



# Technical Colleges Flash Badges for Clout



**AWARD CATEGORY:** Digital Services: Government to Citizen

**STATE:** Georgia

**PROJECT BEGINNING DATE:** 27 February 2021

**PROJECT END DATE:** 27 February 2024

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**JOB SKILLS.** That's where employer needs and workforce strengths intersect. Reaching that junction promptly and without detour benefits job seekers and job creators alike.



The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) is putting up road signs to keep the traffic flowing smoothly. By offering students new digital credentials called badges, TCSG helps provide plain recognition of very specific skills acquired. And those badges are putting employers and Georgia's workforce on a mutually agreeable collision course.

TCSG began issuing badges using the Canvas Badges enterprise micro-credentialing platform in 2023, making it the first two-year college system in the nation to adopt micro-credentials systemwide. TCSG is actively developing a standardized badging system encompassing both credit and noncredit courses.

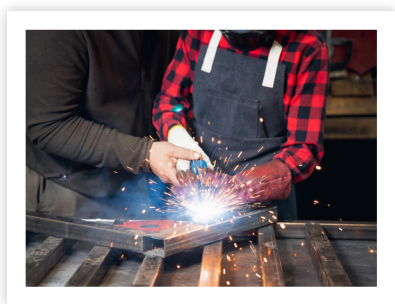


**THE GOAL** – provide students micro-credentials that are quickly recognizable to employers and industry partners, making it easier to connect employers with qualified job seekers.



Technical college, continuing education, and adult education students can all earn badges. TCSG will continue a phased rollout throughout the 2024 academic year.

Micro-credential pathways are short, focused course offerings that train and assess learners on specific skills and knowledge. They offer a flexible and efficient way for individuals to acquire or improve competencies in a shorter time than traditional degree programs. Micro-credentials can serve as milestones toward longer certificate, diploma, and degree programs. They give students more options for starting and stopping points in their studies.



TCSG has partnered with Canvas Badges to provide a digital representation of micro-credentials earned, spanning everything from electrical systems skills to welding and beyond. Badges like the ones above verify a job seeker's qualifications and competencies. Badges can be combined or "stacked" to demonstrate subject mastery. They signal targeted, just-in-time credentials that can promote quick entry into the workforce. Employers recognize these badges as evidence of skill attainment, helping them identify qualified candidates for in-demand jobs.

## WHAT PROBLEM OR OPPORTUNITY DOES THE PROJECT ADDRESS?

System-wide micro-credentialing benefits both the students who need the credentials and industry partners looking for a highly trained, motivated workforce. Benefits can be particularly pronounced in fields facing a shortage of skilled labor.

With the rapidly evolving nature of the job market, speedy advancement of technology, and skill gap faced by several critical industries, the large-scale incorporation of micro-credentials at TCSG assists students in hyper-targeted learning and credentialing in key areas. Many TCSG students are full-time employees with explicit career goals in mind, often intent on upskilling for a job they currently hold or reskilling for a new line of work. Micro-credentials allow students to reach those goals faster than through traditional college programming. Also, according to [Inside Higher Ed](#), employers are more likely to hire candidates with micro-credentials.

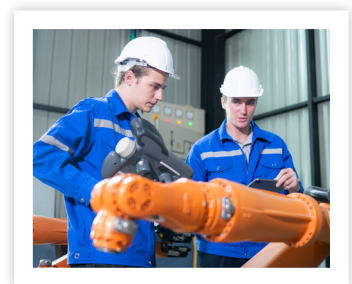
The badges implementation project also addresses a concern specific to one audience – adult education students working to earn their high school equivalency. Sometimes these students invest months, even years, pursuing their HSE only to discover they need to retake math and English at the postsecondary level as part of their technical education pathway. To address this, Columbus Technical College created micro-credentials aligned with diploma-level general education courses. Upon completion of each HSE exam, students earn a badge indicating mastery of requisite skills and exempting them from the general education course at the college. This innovative approach has accelerated their progress by enabling recent HSE graduates to go directly into technical courses relevant to their chosen career paths. That can translate into swifter entry into the workforce.



