



# Engaged Black Bear Digital Badging Initiative

Provost's Action Plan for  
Retention and Graduation

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## Engaged Black Bear Vision

UMaine's vision: "The University of Maine aspires to be the most distinctively student-centered and community-engaged of all the American Research Universities."

To help meet this vision the Provost has created student-centered, learning pathways that are utilizing a digital badging system.

At UMaine we care about the whole student. Our learning pathways are designed to engage students through a series of carefully-crafted challenges that enhance skill development and accelerate knowledge acquisition. Badges are used as incentives to help students navigate multiple learning pathways that include credit-bearing courses as well as out-of-classroom experiences. These pathways will also be connected to UMaine's learning outcomes assessment.

UMaine is a Founding Partner of Maine State of Learning (MSOL).

<https://umaine.edu/news/blog/2015/06/25/maine-state-of-learning-initiative-officially-launches/>

MSOL is a statewide effort to recognize and connect learning opportunities through a digital badging system.

### **What is a digital badge?**

The Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory (HASTAC) define a digital badge this way:

"A digital badge is a validated indicator of accomplishment, skill, quality, or interest that can be earned in many learning environments...Digital badges are a powerful new tool for identifying and validating the rich array of people's skills, knowledge, accomplishments, and competencies. Digital badges inspire new pathways to learning and connect learners to opportunities, resources, and one another." (<http://www.hastac.org/collections/digital-badges>)

**The Engaged Black Bear Initiative** at UMaine seeks to create a transformative learning environment that integrates classroom experiences with out of class activities and educational opportunities within a system of carefully-crafted learning pathways. Within each learning pathway, digital badges will be awarded to students to recognize their participation and achievements, connect them with resources, guide them in the development of skills and knowledge acquisition, and engage them with the campus community and beyond.

**How will it work?** Students will earn a badge when they begin on a pathway and reach level 1. There will be two further levels of a badge that students can earn within that pathway. Students will fulfill the determined criteria through a verification process. Once a badge is earned, it is emailed to the student. Students will be able to display their badges online. When you click on a badge, earned skills/accomplishment are shown, as well as the criteria for awarding the badge and information on the badge issuer. This allows for demonstrating the authenticity of the badge and credibility of the issuer.

**Why is badging important?** Pathway badges are considered to be a significant accomplishment for UMaine students, demonstrating 21<sup>st</sup> Century skill development, leadership development and knowledge acquisition. In the thoughtful development of these learning pathways, it is believed that employers, graduate admissions officers and other stakeholders will see the deep and layered learning that has occurred in order to acquire badges and accept UMaine badges as an additional way to evaluate a student's career readiness and fit. In fact, we are hoping that these badges will provide an expanded framework for evaluating student achievement, skill, knowledge, and preparedness beyond the traditional resume. In this way, UMaine students will stand out among their peers from other institutions of higher learning.

As MSOL scales up and more Maine residents earn digital badges in their communities, UMaine aims to develop a direct pathway to the college admission process. It is our hope that these badges can be verified by UMaine staff and accepted on the Black Bear application (or Common application) as a definitive record of achievement, community engagement and interest. UMaine's Cooperative Extension 4-H/Youth development program is leading the way in this development.

**Provost's "Engaged Black Bear Challenge" Award:** In order to recognize the multiple accomplishments across different learning pathways, UMaine students will have the opportunity to be identified as "Engaged Black Bears." UMaine desires to foster the development of well-rounded, community engaged, life long learners. To meet this challenge, a student will be presented with an "Engaged Black Bear" cord at graduation, if they have earned three different learning pathway meta-badges and successfully completed the required range of activities. This award will be presented to students as a recognition that will be both challenging and rewarding. The award will be considered a high level, prestigious UMaine award.

**Learning Pathway Badges:** Each learning pathway contains three levels of learning challenges and opportunities. A pathway badge is first earned at level one, prompting a student to move forward and to earn all three levels of the pathway. Levels are designed to take a student essentially from novice to accomplished. All badges will be designed using the three level format. Briefly:

**LEVEL 1** designates the start of a student's journey toward a significant goal within a specified theme (see list of pathways below). At the conclusion of Level 1, a student would earn the Level 1 badge (Participant). The student will then be prompted to begin to develop the skills, training, and experiences necessary to reach Level 2 within that learning pathway.

