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# What, Why, and Who of Alternative Credentials

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# What are alternative credentials?

**Certificates** – awarded at end of period of study; credit and non-credit

**Certifications/licenses** – awarded based on demonstration of competency, usually with exam

**Apprenticeships** – structured work-based learning experience

**Coding boot camps** – short-term course in a tech skill

**MOOCs** – large-enrollment online courses, sometimes bundled into micro-credentials

**Badges** – digital representation of a skill or accomplishment

# How many alternative credentials?

**Certificates** – ~1 million awarded  
by Title IV providers in 2015;  
~600,000 by non-Title IV  
providers in 2013

**Certifications/licenses** – 21% of  
adults held one or the other in 2016

**Apprenticeships** – 500,000  
registered apprenticeships in 2016

**Coding boot camps** – 18,000  
completers in 2016

**MOOCs** – 35 million enrolled, 6%  
of courses completed in 2016

**Badges** - ????

# How valuable are alternative credentials?

The potential: faster, cheaper,  
directly job-related

Labor market value varies by field,  
type, and provider:

Cosmetology <<< IT

Certificates < certifications/licenses

For-profit college < not-for-profit  
college < corporate/industry

# Who earns alternative credentials?

Majority of certificate programs are sub-baccalaureate

Certifications, licenses, apprenticeships, boot camps, and MOOCs cater to those with undergraduate degree

Lower-earning certificates disproportionately Black/Latinx women

Higher-earning certificates, certifications/licenses, boot camps disproportionately white men

# Challenges & Opportunities

Data are limited & quality assurance is patchy

Missed signals between employers and candidates

Lower-income, first-generation, minority opportunity seekers may be least able to navigate

Large employers are highly motivated

Interesting partnerships among higher ed, employers, and other providers

Bi-partisan federal/state interest

# Thank You

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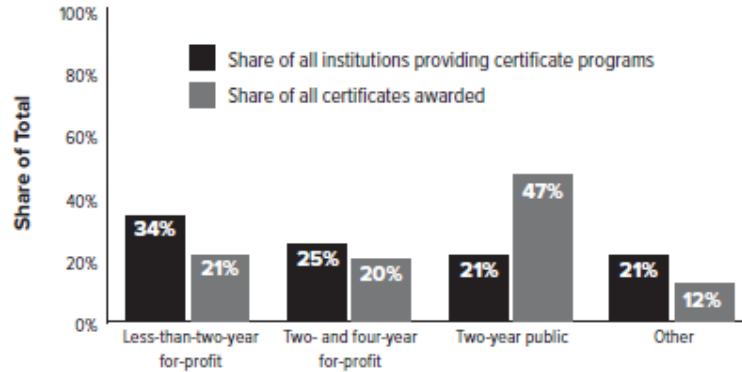
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<http://sr.ithaka.org>

# Appendix



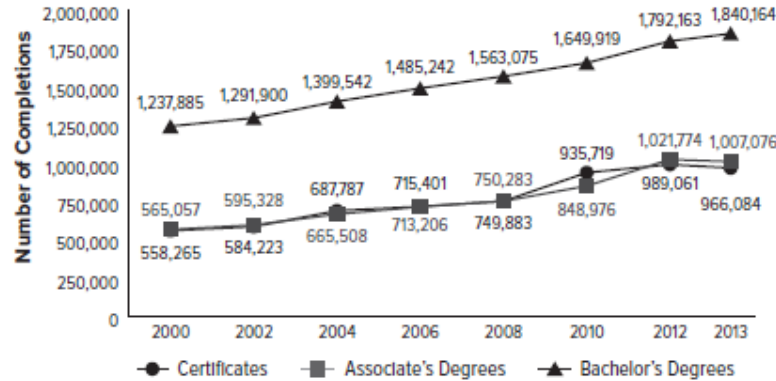
Figure 1: Share of Institutional Providers of Certificate Programs and Share of Certificates Awarded, by Institution Type, 2013



**Note:** “Other” includes public and private nonprofit four-year schools and public and private nonprofit less-than-two-year schools.

