Challenge 1: Marketing and Advertising

Marketing entails everything from web presence to paid advertising and encompasses every communication and touchpoint. How do we nurture and develop lifelong Wolfpack learners—from their first interaction at a youth camp into credit degree programs and later through professional development and post-career personal enrichment? We must recognize that even our lifelong learning alumni will be courted by other institutions' programs. The reality is that programs from our peer and aspirational institutions, and possibly even elite, Ivy League schools, will vie for their attention and lifelong learning dollars.

As a university, we must solidify our definition of lifelong education (see: introductory notes) and who we are trying to reach, and then identify all the entities on campus who are current and/or potential providers of such programs to get them involved. Once those units are identified, we need to determine the appropriate person within each unit to participate in the working group.

Multiple units on campus offer similar programs, although the format, content, and pricing may vary. If we can't readily identify all of the offerings that qualify as lifelong learning, how can our target audience? We shouldn't force them to search hundreds of subpages to find all potential offerings that may interest them. We must offer an easy-to-find, easy-to-navigate, one-stop-shopping experience.

Our silos have not only resulted in isolated programs, but also individualized databases and communication efforts. We do not have a complete snapshot of what our target lifelong learner "looks" like, nor information relating to how they interact with NC State in terms of contact information, interests, participation, and enrollment. A consummate image would allow for more accurate, targeted marketing to individuals, which would also translate into cost savings. Resources will need to be directed toward understanding market needs and opportunities.

An Amazon-like lifelong-learning shopping portal may help to bring customers to our doorstep, but then we must entice them to buy our product. So how will we earn our 4- and 5-star ratings?

Challenge 2: Content Creation and Delivery

We will earn our 4- and 5-star ratings by having the most relevant and valuable content. To achieve this, technology, financial incentives for instructors, as well as curriculum design are key factors we must examine.

Content Creation

We have creative and dedicated faculty and staff who can deliver the required content provided the university creates a framework for encouraging and rewarding the development of lifelong learning content. The challenge is identifying all the relevant players and bringing them to the table to work in collaboration. Additionally, this content must be based on a market-needs analysis.

Content Delivery

NC State is home to incredibly dynamic and creative instructors. Ensuring they have the means and technology to enable them to make full use of their talents is essential. The big question is whether this can be done in a way that keeps costs low, while ensuring substantiality of the endeavor. As a university, we have a long track record in terms of online delivery (Engineering Online, DELTA) and in-person continuing education (McKimmon Center). One option to strengthen our position in the state is to create multiple mini-McKimmon centers around North Carolina (in existing extension facilities) where our faculty and staff can deliver in-person continuing education courses. This would be akin to the outreach activities of the NC Symphony which gives concerts throughout the state, not just at Duke Energy Hall.

In devising our lifelong education model, we need to consider the changing business environment, face of education, and demographics.

Lifelong learning will have a strong online mode of delivery. Programs that make the remote, online learning experience effectively indistinguishable from the on-campus, in-person learning experience will have a competitive edge, both in quality and marketability, as well as an efficiency edge in terms of required resources. Recent events have revealed the need for hybrid *online* and *in-person* versions of the same course. We are not far from the day when every in-person class is recorded, edited, and digitally-enhanced with minimally more instructor effort than what is now required to teach in-person only.

In this mode of operation, in-person students are served as they always have been, with the important added advantage that missed classroom lectures are immediately available for viewing. Lifelong learners will have access to the same course material as on-campus students, thereby blurring the distinction between on-campus degree programs and online degree programs.

Degree-directed lifelong learning does not need to be bound by the standard three-credit course increment of learning. Herein lies a role for stackable credentials that entail formidable, but not overwhelming, challenges of both pedagogical and administrative nature. Experience suggests that some lifelong learners come looking for the training they need to be successful in their current jobs but want to do so with the possibility of eventually receiving a degree.

