

Idaho's Digital Campus

The creation of a digital campus with a focus on simplifying access, registration and tracking of online courses across Idaho's public post secondary institutions. The portal will focus on online courses that fulfill progress towards a GEM certificate or other program of study.

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Executive Summary

The creation of a digital campus with a focus on simplifying access, registration and tracking of online courses across Idaho's public post secondary institutions. The portal will focus on online courses that fulfill progress towards a GEM certificate or other program of study.

Background Information

There is a defined need, as identified by a number of current task force groups, to provide *streamlined and expanded access to tools, resources, and training / degree programs throughout Idaho*. There is a growing need to expand opportunities, provide exposure to learning pathways, create access to programs of study and deliver training in a meaningful and engaging environment.

Data from the Office of the State Board of Education shows that, in 2015, 2/3 of dual credit students enrolled in college within one year of graduation. Only 39% of students who did not take dual credit in high school enrolled in college. Between 2008 and 2016, 80% of dual credit high school students returned to college for a second year. During the same time period, only 70% of students who did not take dual credit in high school returned to college for a second year.

The Future of Education, as described by the Higher Ed Task Force, is a vision of necessity which in turn will equate to increased opportunities and growth for the State of Idaho. Idaho Digital Learning has the capability and expertise needed to collaborate with others to align opportunities for all Idahoans creating access and equity throughout the state.

Challenges

Over the past few years the Idaho State Board of Education has been looking at articulation and the challenges that students face when transferring from one program or university to another. Each university and college have support members and technology to help students understand the impact of transferring credits from high school, two year programs and four year programs. The challenge for students is that each of these programs are different, and gathering answers to common questions can be challenging. This challenge is compounded by policies that are interpreted differently and institutions having unique approaches to handling how classes within Idaho are transcribed.

The process and establishment of content alignment among the public institutions throughout the State of Idaho will empower our students to be in charge of their learning. The Idaho State Board of Education is working to assist students in understanding the implications of transferring between state-sponsored post-secondary institutions. The web portal will allow students to view how their credits will transfer and if they will transfer between institutions and programs. IDLA was tasked with conducting research and reviewing existing transfer sites of other states.

Much of the independence between the institutions comes from each institution having different

missions and objectives. These missions and objectives trickle down into course numbering, course objectives, degree opportunities, degree requirements, and course offerings. While this independence allows the institution freedom to make changes to best meet their individual missions, it also creates challenges for students with transfer and articulation.

Access to courses (i.e. adult courses & dual credit), college credit, and CTE opportunities can vary for students across the state. Without online access to course opportunities, student access is limited to that which is available to them in their local community. High school students have access to limited courses and teachers with college approval at their local school. Adult learners have limited access to programs offered at their local community college, extension center, or other organizations. For a large number of Idaho students, both high school and adult learners, local resources do not support their learning and development needs.

It is understood there is a growing need in the number of adults (aged 25 – 34) *needing some form of higher education (academic or technical) to earn a living wage to provide for their families, and be able to maintain or exceed the standard of living experienced by their parents.* Hence, the onset of Idaho's 60% goal set in 2010. Idaho is climbing to meet that goal, but there is more than can be done.

Recommendations

The "Structure for Success" strategy focuses in on ensuring that students have clearly articulated pathways to certificates and degrees, and that the general education core is reformed to include the best policies and practices to include changes that add clarity and consistency in the general education core.

The Complete College Idaho plan states, "There are multiple pathways to degrees, but not a single roadmap to getting there. Students who enroll in the nation's community colleges in order to save money may end up actually paying more than they should unless they have access to current, accurate information about how courses transfer from one institution to another. They may take the wrong courses for their chosen field of study, take courses that do not transfer at all, or end up in college longer than if they had not transferred, thereby negating any cost savings incurred from enrolling first at a community college."

In addition to challenges that students face in transferring from a 2-year institution to a 4 - year institution, there are similar challenges that high school students face when transferring college credit obtained during high school, and similar challenges that 4-year students face when transferring to another 4-year institution.

All Idaho students / learners should have access to a full collection of choices when choosing their career pathway or college program of study to reach career objectives. Idaho needs a solution that will provide an integrated approach for accessing Idaho's high-quality programs. The following are areas in which Idaho Digital Learning is poised to assist Idaho meet the 60% goal for adults attaining a form of postsecondary education.

