

Degree and Certifications Project
Final Report for 2010
Last Revised: January 13, 2011
Prepared by: Tim Dykstra

Project Description

In 2010, under the leadership of Mr. James Folkening, Manager, Community Services of the Michigan Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth, a research project was begun to strengthen the databases of Michigan Community Colleges and the State of Michigan.

Specifically the databases were to be strengthened in the following areas:

- Assurance that the Program Inventory on the State's website for a given college was accurate, complete, matched local institution's program inventory, and was up to date,
- Assurance that the program titles listed in a given institution's inventory complied with the program definitions as presented in the U.S. Department of Education list of program titles and definition
- Assurance that the third party assessments and certifications employed by an institution for a given program were included in that college's information on the State's database.

To accomplish these goals pilot tests were conducted with four (4) Michigan institutions: Kirtland Community College, North Central Michigan College, Northwestern Michigan College, and Southwestern Michigan College.

Institutional researchers and instructional administrators at these colleges conducted an analysis of their institution's program list as used internally with their respective program lists on the State of Michigan website. When discrepancies appeared, they were removed, so both program lists coincided. At the same time they reviewed the formal titles for these programs and verified their accurate compliance with Federal program definitions. Finally, a cross-reference was made between a given program's third party certifications used by a given institution and the inventory of third party certifications listed on the State's website to verify accuracy and completeness of the college's listings.

Project Outcomes

The pilot tests revealed the following information:

- Virtually all colleges were confident that the program titles they used complied accurately with the program U.S. Department of Education title definitions, so no title adjustments were necessary.

- Generally, the program list used internally by a given institution and the program list the institution provided for the State's website were coordinated, accurate and current. The institution's review revealed occasional differences, and these were all rectified.
- Some colleges were challenged in their efforts to compile complete and accurate lists of third party certifications that covered all of their occupational programs, and the inventory of such certifications at the State's website appeared to be somewhat underused.

Project Action Plan

The pilot tests have caused the initial scope of action for the project to change. Because most colleges were very confident that their program lists complied with Federal definitions and were accurate and current at both the local and State locations, these phases of the project are being dropped.

The primary focus for the project moving forward is on assembling and enhancing the college's list of third party certifications used formally for its Carl D. Perkins 1P1 reporting to the State.

To that end, the focus for 2011 for the remaining community colleges in Michigan will be to:

- Compare each college's occupational program list with its list of programs for which it is currently using third party certifications for Carl D. Perkins 1P1 reporting.
- Compare each college's occupational program list with the inventory of third party certifications already identified on the State's website
- Provide an individualized list to each institution of those occupational programs it offers for which it does not currently use a third party certification tool for its 1P1 reporting but which do have a certification included in the State's inventory.

The purposes for these comparisons are twofold:

1. To verify the completeness and accuracy of an institution's currently used third party certifications, and
2. To assist and encourage institutions in considering additional third party certifications known to exist but not currently being used by that college.

This work is targeted to be completed by August 2011.