Some employers think in terms of employee's subject-area Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs). Although opinions vary on the exact nature of the distinctions among K, S, and A, it is not too far off the mark to think of 1) Knowledge of a subject as an appreciation of why it is important and what it has to offer; 2) Skills as a deeper understanding that enables informed use of Knowledge; and 3) Abilities as the facility to apply Knowledge. For example, in the realm of data science, Knowledge is an appreciation of the various ways data science can contribute to the efficient operation of an enterprise; Skills refers to a sufficient understanding of machine-learning (ML), for example, to act advantageously on results of an ML analysis; and Abilities refers to being able to generate ML results (data wrangling, programming, and output summarization).

This explanation of KSAs is to introduce the advantages of arranging, for example, a three-credit course in ML so that one-third of the course conveys Knowledge of ML, another third develops Skills, and the final third imparts ML Abilities. Each third could be taken independently - in any order - for a single credit, or "stacked" to satisfy the three-credit course requirements for a degree. The administrative challenge is for the university to develop procedures to approve and offer stackable courses.

Challenge 3: Funding Model

Creating and delivering high-quality content that is attractive to a wide audience depends crucially on a funding model that 1) offers appropriate incentives and rewards to Departments and faculty as a motivation for engaging and participating in lifelong education, and 2) adopts a well-defined structure, with variable price points, that is widely applicable across programs within the university, external partners, as well as the various target audiences of lifelong learners. The challenge will be to select the model features so as to encourage innovation in developing high-quality content at a competitive price.

A common complaint from online degree program directors is the prohibitive costs of NC State's online program for out-of-state students. While our in-state costs are very reasonable, we are not competitive with other online degree programs for out-of-state students. As a result, our online programs are relatively small and cater mostly to in-state professionals. These small online programs are financially viable because they leverage existing on-campus resources (i.e., faculty, technology, infrastructure) for content creation; at the same time, online students have access to the same high-quality content as on-campus students. Non-degree lifelong learning programs, on the other hand, are neither constrained by the in-state/out-of-state tuition dichotomy nor will they necessarily rely on content whose cost has been amortized over a large group of on-campus students.

Lifelong learning programs will have to find a sweet spot between scale and cost to deliver a product that is both high-quality and attractive to a wide range of price-conscious learners.

Challenge 4: Agile Infrastructure

In order to succeed as a premium provider of lifelong learning and credentialing, NC State must remain agile in its infrastructure. While there are some organizations that are working to develop a generally accepted industry standard, there is no industry-standard for badging and credentialing – leading some employers or potential participants to question the validity and value of badges, certificates, or credentials.

Our key audiences must know what an NC State credential means—that it corresponds to an evidence-based, tangible representation of their skill and achievement that they can share with others, including - but not limited to - employers. We must create an innovative and agile approval system in which expectations for participation are transparent and flexible.

Our Current Situation

To date, NC State offers a wide array of relevant lifelong education possibilities, though they may be decentralized and difficult to place in a broader university context because they differ greatly from each other. A first step toward grasping a possible structure for these current offerings is to sort them into a few categories with different purposes and different forms of credentialing. Defined categories can include youth development, services to current faculty,

staff and students, professional advancement, corporate partnerships, and personal enrichment.

After identifying groups and categories, we must consider - in the cases where credentialing is warranted - how each group can or should be credentialed. For example, the camps and summer activities offered to community youth in the summer do not typically offer a credential. Personal enrichment activities like [Osher Lifelong Learning Institute \(OLLI\)](#) and [Association of Retired Faculty \(ARF\)](#) also do not offer credentials, although we can leverage professional advancement activities that already do. We could also examine programs where the credential may be offered as a badge, rather than an externally accredited credential. Badging may be used for both credit and not-for-credit programs.

