Designing Teradata's Campus Certification Initiative

Project Duration: June 2024 - September 2024
Role: Academic Marketing Intern (UX + Community Focus)
Team: Marketing, University Outreach, Student Success
Company: Teradata Corporation

Executive Summary

This case study outlines the process of research, design, and implementation of Teradata's Campus Certification Initiative, an initiative to address the challenges that discourage university students from successfully completing Teradata certifications. By applying user centered design thinking methodology, the project transformed a disjointed certification process to one that is engaging, social, with 40% increase in student completion rates and 60% increase in confidence in the worth of certifications.

This project demonstrates how design thinking bridges the gap between business objectives with actual user needs, producing a scalable program developing university visibility and interest and allowing students to develop their careers.

1. Project Context and Background

1.1 Organizational Challenge

Teradata, which is among the leading data analytics platform providers, was facing a strategic challenge in campus recruiting and brand building campaigns. Although they were offering valuable professional certifications that could make significant contributions to the professional growth of data analytics students, the company observed:

- **Low Student Engagement**: University students had low awareness of certification opportunities
- **Poor Completion Rates**: Students who discovered certifications were not likely to complete them
- **Weak University Presence**: University initiatives lacked defined processes to integrate Teradata certifications into student success initiatives
- **Recruitment Pipeline Gaps**: Difficulty in finding and hiring strong entry level talent with relevant certifications

1.2 Objectives

1. **Increase Completions of Student Certifications**: Drive measurable growth in university student participation and success rates
2. **Strengthen University Relationships**: Establish long term presence on campuses
3. **Enhance Brand Presence**: Position Teradata as a student focused, caring technology leader
4. **Improve Recruitment Pipeline**: Create a repeatable pipeline of certified candidates for entry positions

1.3 Initial Problem Hypothesis

The early hypothesis targeted awareness and access issues. Leadership suggested that students merely were not aware of certification opportunities or the value they offer. Initial conversations with students, however, revealed more complex systems of barriers requiring more surveying.

2. Research Methodology and User Discovery

2.1 Research Approach

I utilized a multi method research approach intended to gain an end to end understanding of the student experience in order to validate business hypotheses. The methodology positioned qualitative insight to identify underlying motivations and pain points first, supported by quantitative insight to assess problem size and solution efficacy.

Primary Research Methods:

- **User Surveys**: Comprehensive form distributed to Teradata's summer intern cohort
- **In Depth Interviews**: Semi structured conversations with students different stages of certification
- **Stakeholder Interviews**: Sessions with Teradata team members and relevant teams
- **User Journey Mapping**: Collaborative workshops mapping current and desired student experiences
- **Competitive Analysis**: Review of similar professional certification programs and student engagement programs

2.2 Research Execution

Survey Methodology

Participants: 20+ university students from Teradata's summer intern program representing diverse academic backgrounds and career stages
Distribution: Digital survey via Qualtrics, distributed through pre existing intern communication channels
Response Rate: 89% response rate

Key Areas Explored:

- Current awareness of Teradata certification programs
- Past experiences with professional certifications
- Perceived hurdles to certification completion
- Learning style and motivation considerations
- Career goals and professional development agendas

Interview Protocol

Participants: 12 students representing different engagement levels:

- 4 students who had never attempted certifications
- 4 students who started but didn't complete certifications
- 4 students who successfully completed certifications

Interview Structure: 60 minute conversations via video conference
Key Research Questions:

- "Walk me through the process of how you initially learned about professional certifications."
- "Tell me about your ideal learning and certification experience."
- "What would need to change in order for you to make pursuing a certification a high priority?"
- "How do you generally stay motivated by tough, long term goals?"
- Stakeholder Research

Stakeholder Research

Internal Interviews: Sessions with Global Academic Program Manager, Senior Director of Marketing, and Student Success team members
University Partner Interviews: Conversations with career services directors and academic advisors at target institutions
Focus: Collection of information on organizational constraints, metrics of success, and institutional mindsets regarding student professional development

2.3 Key Research Findings

User Personas and Insights

Through thematic analysis of interview transcripts and survey responses, three distinct user personas emerged:

Primary Persona: "The Career Builder" - Baileigh

- **Demographics**: Junior/Senior undergraduate, business or STEM major
- **Motivations**: Career advancement, skill differentiation, competitiveness in the job market
- **Pain Points**: Overwhelming options, unclear ROI, lack of structured guidance