On the employers' side, there's a need for more efficient job placement. Badges help there too by clearly identifying a candidate's specific skills and competencies. And as employers gain familiarity with TCSG badges, they may incorporate badge requirements into job postings to more quickly reach qualified candidates for specialized, hard-to-fill positions.

## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The prominence of technology in key industries, and the expected growth in evolving sectors (green energy, EV plants, and AI power manufacturing), have raised the demand for a workforce that can be precisely trained in the latest advances for specific tasks. Much of this training will not be just for traditional college learners, but also directed to longtime members of the workforce with full-time jobs, families, and significant responsibilities. These learners need flexible programs that produce the skills they need and marketable credentials quickly and efficiently. An integrated system of micro-credential training and badges will play a pivotal role in addressing these challenges.

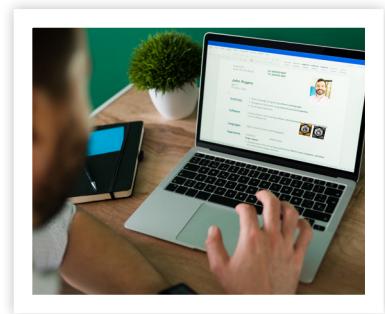


The Canvas Badges system provides stackable pathways for obtaining related micro-credentials with convenient on and off ramps. Stackable credentials build on prior learning and complement each other to build an accumulated set of skills that can lead to career advancement and higher educational attainment. This motivates and empowers students, including those who may not have otherwise considered college as an option, to pursue career-building certifications. It can also incent continued pursuit of other college certificates, diplomas, and degrees by marking incremental achievements (i.e., competencies and skills acquired) along the way.

That last point stands tall for students who do not finish requirements for a degree. That's as many as two in three technical/community college students nationally, according to the 2020 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) survey. Micro-credentials provide tangible proof of skills gained through training completed, and do not hinge on earning a degree.

## WHAT MAKES IT DIFFERENT?

In 2023, **TCSG** became the first two-year college system in the nation to adopt micro-credentials and corresponding badges systemwide. The program serves both students who are just starting their educational journey as well as experienced workers in need of upskilling or reskilling. Through the Canvas Badges credentialing system, learners are given pathways to vital workforce skills, over 1,500 resume-boosting credentials, and visual representation of the skills they have acquired. They earn personalized badge URLs to attach to resumes and CVs. This project promotes lifelong education, job readiness, rewarding careers, and helps industry partners across the state fill open posts.



This initiative entailed the creation of micro-credentials across all TCSG program majors, and all colleges within the system are authorized to issue micro-credential badges. While TCSG has developed standard badges for approved credit courses, colleges also have the authority to create and issue other badges, allowing them to be responsive to local workforce needs. The certification and quality-assurance process are overseen by the TCSG State Board, Presidents' Council, and Colleges' Departments of Academic Affairs, Economic Development, and Adult Education.

Systemwide badging offers many benefits, not the least of which is the assurance of badge integrity and transferability. By consistently applying credential standards across the system, both colleges and employers can trust in the validity of any badge issued by a TCSG college and that similar badges are equivalent in merit across institutions. Moreover, since badges represent the acquisition of specific pre-defined skills, regardless of whether they were obtained through credit or noncredit instruction, systemwide badging paves a foundation for recognizing students' achievements in nontraditional courses and pathways. Further, transferable systemwide badging simplifies the process of awarding prior learning assessment (PLA) credits for noncredit courses, facilitates quicker program completion, and reduces educational costs for students. By leveraging Canvas Badges, transferability between colleges within the system becomes seamless.



### ALHS 1090 - Medical Terminology for Allied Health Sciences

Introduces the elements of medical terminology. Emphasis is placed on building familiarity with medical words through knowledge of roots, prefixes, and suffixes. Topics include: origins (roots, prefixes, and suffixes), word building, abbreviations and symbols, and terminology related to the human anatomy.