We recognize the cost of each activity for the learners, as well as the compensation for facilitators and instructors, will be an important consideration. Many activities that we offer, from summer camp to informational technology (IT) training, charge some sort of fee. Notably, “cost” is a broad term; we should not limit it exclusively to money. The cost of time, energy, and other resources for the learner should be justifiable by the quality of the guidance, expertise, care, connections, and other potential benefits that NC State offers.

The learner should believe that spending their time participating in an NC State program will be worth every dollar and minute. Similarly, the time, energy, and resources expended by facilitators and instructors should be advantageous, rather than draining and burdensome. The system should be symbiotic and flexible.

However, to fully understand costs, we must first identify our primary goals. To enhance the NC State brand? To reach a larger audience? We must know the end-goals before we can assess the cost-effectiveness or metrics of success.

Identifying and reaching various groups in a focused way is critical. Pinpointing a specific audience for our predefined activity categories should help with marketing strategies. For example, faculty and staff wellness programs are for faculty and staff. Linking certain populations to activity categories shapes our scope, but it should not rigidly exclude those who may not “fit” in our predetermined groupings. Our lifelong learning campaign should be adaptable. The same IT training concepts taught to a 40-year-old learner can be modified for a 13-year-old student participating in an after-school program.

NC State offers a wide variety of non-credit programs – as identified by an external contractor’s review of the NC State website. You will find a sampling of programs identified by committee members in the report’s Appendix. While we may not have the resources to offer all things to all audiences, it would be useful to consider creating a platform that aggregates lifelong activities from many sources - including those outside the university. Offering a one-stop-shop for educational, professional, and personal enrichment to search through will benefit both the learner and university.

Recommended Goals & Strategies

In looking to the future, the task force proposes NC State pursue a bold strategy: **to become the “Amazon.com” for lifelong learning and credentialing—a one-stop-shop for learning opportunities at NC State and with its partners.** This will be accomplished by creating Amazon.com-like sophisticated search engines, robust product offerings, user-targeted branding and communication strategies, along with innovative and agile internal processes.

The new digital infrastructure to be created will offer simple and user-friendly access for not only those seeking lifelong learning opportunities but also university faculty and staff and partners wishing to add their programs and courses to the digital infrastructure.

Goal 1: Develop an integrated infrastructure and database connecting and collecting information across all degree and credentialing programs at NC State.

Whereas the development of an integrated infrastructure and database can be seen as a strategy, the significant changes envisioned for this proposed infrastructure elevate such development to the level of a goal.

This integrated infrastructure and database will not only connect all systems and programs within NC State, it will do so with a user-benefit and experience as the framing process. By emphasizing the external value of NC State offerings, the process will also support the approval of new programs, transitions between degree and credentialing programs, as well as easily allow for the implementation of innovative funding models and payment structures. Internally, this infrastructure and database will transform the work we do at the university, with easy access to all appropriate information for all those working at the university.

Such agile technology has the potential to support more integrated and interdisciplinary approaches to all learning opportunities, allowing for lifelong learning experiences and programmatic innovations. It can change the way NC State conceives of its programs, augmenting opportunities offered to all learners. The integration of existing and novel learning opportunities across campus into this framework needs to be easy and stress-free, bringing enough participant benefits to encourage their integration into the system.

For current and potential NC State learners, this infrastructure will operate as an easily searchable mechanism allowing them to quickly find what they need. An integrated system will allow NC State to:

- Facilitate the work of faculty, staff, and programs interested in participating
- Have programs that talk to each other within NC State
- Facilitate a funding model
- Use technology to facilitate collaborative work
- Demonstrate the value of participating in the infrastructure
- Provide easy access for faculty and staff to add their programs
- Provide easy access for users

- Facilitate the development of a pricing model that is win-win for learners, university faculty/staff, corporate partners, and programming partners (such as the NC Community College System)

Goal 2: Create a sophisticated branding strategy for targeted audiences to highlight NC State’s lifelong learning and credentialing programs.