Level 1 is designed for students to “get their feet wet,” to try something new and exciting with little fear of failure, to expand their comfort zone, and to be rewarded for having the courage to become involved. Often students may have a particular goal in mind, such as obtaining a prestigious internship, conducting research and participating in the CUGR Academic Showcase, or becoming a student leader, but they may not know where to start. They may also lack the initial self-confidence needed to take that first step. Level 1 activities will help them to get on a path that leads them to deeper understanding and learning opportunities.

For students already familiar with a particular learning pathway, Level 1 activities can be used to meet new people with similar interests and network with them on their journey toward mastery and leadership in that area.

**Level 2** incorporates training, skill development and further knowledge acquisition. Students will be given opportunities for more profound experiences, involving increased time commitment and effort. Level 2 activities are designed to build upon student interests, leading them toward valuable experiences and competency in specified skills at level 3.

Unlock awards:

*Pending funding:* After earning two Level 2 badges, a student would be eligible for a competitive Engaged Black Bear scholarship or fellowship award, providing increased incentive to pursue a Level 3 badge. An application would be required.

**Level 3** is designed to demonstrate skill and competency within a specified theme. They may have completed an internship and/or presented a research paper at a conference, for example. When Level 3 is reached students will have developed a level of comfort within the area and developed a strong knowledge base. Students will also have become a leader or mentor in this area, giving back to UMaine and the community, working toward becoming a civically engaged, active citizen.

Level 3 will be achieved through demonstrated skills and competency, obtained employment, and completed tasks and projects. Students will continue to participate in related activities, but must exhibit a deeper level of commitment, taking on leadership or advocacy roles. It is UMaine’s hope that students to continue to be civically minded citizens and life long learners after graduation.

### **What are the categories of activities that will fulfill each level of a Learning Pathway Badge?**

Below you will find **examples** of the ways in which a student learner can earn the three badge levels within any given pathway. Each issuer will decide on which pieces of evidence and artifacts will meet the criteria for a particular badge. This long list is provided to help issuers think of the possibilities.

### **Level 1: (Connected Participant)**

**Participating/Attending events such as:**

- Take 100/200 level (Knowledge/Content area) courses; Fulfill general education requirements
- Meet with staff, faculty, or community member related to the badge/theme
- Visit a related Center and use its resources, such as the Career Center
- Attend designated UMaine events, fairs, forums, panel discussions, showcases, lectures, films, art shows, performances etc.
- Attend designated/affiliated off-campus events, activities etc.
- Join an organization/club
- Visit the Bodwell Center and Volunteer on campus or in the community
- Take 100/200 level (designated) service-learning courses
- Other categories of activities (with approval)

**Level 2: (Knowledge/Skill Development)****Develop skills; Attend trainings; Build knowledge base; Develop competencies such as:**

- **CONTENT KNOWLEDGE/COURSES:**  
Take 300/400 level (Knowledge-based/content area courses)  
Take 300/300 level (designated) service-learning courses  
Take other relevant college courses (on- or off-campus, in person or online)  
Work toward a relevant major, minor or double major
- **TRAINING: (outside classroom)**  
Take workshops, webinars and trainings on and/or off campus  
Train and participate in the arts, music, performance etc.  
Participate in webinars (online trainings)  
Pass necessary trainings/exams for your profession  
Pass certificate programs/trainings; receive certifications to enhance your professional experience/skills.  
Work in research labs  
Complete approved online modules/trainings and/or courses to reach your goals  
Demonstrate on or off-campus skill development through other forms of approved badging and credentialing  
Develop leadership and mentorship skills through trainings/workshops/conferences etc.  
Train and become an undergraduate assistant, resident assistant, or fellows assistant etc.
- **CONTINUED INVOLVEMENT:**  
Be an active member in a university (or approved off-campus) club or organization by attending meetings and participating in their events  
Attend a relevant conference  
Become involved in the surrounding community

