

Episode 41: Saint Leo's Center for Alternative Pathway Programs (CAPP)

Speaker 1:

Saint Leo 360. A 360 degree overview of the Saint Leo University community.

Greg Lindberg:

Welcome to another episode of the Saint Leo 360 podcast. My name is Greg Lindbergh. Here on this episode, we are speaking about the Center for Alternative Pathway programs here at Saint Leo University. And we are very excited to have launched this center last year in 2020. And it's opening the doors to many new forms of education, essentially for our students. In addition to our degree programs, CAP, as we like to call it is essentially providing micro-credentials, professional development opportunities and a lot more, short forms of education. So first I'd like to introduce Dr. Cindy Lee, who is the director of CAP, Dr. Lee. Welcome.

Dr. Cindy Lee:

Thank you, Greg. Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to share about our center.

Greg Lindberg:

Absolutely. Very excited to have both you. And then we also have Amanda Forrester with us who is the program administrator of CAP. Amanda. Welcome.

Amanda Forrester:

Hi Greg. Thanks for having us.

Greg Lindberg:

Absolutely really excited to have you guys on the podcast. And I think we have a lot of great information to share here, so we'll go ahead and dive right in. So first off, we'll go ahead and start with Dr. Lee, just a few questions here for you, Dr. Lee. Talk to me about your background, Dr. Lee, and just, I know you've been with the university for many years now, and then previously had another hat that you wore so to speak.

Dr. Cindy Lee:

Thank you, Greg. Yes. I have actually been with Saint Leo for 22 years. I began as a faculty member in the Bachelor of Social Work program and I became chair of the department and served as chair for 10 years. Then in 2008, I was given the opportunity to develop an innovative Masters of Social Work program. It was one of the first in the nation that offered a full time web based program. This was where students came to classes via Zoom-like classes. The key was to provide the ability for those who were not able to commute to attend classes.

Greg Lindberg:

Excellent. And I know we've certainly prided ourself on online learning. We were one of the first universities to offer fully online programs, so that's wonderful. And thank you for everything you've done for the University.

Dr. Cindy Lee:

Yes.

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Greg Lindberg:

So let's talk a little more about CAP and talk to me about just the inspiration behind launching this new center.

Dr. Cindy Lee:

Yes, well, the current vice president of academic affairs, Dr. Mary Spoto, she was the forerunner and future of work initiatives about five or six years ago and identified the changing skills that the workforce was requiring because of that advancement in technologies. Then when she became vice-president of academic affairs several years ago, it was around two or three years ago. There was a substantive increase in offering alternative credentials to meet the skill gap the workforce was experiencing. And so based on the short shelf of skills, meaning that it only is four years, that skills remain current and also the need to stay competitive in the workplace, Dr. Spoto offered me the opportunity to begin the Center for Alternative Pathway programs.

Greg Lindberg:

Excellent. Very interesting. And then as the director of the center, talk to me about your role and your duties.

Dr. Cindy Lee:

I am the director and responsible for overall management of course delivery, subject matter expert recruitment and overall operation of the center.

Greg Lindberg:

Gotcha. Very interesting. And then let's dig into micro credentials. Let's define what a micro credential actually is and talk about the value of these short form programs.

Dr. Cindy Lee:

Very good. Yes. The micro-credentials, these are skill focused and short-term courses that are in demand in the workplace. And so these courses allow employees and employers to up-skill in a short period of time in order to stay current and competitive in the workplace. And one of the differentiators is upon successful completion of a micro-credential a digital credential badge is achieved, and this allows employees or anyone that the learner shares the digital badge with to see what skills the learner achieved, what the learner did to achieve the skill and how well the learner did. So the differentiator here is an employer can actually see the individual accomplishment of the learner by detailing the documentation of the learner's skills, which exceeds what people typically represent on a resume or what can be seen from even a college transcript that shows course titles and grades only.

Greg Lindberg:

I see. Very interesting. So these really are very specific, very niche, shall we say courses?

Dr. Cindy Lee:

Absolutely.

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Greg Lindberg:

Gotcha. I know that we also offer a continuing education professional development courses under the center. And let's talk about those and perhaps those, how those are different from the micro-credentials.

Dr. Cindy Lee:

Right. Very good. I'm glad to be able to explain the difference. The continuing education professional development courses allow for professionals to gain additional skills, to maintain licensure, certifications, or to enhance their resume and to be more competitive and promotable. So in short, they allow people to prepare for the next steps ahead in their careers in a short period of time and with a limited monetary investment.