Without adding a single additional program, NC State offers a plethora of opportunities for lifelong education, from pre-college through retirement years. To set NC State apart from its peers, we must develop a sophisticated branding and communication plan, along with the financial resources necessary to make it a high priority. Very few universities have set a high bar when it comes to the “appearance” of making lifelong education and credentialing a top priority, which is proven by the difficulty experienced when trying to navigate each organization’s website to locate its lifelong education offerings.

NC State will take the lead and set the bar high.

As a land-grant university, NC State will become the university of choice for personal and professional development, providing learning opportunities for people of all ages within and outside the state of North Carolina. It will do this by providing a visible and easy-to-navigate website of both credit and not-for-credit offerings for lifelong education and credentialing.

Lifelong learning opportunities will be directed to five broad audiences:

- Youth Development
- Undergraduate and Graduate Students
- Professional Advancement
- Corporate Partners
- Personal Enrichment

A sophisticated search engine will allow searches via audience, purpose, and format, forming a type of matrix for searching.

Following the development of an internal infrastructure to serve as the central point of contact for colleges and units to access and input their programs, the university will develop an inclusive marketing and communication strategy reflective of the population segments that are the primary target populations for the various programs (see above).

Critical to its success is working with NC State’s branding team to make the branding distinctive, beginning with a “catchy” name, as well as sub-group names to generate interest and excitement.

In a phased approach to branding, the university should begin with its captive audience - current students - making them aware of all of the lifelong learning opportunities offered to them as current students, and later as graduates.

While perhaps not intuitive, the success of expanding the university's lifelong education and credentialing program will require the university's investment in the development of a central internal infrastructure for programs and creation of a robust and engaging branding plan, as well as the development of new programs.

We can, and indeed will, become the Amazon.com for lifelong learning and credentialing.

Goal 3: Identify a shared definition for a credential and establish a flexible and unified framework for partner participation.

As previously mentioned, NC State currently offers a vast array of individual learning opportunities that extend beyond the credit-bearing curriculum. To unify and expand participation in our vision of a meaningful, high-quality NC State lifelong learning program, we need to provide reliable structure and support for two essential constituencies: our learners and our leaders.

Our learners need to know what an NC State credential means—that it corresponds to an evidence-based, tangible representation of their skill and achievement. They can then confidently share this achievement with others, including but not limited to employers. Our leaders, meaning the campus partners who will integrate existing and new offerings into this uniquely branded suite of options, need an agile approval system in which expectations for participation are transparent and flexible.

An NC State credential - whether credit or noncredit, paper or digital - means excellent quality for a good value. Our lifelong learning opportunities should, therefore, include:

- At least one measurable learning outcome that focuses on learner achievement;
- An “artifact,” or work product, that demonstrates achievement of that outcome;
- A reflection component;
- A primary point-of-contact within the credential's “home unit” who will interface with the standing committee (see below) on lifelong learning and credentialing; and
- One or more people within the home unit who are designated as reviewers and qualified to approve learners' credentials.

To facilitate the approval process for a university program's inclusion within the lifelong learning suite, we recommend a flexible overarching structure of a standing committee, consisting, like this task force, of representatives from the campus units who have experience working in this space (e.g., Continuing Education, the Graduate School, Executive Education, the Libraries, DELTA, Extension, the Alumni Association). Additionally, this committee should include faculty and student representation.

The primary role of the committee will be to provide direction and support to campus collaborators in order to facilitate the process of creating and integrating offerings within the lifelong learning suite. Its secondary role will be to collect and analyze feedback from current

and potential internal collaborators and external partners, including key learner constituencies, to identify areas for innovation. The university should consider a process where programs are allowed to start before a complete review to enable units to respond quickly to market demands and be agile.