- **EMPLOYABILITY:**

Talk with professionals in your field of study; Job shadow, participate in informational interviews and demonstrate networking participation etc.  
 Create a LinkedIn page and/or other professional media sites  
 Develop 21<sup>st</sup> century and transferable skills (hard and soft skills); demonstrate these skills: Learn how to write in multiple contexts for various audiences;  
 Participate in activities that require public speaking or giving presentations (in or outside the classroom setting); Work on team projects; Learn another language;  
 Work with diverse others; Participate in projects to solve complex societal problems; Develop technical, computer skills and proficiencies; learn new software; develop marketing and communication skills; learn advertising/social media marketing skills; become financially literate etc. All these skills will be listed for students and ideas on how they can develop these skills at UMaine and in the local community.  
 Learn how to create an e-portfolio  
 Begin to create a Career Portfolio or other type of digital portfolio  
 Participate in a Mentor Program  
 Create a career-based, professional Facebook page  
 Learn grant writing  
 Learn how to write a business plan  
 Other, as approved

**Level 3: Accomplished/Leader/Active Citizen Examples:**

- **CONTENT KNOWLEDGE/COURSES:**

Obtained UMaine degree(s)  
 Completed UMaine (related) minor(s) and/or certificate programs  
 Became Certified: CPR; UVAC etc.  
 Completed a licensing for your profession

- **ENGAGED/APPLIED/INTEGRATED: (complete a minimum of 2 of the following High-Impact Practices)**

**Each learning pathway must offer at least one of these options:**

Completed capstone project or thesis (High impact/signature work LEAP Challenge)  
 Completed at least one service learning/community engaged (may also include: experiential learning/field work/clinical/practicum course) (High Impact)  
 Completed career related Internship (High Impact)  
 Participated in study abroad (High-Impact)  
 Participated in undergraduate research (High-Impact); Participated in CUGR Showcase; Conduct community-based research  
 Demonstrated advocacy efforts for a cause  
 Worked on a team to help find solutions for complex societal problems  
 Take a personal pledge (challenge) to improve self and/or other aspects of the world (i.e. sustainability pledge; health/wellness pledge)  
 Other, as approved

- **EMPLOYABILITY/SKILL DEVELOPMENT:**
  - Completed e-portfolio (evidence included on e-portfolio)
  - Demonstrated a level of proficiency in the development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century and transferable skills (in other ways not mentioned above)
  - Developed own website geared toward your chosen career
  - Obtained employment related to career path
  - Interviewed for and obtained career path related job after graduation
  - Applied and admitted to graduate school
  - Applied and admitted to special career-related (approved) program
  - Presented at a relevant conference
  - Published a research paper
  - Part of a research team
  - Applied for a grant
  - Created a business plan
  - Created a product
  - Started a business (start-up company)
  - Gave a formal poster, presentation, exhibit (on or off campus) that requires professionalism, and a strong knowledge base.
  - Contact the UMaine Alumni Association and get involved; Networking
- **LEADERSHIP:**
  - Became a campus or community leader
  - Became leaders/directors in the arts, music, performance areas etc.
  - Ran for political office
  - Achieved a leadership position or become a mentor, ambassador etc. related to your chosen field of study
  - Became a leader in your club/organization etc. on or off campus
  - After training, become a tutor
  - Other, as approved
- **HONORS**
  - Receive honors/awards related to career advancement, majors/content area, or theme
  - Received and completed a UMaine (or approved outside) Fellowship

**Claire Sullivan, Associate Dean for Community Engagement, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Maine (Chair, Engaged Black Bear Initiative Committee)**

Revised 8-6-2015

## **Engaged Black Bear Pilot, 2015-2016**

### **Draft of Plan**

Planning for the Engaged Black Bear pilot study began the summer of 2015 and will continue in the Fall. Claire Sullivan, Associate Dean for Community Engagement, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences has been working with the Maine State of Learning initiative to develop a plan. MSOL has agreed to create the initial pilot micro-badges and host them on their FERPA-compliant site.

