

# Get Moving, Get CERTiFied:

## New Initiative Offers Courses and Credentials to Help Working Adults Advance Their Careers

**T**he world of work is different than it was 20 years ago — and even three years ago. New technologies factor into every job and continue to transform every industry. It is common for workers to change jobs, companies and even fields quite frequently. And employers are increasingly seeking employees who have specific skills, not just specific degrees.

To meet the evolving needs of the workforce and employers, Mercy College launched the Division of Workforce Credentialing and Community Impact (DWCCI) in 2021 to fill skills gaps in the labor market and help individuals advance their own careers. CERTiFi by Mercy College (CERTiFi) is the public-facing brand that provides an online learning portal where people can reskill or upskill by enrolling in a diverse array of courses curated from various providers.

“We’ve inherited a centuries-old model of what a college or university education is supposed to look like,” said Brian Amkraut, Ph.D., vice president and general manager of DWCCI. “But that’s very much in flux now. Mercy College has always been focused on giving people what they need to be successful. And now, Mercy is stepping up as a leader as we supplement our degree programs with less traditional offerings.”

Current CERTiFi course topics



include cannabis education, software development and design, insurance sales, marketing, food truck entrepreneurship, nonprofit management and small business management — and the list keeps growing. Most courses are offered online (but more courses will be offered in person soon).

Jonathan Seti recently completed CERTiFi’s Business of Cannabis Certificate program, a six-month program comprised of three courses run by cannabis education company Green Flower. Seti, a professional celebrity makeup artist based in New York, recently launched a skincare company that uses CBD in some products, so he decided to enroll in this program to make sure that his company is compliant with state rules and regulations. “It’s beyond fascinating to learn about this industry from seed to sale,” he said. “I thought I knew a lot, but I was so wrong — and it’s the things I didn’t know that make me continue to take

the courses.”

CERTiFi courses are open to anyone, including community members who have had no connection with Mercy before now. Someone could take just one course, several courses or an entire program that results in a formal credential. Someone could improve their skills in one specific area or use the courses to explore a new field before enrolling in a more formal degree program at Mercy. With an eye toward accessibility, the prices are affordable, and there is flexible financing with the option to pay in installments.

“We want to give learners an immediate return on their investment with micro-credentials,” said Regina Wattley, CERTiFi’s director of marketing. “The idea is that a learner could pick a very specific course that will advance them in their current job or whatever direction they’re trying to go.”

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Amkraut explained that national data supports the need for initiatives like CERTiFi. College enrollment is declining across the board in the United States due to declining birth rates — and the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this enrollment trend. In addition, there is an increase in nontraditional-age students in higher education. “One of the questions that higher education really needs to figure out is how we can best meet the needs of nontraditional students,” Amkraut said. “Some may say that we could meet their needs by offering them only a college degree, but that may not be what they’re looking for at this time. Perhaps we can meet their needs more effectively by giving them credentials and specific skills to help them progress on their lifelong educational journey.”

Mercy College sees CERTiFi as a way to create access and opportunity. “Some communities are still too



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CERTiFi by Mercy College is designed for learners like you. Whether you have a college degree, want to further your career without one, or are looking to advance your skills and gain credentials vital in today's workforce, CERTiFi has a program that can help you get moving.



often left behind in higher education, and we want to create pathways for them to succeed," said Amkraut. "CERTiFi continues Mercy's work as a Minority-Serving Institution and a Hispanic-Serving Institution by giving these communities a more flexible way to get ahead. I like to say that CERTiFi operates in the sweet spot where the Mercy mission meets the market," he said.

To ensure that local communities know about CERTiFi, DWCCI launched a full-scale marketing campaign this fall, which included everything from billboards at Port Authority, signage on Westchester's Bee-Line Bus System, radio advertisements and cable network advertisements on channels such as Bravo and Food Network. DWCCI is also organizing public events in the community and on campus, such as a forum with leaders in the cannabis field this fall.

In determining which courses to offer through CERTiFi, DWCCI prioritizes topics where there are clear skill gaps — either as identified by employers in the New York City metropolitan area or in national data. For example, there is a well-publicized shortage of health care workers, not just nurses but also all kinds of administrative and allied health positions such as lab assistants and medical technicians. To help alleviate these shortages locally, DWCCI is

working with White Plains Hospital to develop courses that could be "stackable" into a longer-term training and career pathway. Another example of how courses are selected is that DWCCI has been following New York State's nascent cannabis industry, which will likely create education and training needs as it takes shape. That is why cannabis courses were some of the first that CERTiFi launched.

Seti is thrilled with his decision to enroll in a CERTiFi program: "It's

evident that Green Flower has put a lot of thought and effort into this program. And they really chose the right instructors who teach in such a way that you want to pay attention the whole time. This course is 1000% worth taking!"

As the world of work continues to evolve, learners like Seti who take advantage of CERTiFi courses will be prepared with up-to-date skills and credentials that will undoubtedly help them stand apart at work and advance their careers.

Explore the courses and programs currently available through CERTiFi by Mercy College by visiting: [certifi.mercy.edu](https://certifi.mercy.edu)



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