To facilitate the process of marketing, awarding, and communicating credentials, and to promote stackable programming, we recommend the adoption of an NC State-branded digital credentialing platform (i.e., “digital badges”). The Graduate School, Executive Education, Libraries, and DELTA have done work in this space for graduate students/postdocs, industry/external partners, and undergraduate students/faculty. This work should be harnessed into a single, branded effort to maximize its reach and impact. We want to present one front door to the learners we serve—even though behind the scenes, there will be flexible pathways for individual unit participation.

The standing committee and campus collaborators should work together with the NC State Communications team to articulate the value of our credentials to learners, employers, and programming providers.

Goal 4: Integrate and create seamless transitions between credentialing and degree programs.

To amplify NC State’s student and alumni communities, transitioning between credentialing and degree programs should be a simple process, with students receiving similar treatments and opportunities under the larger university banner. This seamless transition must be developed in partnership with accreditation agencies and provide students maximum flexibility. When credentialing and traditional degree-based courses are all part of the university mission, vision, and goals, and when they are all submitted to rigorous approval and quality-control processes while maintaining high-levels of academic integrity, students can be assured that all their NC State learning experiences are recognized and valued.

The integration and transition between credentialing and degree programs must be bi-directional. Allowing students in degree programs to participate in credentialing opportunities can enhance their knowledge, marketability, development of specific competencies, and access to knowledge currently in demand. It also allows degree students to engage with practitioners and other professionals who might be seeking credentialing. These experiences for degree students have to be considered in the funding model for degree programs.

At the same time, allowing those seeking credentialing to stack a collection of work, when appropriate and approved by departments, so that it counts as credits toward a degree program encourages those pursuing credentialing opportunities to consider engaging in more formal degree programs and augmenting their connections to NC State. This integration can be facilitated by the integrated infrastructure and should be clearly emphasized as an NC State advantage in the branding and communication campaign.

The seamless transition between credentialing and degree programs has to bring advantages to participating departments. Securing college and department endorsement for such articulation is key. Making a seamless transition between credentialing and degree programs can also support faculty in counting their work on credentialing programs toward their workload, as well as reappointment, promotion, and tenure processes. Developing a measure that assigns some form of credit hour production to these credentialing opportunities can also increase faculty and departmental participation in these programs.

Overall, blurring the lines between credentialing and degree programs allows NC State to be an innovative leader in the field, offering high-quality learning opportunities to all those who seek to learn with our faculty. The portability and stackability of credentialing opportunities that reflect the values of NC State allow for this connection, ensuring all learners the opportunity to take charge of their own education.

The following strategies support the integration of credentialing and degree programs:

1. Create a single, agile process for approving credentialing initiatives at the university that assures program developers the capacity to quickly reach potential learners in a timely manner while ensuring the quality of an NC State-approved product.
2. Develop the capacity to connect credentialing programs and degree programs, joining these opportunities to specific colleges and departments as appropriate.
3. Integrate faculty work in these two types of programs, making sure both count for all faculty advancement within the university.

Goal 5: Engage external partners.

Implementing the goals of the task force will be more successful with the strong support of NC State's extensive network of external partners. Our pool of external relationships can be defined in several ways:

Organizational leaders who have found benefit in partnering with NC State or benefiting from our services. Examples are reflected in research and student projects, extension unit partners, Centennial Campus members, etc.

Organizations not directly affiliated with the university but that work with our leading experts, respect and value what they have to offer, and - by extension - how NC State provides support to their efforts. These individuals can be found in many sectors, such as those at Ft. Bragg.

Academic peers who recognize the service mentality and openness to partnerships we have fostered here at NC State. This should include our UNC System peers, Community College members, and universities outside North Carolina.

The general community stakeholders in the university's success, not just here in Raleigh but communities across the state in areas where NC State extension efforts have provided critical support.

Organizations that actively recruit students and have found the university to be a valuable resource for strong, humble future leaders.

The army of NC State alumni who, for many years, have attained the largest annual graduation rate of any university in the state, and who on the whole prefer to stay close to home.