### **The committee:**

- Claire Sullivan (Chair)
- Rick Corey (CIS VEMI lab)
- Dan Dixon (Office of Sustainability)
- Brain Doore (Office of Assessment)
- Jon Ippolito (New Media)
- Lisa Morin (Bodwell Center)
- Laura Wilson (Cooperative Extension/4-H)

### **Micro-Badges in development:**

- Cooperative Extension/4-H: STEM Ambassadors (Laura Wilson): badges completed
- Foster Center: Innovation (Renee Kelly)
- Career Center: part of Career Ready meta-badge: Career Fair (Crisanne Blackie, Kate Axelson Foster)
- Bodwell Center: Service/Volunteerism (Lisa Morin)
- Environmental Stewardship micro-badge (Dan Dixon and UMaine's Campuses for Environmental Stewardship faculty)

**Examples of other badges under consideration and/or development:** Undergraduate Research (CUGR); Global Awareness; Diversity/Multicultural Perspectives; Digital literacy; Financial literacy; Health, Wellness and Recreation

### **FALL SEMESTER, 2015**

- Work with Maine State of Learning as Founding partner and develop pilot micro-badges (began Summer 2015)
- Introduce the badges concept in First Year Success Courses (LAS and possibly others). Met with LAS instructors in August to develop a plan to introduce the pilot badges and recruit for Focus groups.
- Plan assessment strategy and seek approval to launch National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Commit (due Sept. 25); advertise/promote; launch in Spring 2016); First year 100 level courses and Senior Capstones; Office of Assessment with aid from OIR and Engaged Black Bear Initiative
- Seek IRB approval for research study



- Introduce students to the pilot micro-badges and register them
- Plan for the Focus Groups (1 and 2):
- Conduct Focus groups (1): Include students from diverse groups and demographics.
- Issue earned badges to students
- Conduct Focus Groups (2): students who have been involved in the pilot
- Begin to research possible funding sources
- Formalize the link between EBB initiative and Flagship Internship program
- Meet with Provost to discuss the Fall Pilot and Spring plans

### **SPRING SEMESTER, 2016**

- Analyze the results of Fall focus groups
- Administer (NSSE), if approved
- Issue earned badges to students
- Conduct Spring Focus Groups
- Find suitable external grants and develop a strategy
- Meet with potential issuers for year 2 and discuss
- Meet with all pilot issuers to discuss pros and cons; receive suggestions on how to scale up the program
- Bodwell Center (Lisa Morin) plans the Spring gala event; rewards for pilot badge earners
- Develop an initial plan for scaling up (level 1-3 learning pathways)
- Meet with Provost to discuss the pilot and scaling up

### **SUMMER 2016**

- Analyze NSSE results
- Analyze results of focus groups
- Make recommendations for next steps of the EBB initiative
- Write paper on results of the first year pilot
- Meet with Provost about scaling-up
- Plan for year 2, if there is support

**Engaged Black Bear Initiative  
Career Ready Learning Pathway  
EXAMPLE**

**Meta-Badge Name:** Career Ready

This badge is aimed at increasing the number of students who utilize the Career Center resources over time (throughout 4+ years and the year after graduation). This is not intended to be a badge for targeted career skills tied to a specific profession. Yet, this badge can compliment other pathway badges, depending on student interest. This falls in line with the holistic student-engagement model that leads students toward earning the distinction of being an Engaged Black Bear (earning 3 or more meta-badges).

**LEARNING PATHWAY:** *Becoming career ready by engaging with Career Center staff, utilizing its resources, creating an e-portfolio and developing career ready skills, knowledge and experiences.*

**ISSUE DATE:** When would the badge be issued? Start and end dates? *end of the Fall semester (December 1), end of the Spring semester (April 1).*

**ISSUER(S):** What Programs/Departments/Units is this Badge associated with?  
*Career Center*  
Who would award your badge? *Career Center staff*

**AWARDED:** How will the issuer be able to keep track and award the badge? *The Career Center will develop a system for tracking. ISSUES: Some of this tracking is already being done, but is not organized in a way that can be readily used at this time for this purpose. Staffing is also limited. Resources will be needed after the pilot.*