Greg Lindberg:

I see. Very interesting. All right. I appreciate that information. And so we're going to go ahead and move on to Amanda Forester now to talk a little further about some specific micro-credentials and specific courses that we offer. So, Amanda, first of all, I'll just talk to us about your background with Saint Leo University.

Amanda Forrester:

Sure. Greg, I joined the staff at Saint Leo in 2012 and worked in the College of Arts and Sciences until joining CAP in 2020. I earned an MFA in Creative Writing in 2018, and I use my creative and analytical skills to bring these high quality, in demand micro-credentials to the Saint Leo community and beyond.

Greg Lindberg:

Wow, very interesting. And then how did you actually become part of this, the center?

Amanda Forrester:

When I heard of this exciting new center, developing professional, continuing education, micro-credentials and digital badging, I just had to be a part of it. This is the future of higher education. Skill building is necessary even after we earn our higher education degrees. So it's really important and really exciting.

Greg Lindberg:

Absolutely. And that's a great way to put it. This is the current and future of education. No question. On terms of your title and role with the center, talk to me about your duties and just everything that you do.

Amanda Forrester:

Yeah. I'm the program administrator for CAP and I work with Dr. Cindy Lee and I assist her as the director with the CAP's daily operations.

Greg Lindberg:

Gotcha. I see. So let's dive a little deeper into some of the specific micro-credentials just to give individuals an idea of what's actually involved with these. And I know we do offer several human resources micro-credentials and several tracks there.

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Amanda Forrester:

Yes. HR is pretty popular. CAP has two HR certificates, two HR bundles and 37 exam preps and individual courses of various topics in the HR field. These topics cover areas from ethical organization to corporate social responsibility. On completion of these certificates, the learner will be prepared to play an essential role in their workplace and provide the guidance, the policies and the resources to help their employees thrive.

Greg Lindberg:

I see. Very interesting. And then I understand we also have a grantsmanship micro-credential as well, right?

Amanda Forrester:

Yeah. We do. We offer two tracks and they're both very popular. We offer a general track and an agency track. We accept agency cohorts and we customize content to meet the needs of the agency. So for example, we recently hosted an agency that sought to take advantage of the COVID grants and the staff of this agency all learned how to apply for grants that pertain to their specific field. And that's because we have subject matter experts as course developers and instructors, and that enables us to offer that customized experience that really meets the needs of our learners and our partners.

Greg Lindberg:

Very interesting. And I think that really goes back to the university in general, as you know, really having that personal one-on-one support.

Amanda Forrester:

Absolutely.

Greg Lindberg:

Sure. In terms of project management, I know that's become a huge field, especially in recent years and we do offer a project management micro-credential as well, right?

Amanda Forrester:

Yeah. We do. Project management is a hot commodity. Employers are seeking certified project managers. And these skills are in very high demand, according to labor insight. Right now, over two and a half million job openings require these skills and they pay like a median annual wage of over \$78,000. CAP offers PMP bundles and exam preps for all sorts of different PMP skills, such as CAPM, Comp TIA, PGMP, and many others.

Greg Lindberg:

I see. Wonderful. We also have several test preparation options for professional certifications. I know many fields require regular certifications and there are certainly exams associated with those. Let's talk about some of the examples of those.

Amanda Forrester:

Yeah. They're quite popular. Each field that does require certification requires an examination. And CAP offers preparation courses for many of these. These prep courses provide practice exam questions,

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exam taking tips and comprehensive quizzes that cover the areas of knowledge that are described in these content specific exams. Some exam prep courses actually offer one-on-one coaching sessions and printed practice materials. Check out the CAP catalog for details on those. Taking certification exams is hard and can be scary, but CAP helps you prepare and succeed by providing these types of coaching sessions and materials. It's pretty awesome.

Greg Lindberg:

You really can't beat that. Absolutely. Once again, having that personalized support, that's fantastic.

Amanda Forrester:

Yeah.

Greg Lindberg:

In terms of continuing education professional development courses, I understand that we offer a wide variety of courses. Let's talk about some examples of those.

Amanda Forrester:

In fact, we offer over 220 courses, certificates, bundles, and micro-credentials that provide skills you need to be successful in landing a job or landing that raise. These range from agile to web design. We have something for everyone and we're always expanding our catalog. If you need employment that leads to a career now, take the insurance designation course that exempts you from taking the state exams and become a licensed insurance adjuster now, and you can start making money and a name for yourself in the industry. Are you on the board of a nonprofit and need help getting back on track post pandemic, take the nonprofit management micro and give your team the tools that you need to continue your mission post pandemic. We have something for everybody.

