

Chapter 18

Practical Considerations on How to Document and Transcribe Multi-Modality Learning: The Emergent Role of the Comprehensive Learner Record

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ABSTRACT

For the first time in its history, higher education is having to prove its value. Being able to communicate a learner's holistic set of experiences and competencies when they leave an institution is critical both now and in the future. Comprehensive learner records (CLRs) have been created to fill this important role. These are the practical considerations for the creation of CLRs, the steps that should be considered, and how this new credential can be used to assess and document learning that happens inside and outside of the classroom.

In 1997 registrars were asking, “What would happen if transcripts were electronic?” Now, in 2022, registrars are asking, “How can student outcomes be improved by using the rich student data that is collected by campus computer systems?” and “How can we align what we report about learners in a way that presents selected information about each learner in a personalized way for each stakeholder/receiver [employers, other institutions of higher learning, licensing bodies]?” In higher education, an immense amount of data about learning experiences and instructional outcomes is collected about each learner. So, what is left to do is to format that information so that each type of receiver will receive a learner report that aligns with their unique mission and/or program design.

Enter the Comprehensive Learner Record (CLR). CLRs are a new category of information collecting and reporting that is more detailed than the traditional record. CLRs include a broad and deep curation of academic records from a student's learning activities and experiences on campus. Then, this information

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is presented in new ways, including visual presentations and machine-readable data. In use at institutions of higher education since 2015, CLR's use a common language for structuring the data collected about learners so that customized reporting of a portion of that information is possible.

Revolutionizing the way a learner record is presented to a receiver also underscores the value of the institution, especially liberal arts colleges. Hagel's (2021) article in the *Harvard Business Review* made the following recommendation for higher education: "Rather than focusing on the two- or four-year degree or credential as the output, help students identify and more easily demonstrate to employers what job-ready skills they've developed as part of their education and training" (para. 13). I call these skills "evergreen skills" (e.g., teamwork, leadership, communication, and problem-solving). However, most institutions do not define, articulate, assess, or report these competencies. Thus, they fail learners at the most critical moment, the moment when learners need to represent the competencies they have developed to others.

"A highly skilled workforce, with lifelong access to a solid post-secondary education, is a prerequisite for innovation and growth: well-educated people are more employable and productive, earn higher wages, and cope with economic shocks better" (The World Bank, 2021, para. 1). But employers are not recognizing the evergreen/employability skills that come with a postsecondary education. A more impactful representation of learner outcomes could build awareness of the competencies that develop through curricular and cocurricular experiences. Thus, CLR's can be viewed as a way institutions can differentiate themselves and provide value to their learners and stakeholders. This chapter provides a definition of CLR's, why they are needed, and the benefits and unintended consequences of implementing them.

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE LEARNER RECORD?

In the United States, colleges and universities use the transcript as the gold standard for documenting that students have taken a course and have performed at an acceptable level. Globally, that information is reduced to a degree conferral; either you have earned a diploma or you have not. But most learners do a lot more than take courses and earn credits during the course of earning a degree. They participate in many cocurricular activities, including internships, athletics, academic teams and clubs, volunteer and service projects, multicultural activities, and political activism, and they may also be working full or part time. Transcripts document courses completed and transferred credits, but they do not fully present the personal, academic, and professional growth that happens as learners are acquiring a degree.

Colleges and universities today collect and can utilize much more data about each learner than ever before. Data is collected in the registration system, learning management system (LMS), and student information systems. Institutions use student data to understand who their students are in an effort to improve instruction and retention. They also report data to federal, state, and accreditation stakeholders. However, when it comes time for a student to share the rich experiences from their college years, they have historically only been able to prove what courses they took and the grades they earned. A CLR is different:

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