**EARNERS:** *UMaine enrolled students (PT and FT). (The pilot will have 30 seniors participating).*

**LEARNING: EARNER GOAL/LEARNER OUTCOME:** What skills, knowledge, achievements, or experiences does the badge represent and recognize? What are the learning goals/desired outcomes?  
*Develop a Career e-portfolio (with resume, examples of work etc.); Learn interview skills; Develop professionalism (communicating professionally) and skills for the workforce (soft and hard skills). The particular skills (i.e., technology, communication, writing etc. will vary somewhat depending on the target job). Particular skills can be added to a student's overall Engaged Black Bear plan.*

**VALUE:** Why should a student be excited about earning this badge? What opportunities would this badge unlock (while earning the badge and after)? Describe the importance of

this badge (i.e., motivation for X, recognition, career exploration, skill development, new experiences etc.)

*The badge is important to help students, step by step, get prepare themselves for successful employment, building the skills they will need to be gainfully employed.*

*The badge is important because it will help motivate students to come to the Career Center, utilize their resources and become "career ready."*

**CRITERIA:** What do students do to earn Level 1, 2 and 3? What criteria will you use to demonstrate achievement of the three levels of this badge? How might the learning outcome be obtained through a series of learning opportunities (Level 1, 2, 3)?

*Career Center Staff will establish the specific criteria for each level within this pathway. Some ideas on student engagement activities follow. (Students will not be required to achieve each of these challenges.)*

**Level 1: Participating/Attending events (Examples of possible criteria)**

- Set up a meeting and Meet with a Career Center staff
- Come into the Career Center and use its library resources
- Log into Career Link and use this resource
- Attend one or more Career Fairs, talk with people at different tables (if Interview, Level 2 or 3: prepare for Career Center, Research the companies; interview: Complete preparation worksheet).
- Attend a Career Center event/program or similar event (on and off campus) i.e., panel discussion (primarily listening); aim for 2-4 events/programs (how do we incentivize to attend many?)
- Job Shadow (1 day or a few days/different people) (how do we incentivize to do more than 1?)
- Join an organization/club relevant to your career choice
- Take 100/200 level (Knowledge/Content area) courses

**Level 2: Develop Skills; Attend trainings (Examples of possible criteria)**

- Learn how to create a career portfolio (attend a workshop; watch a you tube video, complete a learning module etc.)
- Begin to create a Career Portfolio (include your resume etc.) (keep adding to it)
- Write a resume and obtain feedback from a Career Center Counselor
- Participate in a Mock Interview
- Take career ready workshops
- Participate in Career Ready trainings
- Participate in the Career Center Mentor Program: Talk with professionals in your field of study, interview 1-3 mentors (commitment/over time)
- Create a LinkedIn page and other professional media sites (ResearchGate; Scholars Network, when appropriate; others?)
- Create a career-based, professional Facebook page (not a personal Facebook)
- Take 300/400 level (Knowledge-based/content area courses)
- Take other relevant courses (on or off campus)
- Pass certificate programs/trainings; receive certifications to enhance your professional experience/skills.

- Pass necessary trainings/tests for your profession
- Complete online career modules

**Level 3: Some high level of mastery (Examples of possible criteria)**

- Completed e-portfolio and/or create you own website geared toward your chosen career
- Interview for a job or Internship (could be Level 2)
- Obtained and career related Internship, Fellowship, Training program etc.
- Obtained Summer, academic year employment, related to career path
- Obtain (career path) job after graduation
- Be admitted to graduate school
- Network on Professional Social Media sites; Build your profile and network
- Achieve a leadership position (mentor, ambassador etc. Related to your chosen field of study
- Receive honors/awards related to career advancement, majors/content-area
- Obtain UMaine degree(s) (with any minor/s)
- Become a Career Center Assistant

**UM ALUM BADGE: AFTER GRADUATE:** Continue to utilize Career Center resources (1 year after graduation). UMaine keeps track: part of next badge to be earned as **UMaine Alum** (or with employer).

**DEMONSTRATION/EVIDENCE/ASSESSMENT:** How does a student demonstrate learning or achievement or participation? What evidence must be provided to the ISSUER? (i.e., what will students create/complete (artifacts, tasks, projects)?

What is the evidence that a student has earned the **badge (completed Level 3)?**

**Level 1:** Career Center keeps track of students as they come in and utilize the services/resources, attend career fair etc.