- **Quote**: *"I want to get certified but don't know where to start or how to stay motivated through the whole process."*
- **Behavioral Patterns**: Research oriented, goal driven, values expert recommendations

Secondary Persona: "The Community Learner" - Joanne

- **Demographics**: Sophomore/Junior, active in student organizations
- **Motivations**: Peer learning, bonding with peers, skill development
- **Pain Points**: Isolation through certification process, no study partners
- **Quote**: *"I'm more likely to complete something challenging if I have classmates doing it with me."*
- **Behavioral Patterns**: Socially oriented, learns in discussion, values peer guidance

Emerging Persona: "The Credential Collector" - Yadvendra

- **Demographics**: Graduate student or high performing undergraduate
- **Motivations**: Resume building, networking, social reputation
- **Pain Points**: Time pressure, unclear differentiation among certifications
- **Quote**: *"I need certifications that actually stand out to employers and show I care about data."*
- **Behavioral Patterns**: Efficiency oriented, brand aware, achievement motivated

Critical Barrier Analysis

Discovery and Clarity Gap Students encountered significant resistance in discovering certification options, requirements, and career relevance. The existing information architecture assumed knowledge of data analytics career tracks and Teradata's ecosystem.

Community Driven Dropout Analysis discovered that 68% of students who started certifications cited "lack of support" as a primary reason for not completing. Students who completed certifications more likely cited external support systems (study groups, mentors, scheduled timelines).

Value Proposition Ambiguity Students questioned whether completion of certifications would greatly improve their employment prospects. In the absence of gauged career outcome measures and peer success stories, many perceived certifications as "nice to have" rather than essential for professional growth.

3. Problem Definition and Design Challenge

3.1 Problem Statement Refinement

Initial business framing: "Students are not completing Teradata certifications."

User Centered Problem Statement: Ambitious university students looking to advance their data analytics career face significant challenges in completing professional certifications, including confusing

journeys, poor support systems, and unclear career utility, with low completion rates and missed professional growth opportunities.

3.2 Design Challenge Framework

How Might We Statements:

- HMW enable students to easily discover and value Teradata certification for their own career goals?
- HMW create an engaging community experience that keeps students motivated all the way to completing their certification?
- HMW provide clear recognition and pathways that reflect tangible career benefits?
- HMW create an experience that satisfies both individual learning needs and group formation?

3.3 Success Metrics Definition

User Experience Metrics:

- Student trust in process and value of certification (target: 60% increase)
- Task rate to finish certification discovery and registration
- User ratings of program clarity and support satisfaction

Behavioral Metrics:

- Certification completion rates (target: 40% improvement)
- Decreased time to finish
- Maintained engagement during certification process

Community Metrics:

- Active participation in peer support activities
- Retention rates for ongoing program activity (target: 75% monthly active)
- Frequency and quality of peer to peer interaction

4. Ideation and Solution Development

4.1 Collaborative Design Process

I facilitated a series of design thinking workshops with cross functional stakeholders to ensure solutions address both user needs and organizational capability.

Workshop Structure:

Session 1: Problem Alignment

- Stakeholder perspective sharing
- User journey mapping exercise
- Problem prioritization matrix

Session 2: Solution Ideation

- Brainstorming sessions using "Worst Possible Idea" and "How Might We" techniques
- Solution clustering and affinity mapping
- Feasibility vs. Impact assessment

Session 3: Solution Refinement

- Prototype sketching
- Resource requirement analysis
- Implementation timeline planning

4.2 Solution Architecture

Four interconnected solutions emerged from the design process:

Solution 1: Teradata Student Groups Hub

Purpose: Centralized digital page solving discovery and clarity problems

Key Features:

- Simple certification path visualization
- Progress tracking with milestones and celebrations
- Peer networking and study group tools
- Resource library with success stories and career outcome statistics

Design Rationale: Students needed a single source of information that reduced cognitive load while providing comprehensive support for their certification journey.

Solution 2: Structured Learning Pathways

Purpose: Break down difficult to understand certification requirements into manageable steps
Key Features:

- Explicit requirements of guided certification roadmaps with clear prerequisites
- Time estimation and scheduling mechanisms
- Career outcome mappings for each pathway

- Success story integration from existing graduates

Design Rationale: Certification complexity overwhelmed students; guided pathways provided clear direction and achievable expectations.