## WHAT MAKES IT UNIVERSAL?

TCSG's systemwide badging solution aligns with several of the NASCIO State CIO Priorities. Canvas Badges is a cloud-based enterprise application that allows all 22 TCSG technical colleges to create, brand, and issue digital badges to students. The identity verification tool within the application assures the integrity and authenticity of badges, issuers, and recipients. When a badge is issued, it captures metadata about the badge, recipient, and issuer, greatly reducing the risk of falsification or forgery. Standardizing and consolidating data, content, and design in an enterprise-wide system ensures badge consistency and simplifies operations by enabling colleges to quickly replicate and customize badges to match their own branding. It also improves data management and reporting since badges of the same type hold consistent merit and meaning across the system, irrespective of their issuing source. The project enhances digital government/digital services by giving learners agency over their own educational and career journey. Students can easily record and share their achievements with prospective employers, seamlessly integrating new badges into their digital resumes as they are earned.

**Micro-credentialed badges make it easy to identify skilled candidates and speed hiring, and that supports state workforce development strategy.**



# IMPLEMENTATION

## WHAT WAS THE ROADMAP?

TCSG gained access to the Canvas Badges enterprise credentialing platform through the U.S. Department of Labor Strengthening Community Colleges (SCC1) grant in 2021 and first tested micro-credentials at Savannah Technical College. Over the next two years TCSG developed badges for noncredit courses, leveraging the enterprise platform, and established data standards to support automated micro-credential distribution. In 2023, TCSG began implementation of badges across all its member colleges.



College staff completed training on use of the Canvas Badges system, and all 22 TCSG colleges have begun issuing college-branded badges. Member colleges are now working to embed micro-credentials into their certificate, diploma, and degree pathways as well, so that specific skills a student acquires via those programs can also be highlighted through badges. (E.g., As part of completing requirements for a degree in advanced manufacturing systems, a student could earn badges in electrical installation and electrical motor controls, among others.)

Under the oversight of the TCSG Presidents' Council and State Board, TCSG plans to expand access to micro-credentialed pathways to more adult education and professional development students, facilitating seamless transition from non-credit options to technical college programs.



## WHO WAS INVOLVED?

From conception to fruition, implementing micro-credentialing systemwide required significant coordination among multiple parties. TCSG executives and college presidents provided leadership and oversight for the project. TCSG's Deputy Commissioner for Technical Education championed the value of enterprise badging, and college presidents committed the necessary resources to build the badges and explore pathways for stackable and transferrable credentials. As with any enterprise-wide project, their endorsement was critical to effective and timely implementation.



A cross-functional team worked on the technical requirements to automate badge issuance. Once the technical environment was in place, TCSG's Data Committee developed the data standards and rules necessary for statewide implementation. TCSG worked closely with its vendor, Canvas Badges, to provide technical training of college specialists prior to systemwide implementation. Ultimately, however, project success is owed to the commitment of college staff, with three colleges playing a strong leadership role.

**Savannah Technical College served as the first college to roll out the program. Atlanta Technical College blazed the trail for the first automated badge issuance. Columbus Technical College tirelessly championed this project, providing leadership as TCSG scaled badging systemwide.**

## WHAT DID THE PROJECT MAKE BETTER?

The TCSG systemwide micro-credentialing project leverages the Canvas Badges platform to create a standardized, streamlined badging system. The initiative has enabled automatic issuance of badges to students who successfully complete approved credit courses. Further, it has forged a pathway for adult education students to receive transferrable credits for passing components of their high school equivalency exam. The program has also improved alignment between TCSG's non-credit economic development programs and post-secondary credit courses, making the prior learning assessment process simpler and more efficient.

Statewide implementation of micro-credentialed badges advance Georgia's workforce development by offering instant credential verification and documenting skills. Employers can easily identify job candidates with the precise in-demand skills they are seeking and confirm training for incumbent employees. And, since TCSG's curriculum is industry-driven, employers can be assured that student badges align with regional workforce development needs.