The process and establishment of content alignment among the public institutions throughout the State of Idaho will empower our students to be in charge of their learning.

Statewide Digital Campus - Improving Access

Digital Campus Portals

Portals provide a unified framework for accessing tools and providing single sign on to resources across Idaho. A Digitized Campus Portal will provide a foundation for accessing the tools listed below in this proposal including but not limited to: registration, application, course tracking, career coaching, and course access.

Idaho Digital Learning has engaged in partnerships with other state entities to develop portals to assist with statewide implementations. Building upon the existing Portals framework lowers training costs and decreases overall development costs by leveraging this existing statewide authentication framework.

The framework enables sharing of resources across organizations and functions as a clearinghouse for tools, events, resources, and courses statewide. This framework would be “Federate” the different “Micro Services” that are provided across the state and provide a unified approach to those services.

On the back end, Internet 2 resources like Grouper and COmanage would be used to facilitate coordinated collaboration across post secondary institutions. This would require adequate policy and adoption by post secondary institutions to ensure compatibility with the digital campus.

Integrated Career Coaching and eAdvising

The Digital Campus will provide a centralized statewide career coaching and mentoring center. Learners participating in mentoring will benefit from outside-the-classroom support for guidance counseling or academic projects. In academic courses, the tool would help establish connections to an expert in their area of interest. The tool helps align the right mentor to the right student or team based on expertise and interest areas.

Through eAdvising the student would have available contact with a counselor and/or a mentor, following the student from middle school to secondary to postsecondary. The system would assist the student in making connections and help expose learners to career opportunities. Whether a senior level student supporting entering students, or professional guidance counselors working with a student along their academic path, eAdvising has many different options to provide opportunities for all students of Idaho..

Integrated Readiness Training

EdReady allows the students to take an assessment to fill gaps in their knowledge. However, EdReady is more than an assessment, the tool provides personalized instruction aligned to the student’s area of need. The EdReady tool will align to course prerequisites and provide assessments and content to help identify and train for gaps in knowledge the student may have prior to entering formal academic

classes. As an example, a student could begin a math assessment aligned to an algebra course that provides students the opportunity to review their areas of need to increase their knowledge and help better prepare them for their college algebra course.

Statewide Digital Campus - Improving Registration

Apply Idaho Integration

Apply Idaho is the system in which students can apply for postsecondary opportunities in one location to multiple institutions. Utilization of the Digital Campus application would begin with Apply Idaho where the student information would be used to populate institution systems.

Apply Idaho would also support scholarship application. The addition of eAdvising during the application and enrollment process will help individuals that have questions around applications or FAFSA applications.

Centralized Enrollment and Course Registration Module

Students that are registered through Apply Idaho with various institutions would have the ability to then Enroll in courses directly through a Portal Catalog. GEM courses would be listed in the portal catalog and students could simply select courses from Idaho Digital Learning or the post secondary institutions for which they are enrolled. Simple links would allow them to quickly apply to institutions they had not yet enrolled in yet.

Registration status and course availability would be handled through portals allowing students to access courses through the portal interface.

Each institution would need to support common standards around authentication, authorization, and data transfer. Internet 2 provides a foundation to build the standards upon but each institution would need to develop the plugins necessary to accept student enrollments, registration, and logins into their various systems.

Dual Credit Enrollments would be forwarded to local High Schools for approval of High School Credit and for counseling guidance.

Adoption of Advanced Opportunities Integration

Universal enrollment would integrate in with the Advanced Opportunities site allowing for integrated Advanced Opportunities funding requests to occur from a single system. The current Advanced Opportunities system and the Digital Campus portal would use back end data calls to communicate registration and enrollment information synchronously.

Digital Campus automation would greatly streamline the process of requesting and receiving Advanced Opportunities funding through the Advanced Opportunities program.