This incredible network is exciting, but tapping into this resource can present challenges. Motivating our various constituents for a particular purpose has been difficult as they, and we, have limited their connection for the most part to the specific entity from whom they draw direct value. In part, this may be simply a factor of our decentralized structure and processes, but each unit also feels the uncertainty and fear that would come from their contacts being an open target for every university opportunity.

The game-changer with external relationships, as we've seen in articles about universities that have seen a significant impact from these relationships, appears to come from allowing these individuals the opportunity to play an active role in the university and see 'behind the curtain.'

Arizona State University's unique online partnership with Starbucks was simply an extension of ASU's effort to move more course work online and a partner who saw this as a way to offer a new benefit to attract employees. Syracuse University's determined and coordinated effort to grow its military engagement, supported by a strong Advisory Board of retired veterans, was able to provide veterans with free tuition (after TAP funding) and today are self-reporting a 500% increase in military-connected students in what was already a military-friendly university.

While it is important to maintain academic independence and control of the process, having these partners participate within the university dramatically increases potential opportunities. We will learn a great deal more about how to extend the university's impact in the future by involving external partners in our discussions than we could accomplish relying solely on internal efforts to design innovative solutions.

In conclusion, we propose the following models to support this committee's efforts:

1. There should be several external members on the planning committee for the front-end proposed marketing site that aligns all of the non-degree efforts. Invested partners can potentially help lead our efforts to position the site as an effective outward-facing process, which our internal folks can choose if and how they would like to participate through aligning their existing programming.

2. Credentialing is already actively used in many corporate organizations; therefore including external advisory board members on a credentialing committee would bring valuable experience and insight into the process.

3. Defining NC State's ability to support lifelong learning would benefit from a diverse board of interested lifelong learners, from pre-college students to Osher Lifelong Learning Institute participants, as well as members residing in areas across the state. If this board could define specific transition stages (student-to-professional, career progression, career changes, employment gaps, etc.) where credentialing would be most valuable, the design of stackable certificates would be more targeted.

4. If this committee or similar representing leaders from across campus were to become a standing effort to explore innovative offerings and processes, a connection with similar committees at other universities (like the Learning Futures Collaboratory at ASU) and several strong alumni would offer unique perspectives and ideas. External partners would also be useful in collaborating with nationally recognized partners and funds in order to gain additional support.

5. The simplest, yet often forgotten, process of gaining external partner insights is through surveys that include both directive and open questions. For this activity, we should request all external-facing NC State entities to offer a list of contacts. The key to success will be limiting the use of the data for survey purposes only (no individual unit marketing communications). The surveys could ask participants to take specific actions as well, such as providing a list of university committees to join if interested in expanding involvement.

These should be easy-to-execute options to engage external relationships in our process. With a few successes in these activities, we hope to promote the value of external involvement throughout the university.

Proposed Action Items

1. Market NC State lifelong education under a unified brand. Invest resources to examine target products and markets in order to communicate the value of NC State's lifelong learning programs and credentials. Position the university as a trusted partner in education across a lifetime.

2. Enhance coordination among degree and non-degree programs. Blurring the lines between credentialing and degree programs allows NC State to be an innovative leader in the field, offering high-quality learning opportunities to all those who seek to learn with our faculty. The portability and stackability of credentialing opportunities that reflect the values of NC State allow for this connection, ensuring all learners the opportunity to take charge of their own education.

3. Leverage our strength as “the people’s university.” Communicate to our vast network - current students, alumni, extension partners, business partners, government, etc. - the non-degree programs we offer and the value of those programs, and encourage them to spread that information to classmates and colleagues.

4. Launch NC State-branded badges. To facilitate the process of marketing, awarding, and communicating credentials, and to promote stackable programming, we recommend the adoption of an NC State-branded digital credentialing platform (i.e., “digital badges”). We want to present one front door to the learners we serve—even though behind the scenes, there will be flexible pathways for partner participation.