Greg Lindberg:

Hmm. That's wonderful. And I appreciate you mentioning kind of the post pandemic as we emerge, knock on wood from the situation. There's so many opportunities out there to kind of support individuals, to help them rebound from the situation.

Amanda Forrester:

Indeed.

Greg Lindberg:

And so I know we've had CAP, the center and these programs, these courses for over a year now. And I'm curious, what kind of feedback have we received from, quote unquote graduates, those who have actually completed these courses?

Amanda Forrester:

Yeah. So the overall response has been very positive. Our graduates are stating that they've been able to implement the skills that they obtained from our micro-credential courses immediately in their workplace. These skills allow them to stand out because they're most current in their field and the online and remote courses are flawless and interactive. So we've gotten some really great response.

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Greg Lindberg:

Awesome. That's great to hear. All right. So again, we've been visiting with Cindy Lee and Amanda Forrester and Dr. Lee and Amanda really appreciate the time. Any final words as we wrap up this segment of this podcast?

Dr. Cindy Lee:

Well, Greg, just thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to share in this new innovative center. Again, we, the center is to address the current needs in the workplace to keep employers and employees current and competitive. So please feel free to check out our website. Thank you, Greg.

Greg Lindberg:

Excellent.

Amanda Forrester:

Thank you, Greg. It's been great being here with you today.

Greg Lindberg:

Absolutely. Thank you ladies so much. And I did want to mention in the next segment of this podcast, we will feature an interview with a student who actually completed one of the micro-credentials. So please stay tuned for that. All right. So in this segment of this episode of the podcast, we are joined by Brittany Hahn and Brittany recently completed the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy micro-credential within CAP here at Saint Leo. Brittany, welcome to the podcast.

Brittany Hahn:

Hi, thank you for having me.

Greg Lindberg:

Absolutely. Really appreciate your time and your perspective here. So first off, Brittany, if you could just give a little bio, just a personal and professional bio of yourself to get us rolling.

Brittany Hahn:

Of course. I'm a former Division One athlete. I graduated from UNF in 2012 with my Bachelor's of Science in Psychology and a Minor in American Sign Language. I obtained my Masters of Social Work from Saint Leo in 2015. And I've been working as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in Oncology for the past six years. I've recently moved to Orlando to establish and develop the social work role for the bone marrow transplant program.

Greg Lindberg:

Excellent. Sounds like a very intriguing and very meaningful career.

Brittany Hahn:

Yes.

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Greg Lindberg:

And then talk to me about how you discovered Saint Leo and obviously you had been a graduate student with us as well, but in terms of a CAP, in terms of the micro-credential program, talk to me about how you discovered that and your decision to enroll.

Brittany Hahn:

I received an email promoting the program, and I instantly knew that this was something I wanted to participate in. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a well-established evidence-based theoretical approach to utilize when treating mental health concerns, commonly seen with my current population. So I knew it was really going to be a great fit.

Greg Lindberg:

Excellent. Great to hear. And then how would you describe your experience in this cognitive therapy micro-credential program?

Brittany Hahn:

I had a wonderful experience. The class size provided a good balance of individualized instruction and connection with my peers and the instructor was extremely knowledgeable about CBT and provided great feedback.

Greg Lindberg:

Nice. So it sounds like it was definitely a very positive experience for you.

Brittany Hahn:

Yes, definitely.

Greg Lindberg:

Excellent. And on that note, why would you recommend this micro-credential to others out there considering it?

Brittany Hahn:

I would highly recommend this program for providers looking to become certified in evidence-based interventions. In school we're introduced to this theoretical approach, but in this program it allows you to dive deeper into the approach and get hands-on application of these techniques.

Greg Lindberg:

Right. I see. Very interesting. And then how has this specific micro-credential benefited you already in your career?

Brittany Hahn:

I think it has allowed me to stand out above other clinicians who utilize CBT techniques because this micro-credential demonstrates that I received additional training from an accredited program. And it's also given me a lot of confidence in providing CBT to my clients.

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Greg Lindberg:

Excellent. Okay. Again, we've been chatting with Brittany Han and Brittany, thank you so much for your time and your perspective on this micro-credential.

Brittany Hahn:

Of course. Thank you for having me

Speaker 1:

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