Integration of Course Transfer

Idaho Digital Learning Academy partnered with the Idaho State Board of Education to develop Course Transfer. Course Transfer is a place where students, future or current, can understand how courses taken and credits earned will transfer between in-state institutions. CourseTransfer.idaho.gov is a tool to help students navigate their higher education. This site provides planning guidance on the transferability of courses, but is not a guarantee. The receiving institution must ultimately verify the acceptance of courses for transfer. Students should work with an advisor to select the best courses and sequence of courses. This tool is not a substitute for an advisor, nor is it intended to encourage transferring.

The existing Course Transfer site would be expanded to provide additional information to students who are looking to register in courses by showing them how the course would transfer during the course enrollment process. When a student registers they will be able to see how their course fits within their selected Roadmap and how the course would transfer other institutions. Students can also see how the class would apply to alternative Roadmaps.

Statewide Digital Campus - Improving Tracking

Roadmap Tracking

Roadmaps will provide courses that articulate into a career pathway or a college program of study. When students pursue a pathway they will have opportunities to obtain a technical certificate or an AA degree. When partnering directly with state sponsored postsecondary institutions there are opportunities for students to obtain:

- GEM Certificate
- Career Pathway -- Technical Certificate
- College Program of Study -- AA Degree

Each available roadmap will provide students an articulated scope and sequence of courses, which, if completed successfully, will provide students an opportunity to test for an industry certificate, transfer credits into an established program of study, or may even provide students a full Associate's Degree.

The portals would enable access to visualizations of where the student was on their roadmap and provide recommendations and options for courses to complete their roadmap.

CTE Roadmap

In today's education landscape, it's even more important for students to graduate from high school with a skillset and experience that prepares them to step into a career that benefits Idaho industry. In conjunction with the Division of Career Technical Education (CTE), Idaho Digital Learning is developing CTE Digital. The goal of CTE Digital is to expand access to CTE programs of study through online delivery. The emphasis is placed on programs that provide a roadmap to Idaho's in-demand occupations and provide a living wage. And, individual courses should lead to dual credit or lead towards a nationally recognized industry certification. Currently Idaho Digital Learning and the Division of Career Technical Education are working on the following program areas: Computer Science, IT

Networking, Business and Health.

The Digital Campus would align roadmaps of CTE courses available through the Digital Campus to existing CTE course requirements and Skill Stack. Skill Stack is a micro credential platform developed in conjunction with the Division of Career and Technical Education. SkillStack tracks the learning a student needs to demonstrate competency in a profession at a granular level. This enables a student to show competency through micro credentials, and these competencies to stack and show competency in higher levels of mastery.

Through the portal, institutions of higher education will be able to award micro credentials as evidence of proficiency within specific programs of study where the mission aligns with competency based mastery.

General Education Matriculation (GEM) Certificate Roadmap

Roadmaps would be established for the GEM certificate allowing students to clearly understand progress toward the GEM certificate and the courses that would fulfil completion of the certificate. Through policy changes, students could achieve a GEM certificate by taking courses from a multitude of state public institutions. Students could complete work toward the GEM certificate as young as age 12 or as old as 95.

Certificate tracking requires a new statewide numbering system of GEM courses to be overlaid on top of existing institution specific course numbering. Establishing courses that are universally known to transfer as general education credit across Idaho helps students plan their education choices. The process of identifying and creating a common labeling of these courses is critical in a clear understanding of these classes.

In the past, a common catalog numbering system for courses has been discussed to address this issue. The challenge with all institutions changing their current numbering system and course naming is that this puts a huge burden on the institutions to change their student systems and historical records.

Creating a new numbering system that is statewide and layers over (rather than replacing) existing numbering and naming in course catalogs allows for all the benefits of a statewide common numbering system, without additional costs and overhead of replacing existing numbering.

Developing the unique numbering allows students and institutions to quickly identify the class and the transferability. It also provides a method of tracking progress towards Roadmaps across institutions.

Institution Specific General Education Roadmaps

Roadmaps would need to could be created to help guide students along their chosen pathway, insuring that they understand the required courses needed and those courses that would be considered electives.

Institution Degree Requirement Roadmaps

Even with the GEM courses transferring between across Idaho institutions can still be difficult. Students entering specialized fields may need to take specific general education requirements that relate to their Major of study. Having Degree specific roadmaps would provide students interested in specializing in a particular major an opportunity to understand what courses at the Digital Campus would not only transfer but also apply to toward the requirements of a particular Degree. The roadmaps would provide a list of the general education requirements related to the degree rather than a comprehensive list of all the courses required to achieve the degree.

