



## Student Transformative Learning Record: University of Central Oklahoma

*CASE STUDY: Curate, Credential and Carry Forward Digital Learning Evidence: [tiny.cc/cccdle](http://tiny.cc/cccdle)*

**Context:** University of Central Oklahoma uses the Student Transformative Learning Record (STLR) to assess curricular and co-curricular transformative learning. Students can earn six different digital badges. They are available to all undergraduate students. They are available in all course work and many co-curricular events. Many of the co-curricular events are merely 'exposure', while other events or course assignments can earn 'integration' or 'transformation' status.

### [1] What are we doing?

Students are assessed through the Central 6 Tenets. We have digital badges for these six tenets: Leadership; Health and wellness; Service-learning and civic engagement; Disciplinary content; Global and intercultural competencies; and Research, scholarship, and creative activity. All faculty must create one assignment in every course that creates the potential for transformation to occur. Transformation is authentically assessed with a transformative learning rubric for exposure, integration, or transformation. After students complete assignments, they write a critical reflection. The critical reflection, completed TL assignment, completed rubric, and digital badge go into a students' (self-created) ePortfolio. Ultimately, they synthesise their skills and abilities can use them for interviews with employers. During the spring 2015 a pilot group of faculty are creating and using TL assignments and assessing them for TL. For the co-curricular side of STLR there is a community employee advisory board to determine if students are learning the beyond disciplinary content they need to know. Student Affairs are trained in how to create TL assignments through co-curricular events, help students write critical reflections, and push evidence of their evidence into students' ePortfolios. Feedback has been good. The TL initiative began in 2006. Now, all courses on our 17000 student campus must contain one intentional designed assignment for potential transformation. A 33000 square foot building was built especially for transformative learning environments. In October 2014 the US Dept. of Education awarded us over \$7 million for faculty, student, and student affairs training and implementation of STLR.

### [2] How are we doing it?

We needed to find an assessable way to operationalize transformative education at UCO in a way that routed curricular and co-curricular learning experiences through our Central 6 Tenets. We developed a grant

application specifying the processes, tools, and infrastructure for STLR.

We wanted a replicable, simple process based on authentic assessment that could be deployed easily and which did not require extensive training based on complicated procedures or philosophies.

Envisioning what we wanted in specifics suitable for a grant application meant checking with various constituencies around campus to see if what we were proposing could be done. There were several iterations of flowcharting and modeling to refine the process for description in the grant proposal. We were pleased with the project's description in the grant proposal even though we didn't get the grant - but we forged ahead, launching the initiative with a baby-steps, internal-funding approach.


### [3] Who is involved?

The entire UCO campus community (students, faculty, staff, alumni); employers in the greater Oklahoma City metro area; our Board of Regents and Oklahoma state and national legislators as well as higher education in general. The STLR Employer Advisory Council is a group with 10–12 representatives from big OKC-area employers. We convene the group regularly for input about the STLR process and ePortfolio design and usage. Our Transformative Learning Steering Committee, comprised of faculty and staff, is the key 'face of TL at UCO' and provides an oversight function for the student TL project applications. Students are engaged via STLR training (segments at orientation, service learning, STLR assignments in our Success Central class taken by about two-thirds of entering freshmen) and eventually STLR training for transfer students and entering freshmen not in Success Central classes. Faculty and staff receive training themselves in order to assess Tenet-related artifacts using the STLR rubrics.

### 4] Why are we doing it?



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We are implementing STLR because of our intense commitment to helping students have transformative learning experiences as part of their undergraduate collegiate experience. STLR is the way we ensure we're doing everything possible to prompt TL so that our students: 1) develop beyond-disciplinary skills, and 2) expand their perspectives of their relationships with self, others, community, and environment.

**[5] What are the challenges?**

- Faculty buy-in: faculty are quick to view any initiative as more work for little return. When they understand that the process is not overly complicated or onerous, and that we're only asking them to associate a Tenet to an assignment they already have in the class, the anxiety level drops considerably.
- Money: Before we knew we had the grant, UCO Administration had committed to STLR because they believed it was the right thing to do and a successful means of operationalizing TL. This meant we were able to begin building STLR by taking off small chunks of the work and paying as we went along, starting with a small number of classes and SA events so we didn't have a large cost in stipend payments for training.
- Systems: The technological challenges were considerable in that our LMS was not capable of cutting across departments and colleges to aggregate student data, to say nothing of the inability to gather data on co-curricular learning.
- Done anything differently? Not really. The cross-campus, cross-functional STLR Project Team was a good method for working on the project. That group met every week for a year and a half to get STLR launched. Maybe one thing would have been marketing STLR and explaining it to more groups on campus earlier – that might have lessened some grumbling.
- Lessons learned: Involve all constituencies early. Think from the student perspective and get student input. Involve students in the creation and

execution of the initiative. Eradicate 'turfism' and proprietary ownership among campus units – initiatives like this one are massive and reach into every nook and cranny of the university, and everyone must be 'all in'

**[6] Where is it heading?**

We will add a psycho-sociological intervention to the STLR ePortfolio. We have been invited to the second cohort of the Educause/Gates Foundation Next Generation Leadership Challenge Breakthrough Models Incubator within which we will create the sustainable process and tools to accomplish this and launch it with Foundation funding in early 2016.

The most important aspect of STLR is its intentionality – transformative moments happen to students during their college careers, but some research shows it happens more frequently outside the classroom. However, whether the moments occur inside or outside the classroom, they usually happen by accident or because of some fortuitous circumstances coming together in just the right way, concerning what the learner is experiencing at the time. Most frequently, these transformative experiences do not happen because the faculty member intentionally designed the environment and activities that would be likely to prompt TL moments. STLR forces our faculty and SA professionals to be mindful and intentional in creating the opportunities that are more likely to prompt TL experiences than if those experiences are left to chance. Then, we observe, document, and assess those moments so we can tell how well we're living our mission statement to help students learn in transformative ways.

**Resources :** [5 minute video on Transformative Learning](#)  
[News clip on STLR](#); [Transformative Learning Guide](#)  
[Journal of Transformative Learning](#); [Central 6 Tenets and Digital Badge Icons](#); [STLR Badge Icons](#)

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