Solution 3: Campus Ambassador Program

Purpose: Support system provided by peers based on social proof and community learning
Key Features:

- Training course for successful completion of certifications
- Mentorship pairing
- Event facilitation and information session leadership
- Genuine student to student communication

Design Rationale: Students trusted peer recommendations more than institutional messaging; ambassadors provided valid guidance.

Solution 4: Industry Connection Events

Purpose: Direct exposure with data analytics professionals to demonstrate career relevance
Key Features:

- Guest keynote sessions with industry managers
- Q&A sessions facilitating direct student interaction
- Career progression discussions and networking activities
- Real world application showcases

Design Rationale: Students needed concrete evidence of certification relevance; direct professional interaction provided credible career guidance.

4.3 User Experience Design Framework

Discovery Phase: "What are my opportunities?"

- Crystal clear certification overviews with career outcome statistics
- Student testimonials and success stories grouped by career interest
- Comparison tools for evaluating different certification paths
- Integration with existing university programs

Engagement Phase: "How do I stay on track and motivated?"

- Progress tracking with visual milestones and achievement recognition
- Peer study group matches based on schedules
- Regular check ins with support resources
- Community challenges and collaborative learning opportunities

Achievement Phase: "How do I showcase my accomplishment?"

- Professional badge credentials tailored for LinkedIn and resume inclusion
- Alumni network access and networking receptions
- Career services connections and placement support
- Regular professional development pathway recommendations

5. Prototyping and Testing

5.1 Iterative Design Methodology

I applied rapid prototyping and user testing to experiment with design hypotheses and refine solutions based on student feedback.

Prototype Development Stages:

Low Fidelity Wireframes

- Paper drawings and computer wireframes for central user flows
- Focus on navigation structure and information architecture
- Piloted with 15 students utilizing think aloud protocols

Interactive Prototypes

- Clickable prototypes of the most critical user journeys
- Progress tracking and community features emphasis
- A/B tested different visual styling of certification path presentation

Content Strategy Prototypes

- Different messaging strategies tested for their effectiveness
- Career outcome focus vs. skill development focus
- Peer recommendations vs. industry expert quotes
- Structured advice vs. flexible self directed options

5.2 Testing Results and Insights

Testing Navigation and Information Architecture

Key Finding: Students preferred topic based organization over chronological progression

- **Original Design**: Certification paths organized by difficulty level and time requirements
- **Revised Design**: Pathways organized by career focus areas (Business Analytics, Data Engineering, etc.)

- **Impact**: 45% improvement in pathway selection accuracy during testing

Key Finding: Progress visualization significantly motivated continued engagement

- **Student Feedback**: "I want to follow through with the certification I see how far I've come"
- **Design Response**: Further milestone visibility with celebratory animations and social sharing feature

Content Strategy Testing Results

Career Outcomes vs. Skill Development Focus

- **Career outcomes messaging**: 60% higher engagement rate
- **Student Quote**: "I care more about where this gets me than what I learn"
- **Design Implication**: Prioritized career outcome data and success stories in all pathway descriptions

Peer Testimonials vs. Industry Expert Quotes

- **Peer testimonials**: 45% increase in intent to sign up
- **Student Feedback**: "I trust the experience of other students more than a promotion from executives"
- **Design Implication**:Positioned peer stories as primary social proof with expert endorsements as secondary support

Structured Guidance vs. Self Paced Learning

- **Structured guidance preference**: 70% of students
- **Student Quote**: "I need clear instructions on what to do next"
- **Design Implication**: Default experience provided clear next steps with optional flexibility for advanced users

5.3 Design Refinements Based on Testing

Information Architecture Improvements

- Simplified navigation from 7 top level sections to 4 logical categories
- Added persistent progress meter visible on all pages
- Used breadcrumb navigation for advanced certification requirements

Community Feature Enhancements

- Added study group assistant based on learning style compatibility
- Added peer messaging system with moderation capabilities
- Designed community challenges and leaderboards to gamify engagement

Content Strategy Optimizations

- Reformatted certification descriptions to start with career outcomes
- Added peer success stories integrated into the user flow
- Made obvious "next step" calls to action for each page

6. Implementation and Launch Strategy

6.1 Pilot Program Design

Since organizational constraints and solution validation in scale were needed, I developed a phased adoption plan with two university engagements as the beginning.

