

**Background:****Preparing Freshmen to Succeed in the 21st Century Classroom**

- ***Alarming higher education retention and graduation statistics from the Education Trust***
- ***The growing need for digital literacy programs that assist incoming students***
- ***An institution's efforts to produce digitally literate and academically prepared students***

Are students who enroll in college or the university prepared to tackle higher education curricula?

Some are, but a growing number of students are not. The Education Trust, a non-profit organization created by American Association for Higher Education, reports that while enrollment continues to grow graduation rates have plateaued.¹ *Many institutions lose one in four students, and just 63 percent of students manage to earn a bachelor's degree in six years.*

As one director of the Education Trust stated, "An awful lot of institutions just assumed that getting [students] in the door was the most important thing."²

Why do students struggle in college if they manage to do well enough to qualify academically?

According to Education Trust research, "the rigor of a student's high school curriculum [is] the single most significant predictor of college success, overriding the significance of race and socioeconomic status."

Notwithstanding this revelation, many high schools have not notably altered curriculum to match higher education requirements. The result: Often students "need significant remediation before they can take credit-learning courses."³

On what subjects do students need evaluation?

Institutions generally assess student math, English and writing skills before they ever enter the classroom. A growing number of institutions are now seeking ways to evaluate student digital literacy.

Why do we need to assess the computing and Internet skills of today's students?

Recent research from a four-year university showed only 7 percent of incoming freshmen could meet digitally literacy standards.⁴ Why do these so-called "Millennials" struggle with technology vital to education and employment? Some educators suggest students are so enamored with social technology (i.e. networking on the Internet, cell phones, gaming, etc.) they fail to learn "true literacy" in the digital domain.⁵

In fact, currently five out of six regional accreditation bodies for colleges and universities in the United States recommend institutions have a digital literacy component for their students.

How are institutions tackling the issue of verifying and developing student digital literacy?

The methods vary. Some colleges and universities have tried integrating segments of computer training throughout required curriculum while others have mandated students to take fundamental computing courses. These programs

¹ "A Matter of Degrees: Improving Graduation Rates in Four-Year Colleges and Universities," Education Trust, May 2004.

² "U.S. College Drop-out Rate Sparks Concern," Associated Press, November 15, 2005.

³ Testimony before U.S. Congress of Ross Wiener, Policy Director, Education Trust, July 2004.

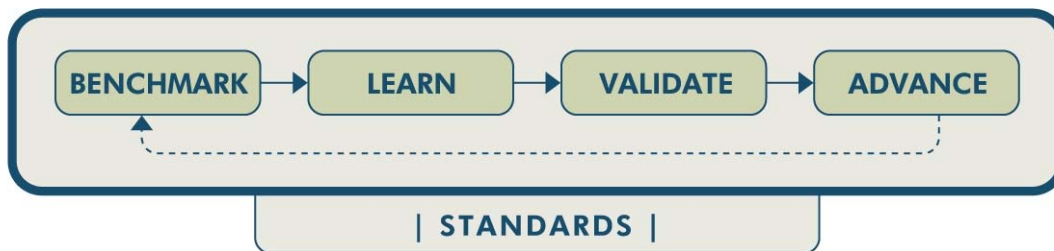
⁴ "Bridging the Digital Divide for Student Success," Williams and Scott, March 2007.

⁵ "Connecting the Digital Dots: Literacy of the 21st Century," Jones-Kavalier and Flannigan, 2006.

have experienced varying degrees of success, but some higher education administrators are now seeking ways to evaluate student digital literacy before they enter the classroom to take credit-bearing courses.

How does Certiport recommend verifying and developing student digital literacy?

The model Certiport has developed to assess and build digital literacy is based on interaction with authorities in higher education and is founded on the Certiport Certification Pathway.[™] The Pathway provides tools that allow institutions to *benchmark* student skills while providing a personalized plan that helps them *learn* concepts and adopt skills they need to meet the digital literacy standard. When ready, students can *validate* their newfound knowledge and skills by achieving Certiport Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC³®), which provides a vital foundation from which they can *advance*.



How does this model integrate practically into a college or university?

Because leading college and university administrators seek globally recognized standards and performance-based testing they can integrate into their school's system, Certiport recommends the following approach to providing a digital literacy solution for incoming students:

Assess: Determine the digital literacy of incoming students through a performance-based entrance exam mapped to the Certiport IC³ standard. Taken before credit-earning courses, the digital literacy assessment could be administered in addition to math or English assessments.

Prepare: Create personalized learning plans for students who did not meet the entrance-exam standard. These learning plans can be leveraged in a self-paced or instructor-led computing and Internet course worth three credits. Because the curriculum for the course can be based on the globally recognized Certiport IC³ standard, students should achieve the Certiport IC³ credential as the exit exam.

Certify: Provide students who meet the entrance-exam standard with the opportunity to earn the industry-recognized Certiport IC³ credential and three elective credits without adding an additional class to their schedule.

Are any schools currently taking the Certiport approach to addressing freshmen digital literacy?

Although colleges and universities around the world have used Certiport IC³ in a variation of the above model for some time, one institution has been a catalyst in partnering with Certiport to innovate new ways to effectively measure, develop and validate student digital literacy. Broward Community College located in the Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, is the sixth largest community college in the United States with a student body of up to 60,000 students. Broward also has approximately 10,000 freshmen enroll every year. After requiring a one-credit computer literacy class with mixed results, a college-sponsored committee selected determined an entrance assessment based on the Certiport IC³ standard would be most effective in meeting the schools needs.

Since that time, Broward has become instrumental in working with Certiport to develop the model to service college-bound students.



How can I learn more about freshmen preparedness and digital literacy programs for higher education?

Visit www.podango.com/certiport to listen to instructors give insights into research on digital literacy's value in higher education and to a Broward Community College administrator provide his perspective on implementing a digital literacy assessment program for freshmen.

Press Contact:

John Pilmer
801-369-7535
mediarelations@certiport.com