**Level 2:** Meet with Career Center staff to show e-portfolio, website etc.; bring in evidence of participation in off campus events (the program, receipt, stubs etc.)

**Level 3:** Look at letters, emails on job and internship offers, admission acceptance letters, paystubs etc. (BE SURE TO COMPLY WITH FERPA etc.)

**CREDIBILITY:** How will quality and credibility of the badge be determined? (i.e., credentials and reputation of the issuer)

*Career Center staff (professionals)*

**RESOURCES and SUSTAINABILITY:** What resources would you need to track students and issue the badge? Would you need resources to implement this badge? If so, what would you need?

*Career Center will need resources to implement the Career Ready Learning pathway: Staff: work with tracking system, recruiting students, marketing and assessment.*

**ISSUED:** Badges will be issued via student email and can be displayed in a variety of ways. Please indicate if you will issue your badge in other ways besides via student email? (i.e., e-portfolio).

**CHANNELS:** Where would a user find out about your badge? How can this badge be promoted? How can you get students involved? Would you provide any incentives for participation?

**ENDORSERS:** Can you think of possible future endorsers for this badge? Who will support and recognize this badge, within/beyond UMaine? (i.e., department, center, employers, organizations etc.)

*Local employers (begin with employers of UMaine mentors)*

**PREREQUISITIES:** Are there any prerequisites or “must have trainings” before a student can earn your badge?

**THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:**

**DISPLAY OPTIONS:** Students will be able to display his/her badge in a variety of ways: develop an e-portfolio, electronic resume, display in his/her email signature, individual website or blog, display on Facebook page, LinkedIn, or other social media sites, put into Mozilla backpack, etc.

*Will the UMaine encourage a particular way to display their badge (i.e., to possibly track or assess)?*

*Does UMaine want every student to earn a Career Ready badge, as a goal? What is the scope?*

*Are there any concerns regarding privacy issues? FERPA/ UMS/UM policies.*

## **Proposal for Career Ready Pathway for Engaged Black Bear (EBB) Initiative**

### **Career Center PILOT, 2015-16**

The Career Center is proposing the following micro-badge to help students become "Career Ready." Thirty seniors will participate in this pilot program. This micro-badge will be implemented beginning Fall, 2015. It is designed to be part of the Career Ready Learning Pathway.

**Goal:** Prepare seniors to present themselves to employers in a professional manner at the Career Fair.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

Learn how to utilize Career Center resources  
Learn how to write an effective, professional resume  
Learn how to use CareerLink and its multiple resources  
Learn how to make an elevator pitch  
Learn to present oneself in a professional manner to potential employers  
Learn how to research potential employers  
Learn how to network at a Career Fair

**Logistics:** Career Center will draft an email to seniors, inviting the first 30 to sign-up/register for EBB program (Kate will send out by September 1, 2015).

- Develop registration process/Call Career Center to be added to list.

**To earn a Career Center micro-badge** students will:

1. Register on CareerLink by completing *Personal and Academic Profiles*.  
Select **Engaged Black Bear** under Student Activities/Involvement in Academic Profile (This has been added this field in CareerLink).
2. Write a resume and have it critiqued by Career Center staff  
Utilize walk-in appointments, or group workshop tailored to this group.  
Make edits to resume and save as a PDF
3. Upload to *Documents* in CareerLink
4. Complete "*Professionalism*" module in Blackboard (with minimum passing score of 80%)  
(to be developed- asking Sean on progress)
5. Participate in Career Center's "Pitch Competition." Must wear a professional outfit and be prepared with an "elevator pitch." This Career Fair Prep Night program will happen about a week prior to fair (on or before January 27, 2015) (Sam working on)

6. Complete "*Making the Most of a Career Fair*" module in Blackboard (with minimum passing score of 80%) (perhaps have to write 1-2 pages of their research on 5 employers and/or career/job opportunities at fair)

7. Attend the Career Fair. Sign-in at registration table (February 3, 2016). If students cannot make the fair on that day, other arrangements will be made for them to participate in an alternative. (Could provide writing prompts for a written reflection- for seniors to bring to the focus group- or to upload into their CareerLink account)

8. Follow-up session: attend a focus group to complete program & earn badge

The Career Center staff is looking into various e-portfolio options, including CareerLink, to see if badges can be used within CareerLink.