Micro-credentials also improve student outcomes. Badges signify milestones along students' educational pathways, providing incentives to continue training and/or exit ramps for career progression. The badges in students' portfolios demonstrate specific skills acquired, which help improve students' career potential and bolster the hiring process for industries seeking skilled workers in high-demand fields.



### Forklift Safety

This training course is designed to ensure you have the knowledge necessary for the safe operation of a powered industrial truck. You will be provided the opportunity to operate a forklift as well as complete a small obstacle course. A stand-up powered forklift, in which loads are carried with forks, will be used during the training course. Our new and improved Forklift course is currently offered in a hybrid format. This means that the course takes place in two parts, online and in-person. Part one is the online, self-paced course training. Access information is sent out on Mondays and Thursdays.



## HOW DO YOU KNOW?



The TCSG scaling of a systemwide badging platform has yielded impressive results. To date, all 22 colleges are participating in the micro-credentials project and have begun building and issuing badges to students. A staggering 40,000 students have earned more than 90,000 micro-credentials systemwide, with one in three badges reflecting occupational or technical skill attainment.

Students have begun sharing their badges through various social media platforms, including LinkedIn, X, Facebook, and more. Students' eagerness to share these badges is a testament to the pride and value they attach to their achievements and the badges they earn.

**Colleges have worked to educate employers about micro-credentials, badges, and digital resumes. As a result, employers are beginning to recognize their significance. Pratt & Whitney, a Georgia-based aerospace manufacturer, has embraced badging to streamline hiring and credential verification processes. Having the support of a prominent regional employer has helped other companies recognize the significance of micro-credentials in verifying the qualifications of both current and prospective employees.**



Employers are increasingly recognizing the value of micro-credentials and digital badges. Badges provide evidence of training achievements, streamline employment processes, and provide verifiable documentation of skills acquired.

## WHAT NOW?

In 2024, **TCSG** saw rapid adoption of micro-credentials and digital badging systemwide. Looking ahead, TCSG is poised to develop and expand specialized training to meet employers' needs. Potential areas for growth include embedding "soft skills" badges within existing courses as well as introducing new badges for continuing education and technical credit to showcase proficiency with specialized equipment or technology. TCSG also anticipates adding new micro-credentialed pathways for seamless transition from non-credit to technical college programs.



Remaining U.S. Department of Labor grant funds may also help fund further micro-credential activities. TCSG has invited colleges to submit proposals for projects that would leverage micro-credentials suited to employment opportunities in their own local communities. For example, North Georgia Technical College in Clarkesville has proposed expanding micro-credential offerings in manufacturing to provide occupational training for adult education students. NGTC will newly be authorized to award National Coalition of Certification Centers (NC3) certifications and Smart Automation Certification Association (SACA) certifications to students who complete the training. Canvas Badges corresponding to the certifications would be issued for skills ranging from electrical systems installation, conduit bending, power-machine threading and more. Those are skills needed by local employers and skills the local workforce wants to be prepared to provide.



Issuing badges is not the end goal in itself. Their power lies in facilitating job placement among graduates. And for graduates' employment prospects to be meaningfully improved, badges need to be familiar to and trusted by both students and employers. With that in mind, TCSG member colleges will train students to create and use digital resumes effectively, incorporating badges. Plus, TCSG will engage employers (through curriculum reviews and more) to build awareness and encourage inclusion of badge requirements in their job postings. That permits homing in quickly on targeted skill sets needed from applicants.

### Micro-credentials and the corresponding badges can play a central role in supercharging Georgia's emerging workforce, aligning its skills with the needs of employers.

They are accessible and cost-effective, which appeals to working professionals trying to advance or redirect careers. They can help employers by making it easier to identify qualified job candidates. The Technical College System of Georgia's pioneering systemwide implementation of badges, and the related micro-credentials programs, allow TCSG to better prepare Georgia's workforce. It's a crash course in efficiency, so when employers and Georgia's workforce collide, the "damages" are mutually beneficial.