Recommended Themes for NC State’s 2020-2030 Strategic Plan

In summary, below are key themes the task force noted throughout the report that we believe are worth further examination and potential inclusion in the university’s 2020-2030 Strategic Plan.

- NC State is a trusted partner of choice to provide personal and professional growth opportunities throughout a person’s or organization’s whole life cycle.
- NC State provides a coordinated presence that seamlessly allows learners (and university and partner providers) to access (or offer) professional growth opportunities (both for and not for credit).
- NC State has an infrastructure that facilitates innovation and agility for its programming in a fast-changing, dynamic environment.
- NC State's programming is designed to help our learners **“think and do.”** We provide learners with understandable and implementable knowledge that creates a positive impact for individuals, organizations, and communities.

Appendix A

Sample of Programs Identified by Committee Members*

[Web resources are hyperlinked]

**Please note that this is not a comprehensive list of programs. The task force recommends completion of a more exhaustive inventory of programs across campus.*

- [Lifelong Faculty Involvement](#)
- [Division of Academic and Student Affairs](#)
- [Free Tax Return Assistance](#)
- [Taste Testing Lab](#)
- [Osher Lifelong Learning Institute](#)
- [“Continuing Education” initiatives/programs](#)
- [McKimmon Center](#)
- [NC State Industry Expansion Services \(College of Engineering\)](#)
- [College of Education Beginning Teacher Institute](#)
- [College of Education Project AIM](#)
- [Belk Center Executive Leadership Programs](#)
- [Arts NC State](#)
- [Gregg Museum](#)
- [JC Raulston Arboretum](#)
- [NC State University Libraries events](#)
- [NC State Executive Education](#)
- NC State Summer Camps
 - [The Engineering Place](#)
 - [Design Camp](#)
 - [4-H Camp](#) (through NC Cooperative Extension)
 - [VetCamp](#)
 - [Communication Summer Camp](#)
- Friday Institute for Educational Innovation
 - [Micro-credentialing](#)
 - [Teacher Leader Institute](#)
 - [Mooc-Ed](#)
- [The Graduate School Professional Development](#)
 - [Accelerate to Industry \(A2i\)](#)
 - [Teaching and Communication Certificate](#)
 - [Writing Certificate](#)
 - [Preparing the Professoriate](#)
 - [Digital badging](#)
 - [Workshops and development series](#)

Appendix B

Task Force Membership Roster

Mark Bernhard (co-chair)

Vice Provost, Continuing Education
McKimmon Center for Extension and Continuing Education

Frank Buckless (co-chair)

Stephen P. Zelnak, Jr. Dean
Poole College of Management

Ruben Carbonell

Director, William R. Kenan, Jr. Institute for Engineering, Technology and Science
Frank Hawkins Kenan Distinguished Professor, Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering
College of Engineering

Fashaad Crawford

Vice Provost, Assessment and Accreditation
Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

Darien Dixon

Doctoral Student, Sociology
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Vanessa Doriott Anderson

Senior Director of Professional Development Programming
The Graduate School

Amber Holland

Doctoral Student, Communication, Rhetoric and Digital Media
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Hans Kellner

Chair of the Faculty
Professor, English
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Dan McGurrian

Director, Executive Education
Poole College of Management

Barbara Mulkey

Director
Shelton Leadership Center

Michael Rappa

Director, Institute for Advanced Analytics
Distinguished University Professor, Computer Science
College of Engineering

George Rouskas

Director, Graduate Programs, and Alumni Distinguished Professor, Computer Science
College of Engineering

Janice Sitzes

Staff Senate Chair
Associate Director, Marketing Services
McKimmon Center for Extension and Continuing Education

Len Stefanski

Department Head and Alumni Distinguished Professor of Statistics
College of Sciences

Paola Sztajn

Associate Dean, Research and Innovation
Professor, Teacher Education and Learning Sciences
College of Education

David Woodbury

Department Head, Learning Spaces and Services
University Libraries