## **Engaged Black Bear Focus Groups (initial plan)**

Plan for the Focus Groups: Include students from diverse groups and demographics. We will also seek students who attend events and/or utilize the services of various centers on campus.

- First year success courses (LAS and possibly others)
- Foster Center for Innovation
- Career Center
- Bodwell Center
- Capstone Courses (seniors)
- Honors College
- New Media (include students who spend time playing video games)
- Non-traditional students/adult learners
- Low income and/or at risk students
- Multicultural and International students

## **Focus Group Questions (DRAFT):**

### **Focus Groups (1) for students learning about the EBB initiative:**

Introduce the pilot badges and learning pathway idea (develop a powerpoint)

1. What are your initial reactions to this initiative?

Do you see the benefits of the learning pathways? Do you think the proposed pathways would be helpful to you? Helpful to all UMaine students or just a sub-set? In what ways would this program be helpful (general knowledge; knowing what to do next when interested, future employment, life skills etc.)

2. Would you try to become an “Engaged Black Bear?” Would it be meaningful to you to receive this ward and wear a cord at graduations? If not, what would make it meaningful to you? Would you be motivated to earn 3 level 3 badges? Are other incentives needed? Are incentives needed at different levels? What are some suggestions you have for incentives? How difficult or easy do think this would be to achieve? How many students do you think should be able to earn this distinction (nearly all –what we do at UMaine (brand) or very few/elite distinction)?

3. How many of you are interested in earning one or more badges? (some micro-badges may be required in LAS courses or others?). Why or why not? What is appealing? What are the barriers (reasons you would not want to get involved)? Would it be a good way to get students who may be afraid to try something new, to give it a try? (get feet wet?). Would students who were very active in high school also be motivated? Does this appeal to particular students and not others? Doable for transfer students? Adult-learners?



4. Do you think a motivated student could earn 3 level 3 badges? Is it doable? SENIORS: How many level 3 badges do you think you would have earned at this time if you had the program available to you your first year here? How much effort? Should there be different distinctions, for example, (Bronze (i.e., (3 Level 1), Silver (3 level 2), Gold (3 level 3) categories). How about 5? Is double dipping OK? To what extent?

5. What suggestions do you have for knowledge, skills and experiences that you believe all college students should graduate with? Are there core skills and experiences that should be encouraged? Should a student who earns the EBB distinction, have a certain set of core skills, knowledge and experiences (i.e., high impact)?

6. What skills/knowledge/experiences would you want to see recognized? What other badges or learning pathways would you recommend? Why these? Who would issue them? How would you assess the learning and demonstrate those skills? What artifacts/evidence would be needed? Do you think students would somehow cheat?

7. Where would you want your badges to be displayed? Would you be motivated to develop an e-portfolio? How helpful would an e-portfolio be to you?

8. What recommendations do you have to help employers to get excited about the badges UMaine students earn?

9. What suggestions do you have for building this program (getting students excited to participate? How would you advertise it? What are the best methods to introduce badging and the learning pathways to students? (at orientation, advisors, website, in courses, sign-up days, Career Center; other centers associated with a specific pathway; student organizations day or other special days, etc.).

### **Focus Groups (2) for students who participated in the EBB pilot:**

1. What did you like about the EBB pilot micro-badge program and your participation in it?
2. What were some of the drawbacks?
3. What are your suggestions for change and improvement?

Introduce the full Engaged Black Bear Initiative (students work within multiple pathways to earn 3 level 3 meta-badges and receive an award at graduation). Could also talk about the other micro-badges in the pilot.

4. What are your thoughts on the proposed Engaged Black Bear initiative? What do you like about the proposal?

5. Will students be motivated to become an Engaged Black Bear? Why or why not? How do you think it can catch on with students? What suggestions do you have? What are some of the barriers or challenges?

6. Do you believe earning these badges would be helpful to you in gaining employment? Will employers be interested?

Claire Sullivan, Aug. 4, 2015