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***Digital Badges Offer Promise for Overcoming Obstacles in States  
Lacking Civic Ed. Assessments  
Possible Alternatives to High-Stakes, Standardized Tests that Monopolize  
Teachers' Time and Miss Advanced Skills***

**MEDFORD/SOMERVILLE, MA** – A new working paper released today by Tufts University's [Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement \(CIRCLE\)](#) explores options for states lacking the comprehensive, nuanced assessments that adequately measure students' knowledge of civics. The working paper, [New and Alternative Assessments, Digital Badges and Civics](#), specifically focuses on *digital badges* – electronic icons awarded for the acquisition of knowledge or skill that are increasingly common features of many web-enabled applications – as a “promising approach” to overcoming the difficulties in assessing competent civics education learning.

A recent factsheet released by CIRCLE found that while “all states have standards for social studies or civics” the number of states that require assessment of social studies has decreased since the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, and the “scope of the assessments has become increasingly narrow.” In fact, only eighteen percent of states require an assessment of the knowledge and skills gained in these learning environments.

However, the [CIRCLE working paper released today](#) states that *digital badges* “have the potential for greater, extended use for individuals in multiple learning environments to create skill and knowledge portraits more comprehensive than a single letter grade or certificate can capture.”

[Felicia Sullivan](#), CIRCLE's senior researcher and author of the report released today, writes, “Digital badges have emerged in part as a response to shifting workplace demands that seek accelerated, ever-evolving, and tailored training. Formal degrees from institutions of higher education are perceived as slower to adapt to market needs, and as requiring significant investments of time and ever-increasing financial resources on the part of the learner.”

An online Prezi of the working paper can be viewed at: <http://prezi.com/rtgacupinb7p/untitled-prezi/>. Additional analysis and results can be viewed on CIRCLE's website at: <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=5406> .

The analysis released today was funded by the S.D. Bechtel, Jr., Foundation which is also one of the supporters of CIRCLE's recently announced [Commission on Youth Voting and Civic Knowledge](#), which will consider the data released today as well as other research on the 2012 election in developing its recommendations for how to enhance young people's informed voting.

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*CIRCLE ([www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org)) is a nonpartisan, independent, academic research center that studies young people in politics and presents detailed data on young voters in all 50 states. CIRCLE is part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University. CIRCLE's reputation for*

*reliable, independent, timely research has been hailed by experts in the field of civic partnership, such as Harvard University professor Robert Putnam who said CIRCLE has brought “the best and most serious research to one place.”*

*The Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service (<http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/>) is a national leader whose model and research are setting the standard for higher education’s role in civic engagement education. Serving every school of Tufts University, Tisch College creates an enduring culture that prepares students to be lifelong active citizens.*

*Tufts University (<http://www.tufts.edu/>) located on three Massachusetts campuses in Boston, Medford/Somerville and Grafton, and in Talloires, France, is recognized as one of the premier research universities in the United States. Tufts enjoys a global reputation for academic excellence and for the preparation of students as leaders in a wide range of professions. A growing number of innovative teaching and research initiatives span all Tufts campuses, and collaboration among the faculty and students in the undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs across the university’s schools is widely encouraged.*