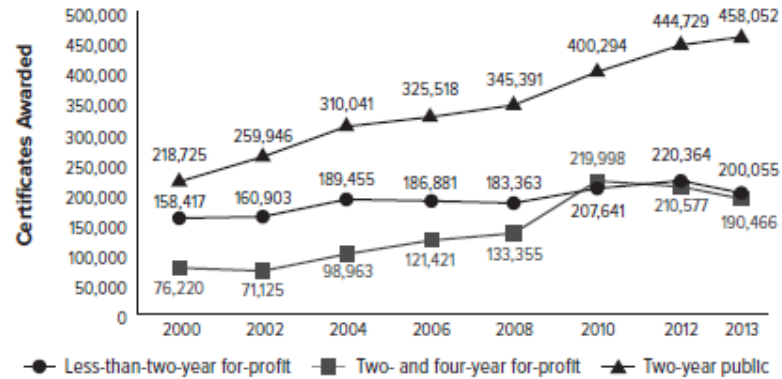
**Source:** U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Institutional Characteristics (IC) and Completions Components, 2013, “Table P143. Number and percentage distribution of Title IV postsecondary institutions that offer programs at each undergraduate credential level, overall and for occupational education programs, by level and control of institution: United States, 2013,” <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/P143.asp>; “Table P152. Total number of credentials awarded by Title IV postsecondary institutions, overall and in occupational education, by credential level, control, and level of institution,” <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/P152.asp>.

Figure 2: Credentials Awarded by Title IV Postsecondary Institutions, 2000–2013



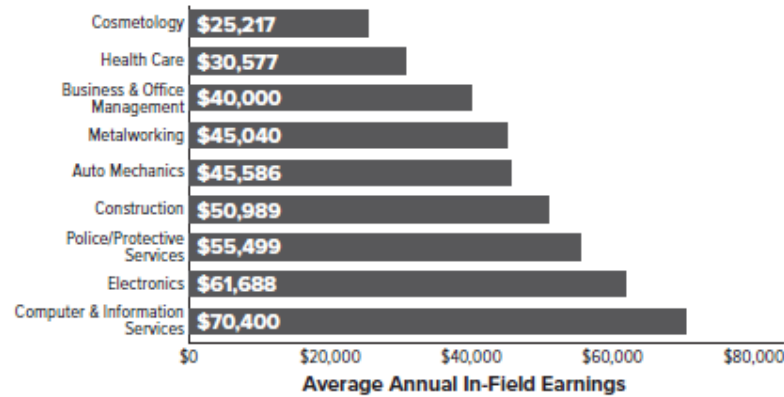
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Institutional Characteristics (IC) and Completions Components, “Table P160: Number of undergraduate credentials awarded by Title IV postsecondary institutions, by control and level of institution and credential level,” <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/P160.asp>; “Table 152. Total Number of credentials awarded by Title IV postsecondary institutions, overall and in occupational education, by credential level, control, and level of institution, United States, 2013,” <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/P152.asp>.

Figure 3: Certificates Awarded by Institutional Type, 2000–2013



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Institutional Characteristics (IC) and Completions Components, “Table P160. Number of undergraduate credentials awarded by Title IV postsecondary institutions, by control and level of institution and credential level: United States, selected years 2000–2012,” <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/P160.asp>; “Table P152. Total number of credentials awarded by Title IV postsecondary institutions, overall and in occupational education, by control and level of institution and detailed field of study, United States, 2013,” <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/P152.asp>.

Figure 4: Average Annual In-Field Earnings for Certificate Holders by Field



Source: Anthony Carnevale, Stephen J. Rose, and Andrew R. Hanson, "Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees," Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (June 2012), <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Certificates.FullReport.061812.pdf>. Certificates in cosmetology, health care, and auto mechanics tend to be short-term certificates; health care, business management, and cosmetology are majority-women fields.