Centralized Digital Transcripts

The Digital Campus would centralize transcripts for students that register for classes through the Digital Campus. These transcripts would be requested from institutions during the application process and would be utilized to identify progress through Pathways and for eAdvising.

Institutions across Idaho currently use the National Transcript Clearinghouse to store and deliver transcripts. Taking a statewide approach to the National Student Clearinghouse may provide the data the Digital Campus would need to help students understand options that are available to them and their progress towards Roadmaps. The National Transcript Clearinghouse provides a variety services that can assist the Digital Campus including digital transcripts, reverse transfer and official transcript services. A statewide agreement may further simplify the process of college application from High School and out of state students.

Statewide Digital Campus - Improving Capacity

OER Textbooks and Content Packages for GEM

GEM courses often use costly textbooks and other materials that raise the barrier for students that struggle with paying for classes. While Advanced Opportunities help fund the cost of courses for students in High School the cost of course materials is a burden for families and adults alike.

Providing common content packages for online materials and OER Textbooks for common GEM courses are a way that the state can play a role in reducing the cost of materials for common general education courses while also helping institutions establish a consistent quality across institutions.

These courses and textbooks would be collaboratively developed with participation from institutions across Idaho. The goal would be to gain consensus on the alignment of the courses that are being transferred, reduce the cost of textbooks to students, and provide a high quality content to Idaho institutions.

The format of the courses would be in Blackboard and Common Cartridge to allow customization. OER textbooks would be in the iPub or similar format to allow for simple distribution and printing if needed.

Expanded Professional Development

Idaho Digital Learning provides professional development opportunities to any and all educators in the State of Idaho. Idaho Digital Learning has over a decade of experience training Idaho teachers in best practices and research based teaching strategies for both online and blended programs. As a national leader in online and [blended learning](#), our model focuses on best practices, pedagogy, content, and the application of technologies that support effective teaching. Professional development can be delivered in a traditional face-to-face setting, online classroom or blended format depending on the needs of the audience.

All of our Professional Development offerings are associated with university credit through a choice of Boise State University, University of Idaho and Northwest Nazarene University Idaho Digital Learning believes in providing up-to-date offerings for educators throughout the state. We are able to do this because of our partnerships with others and the expertise of our internal staff. Professional development is a priority for our team for the academic success of Idaho's students.

Under the Digital Campus these Professional Development offerings would be expanded to include training on the different tools and offerings provided through the Digital Campus. The PD would be regional in approach with personnel assigned to each of the post secondary institutions as a Digital Campus Coordinator and Trainer. This team would then work collaboratively with post secondary institutions on their offerings and also with partners in the Digital Campus including school districts and libraries.

Methods

Partnerships

Idaho Digital Learning appreciates the partnerships we have established and know that together we can accomplish numerous tasks with collaboration.

- Idaho School Districts
- Idaho State Board of Education
- Idaho State Department of Education
 - Professional Development
 - Child Nutrition Program
 - Advanced Opportunities
 - GEAR Up
- State sponsored Postsecondary Institutions
 - BSU, ISU, U of I, CEI, CSI, CWI, LCSC, NIC
- Division of Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Idaho School Counselor's Association (ISCA)
- Department of Labor
 - Career Information System (CIS)
- Governor's Office

- Idaho STEM Action Center
- Idaho Historical Society
- Idaho Technology Council (ITC)
- PTECH
- Idaho Education Technology Association (IETA)
- Idaho PTA
- ISU Trio Program
- Idaho After School Network

About IDLA

Our Mission

Improve the quality of learning through innovative solutions, collaborative relationships, and the access and application of educational technology.

Our Purpose

Advancement of learning through choice, accessibility, flexibility, quality, and equity. Idaho Digital Learning strives to provide a world-class education for students by providing opportunity, equity, and access for a personalized education delivered in ways that are innovative, engaging, and meaningful. Idaho Digital Learning's focus is to create educational opportunities to enhance and advance student-learning in order to prepare the student for college and career growing Idaho's workforce.