University Selection Criteria:

- Existing connection with Teradata academic initiatives
- Strong student interest in data analytics careers
- Structures enabling supportive career services
- Student population diversity that matches desired demographics

Launch Timeline:

Phase 1 (Month 1): Platform creation and ambassador recruitment
Phase 2 (Month 2): Pilot execution with restricted student cohorts
Phase 3 (Months 3 - 4): Full rollout and optimization

6.2 Implementation of Campus Ambassador Program

The program as an ambassador needed to be designed meticulously to guarantee peer genuineness without the compromise of program quality.

Ambassador Selection Process:

- Application and interview process that prioritizes communication skills and certification completion
- Training program that includes mentorship techniques, program knowledge, and event facilitation
- Regular support infrastructure with monthly check ins and resource updates

Ambassador Responsibilities:

- Facilitate regular study groups for certification cohorts
- Arrange information sessions and Q&A events
- Provide peer mentorship and motivation support
- Collect student feedback for program improvement

6.3 Technology Platform Deployment

I spearheaded the development of the Student Groups Hub in collaboration with Teradata's web team with specific focus on user experience requirements.

Platform Features Prioritized for Launch:

- **Certification Pathway Visualization:** Interactive roadmaps with progress tracking
- **Community Tools**: Peer messaging, study group organization, and event planning
- **Resource Library:** Customized content like study resources, success stories, and career advice
- **Achievement System:** Digital badges, celebration of milestones, and integration with LinkedIn

Technical Considerations:

- Mobile responsive design for student access
- Integration with existing Teradata certification systems
- User authentication and privacy protection
- Analytics tracking for program optimization

7. Results and Impact Analysis

7.1 Quantitative Outcomes

Student Engagement Metrics:

- **Certification Enrollments:** 150% growth in student enrollment in first semester
- **Completion Rates:** 40% boost compared to previous unstructured approach
- **Time to Completion:** Average 25% reduction in certification attainment
- **Sustained Engagement:** 78% of students remained active on average monthly in the program

Community Participation Metrics:

- **Study Group Formation**: 85% of enrolled students joined peer study groups
- **Ambassador Program**: 2 student ambassadors across 2 universities
- **Event Attendance**: Above 13 students per monthly keynote session
- **Peer Interaction**: 25+ peer to peer support interactions logged monthly

7.2 Qualitative Impact Assessment

Student Feedback Analysis:

Program Clarity and Support:

- **Pre Program**: 32% of students felt confident about certification requirements and process
- **Post Program**: 89% of students reported confidence in certification pathway and support availability
- **Student Quote**: *"Having a clear roadmap and knowing other students were working the same process made all the difference. I felt supported."*

Career Value Perception:

- **Pre Program:** 45% of students believed certifications would have a significant impact on career opportunity
- **Post Program:** 91% of students reported confidence in certification career value
- **Student Quote:** "The badges gave me real things to talk about in job interviews."

Community and Leadership Experience:

- **Student Quote**: *"Being a campus ambassador lets me help other students while strengthening my own understanding. It felt like real leadership experience*

7.3 Organizational Impact

Recruitment Pipeline Development:

- **Qualified Candidate Pool**: 67% of program completers expressed interest in Teradata career opportunities
- **Interview Performance**: Hiring managers reported enhanced technical interviews from qualified students
- **Brand Perception**: Student surveys reflected 84% improvement in favorability of the Teradata brand

Scalability and Program Expansion:

- **Model Documentation**: Thorough program guide developed to replicate at other universities
- **Resource Optimization**: Cost per completion data revealed program efficiency versus conventional methods of recruitment
- **Leadership Support:** Top leadership supported expansion to 5 additional universities for next academic year

8. Key Learnings and Reflection

8.1 Design Process Insights

Community Centered Design Principles:

Learning: Community design is about striking a balance between individual user requirements and social incentives and group dynamics.

- **Application**: Progress monitoring for individuals to fuel peer benchmarking and coworking features
- **Future Consideration**: Community functions will enhance but not replace individual achievement systems

Learning: Peer influence and social proof are stronger motivators than institutional messaging for student users

- **Application**: Peer endorsements and ambassador program became central to program success
- **Future Consideration**: Genuine peer leadership needs to precede expert content delivery in student led programs

User Research Methodology Reflections:

What Worked Well:

- **Multi method approach**: Combination of surveys, interviews, and observational data provided comprehensive user insight
- **Stakeholder inclusion**: Involving stakeholders in research revealed important institutional constraints and opportunities
- **Iterative testing**: Multiple user feedback loops prevented major design flaws and maximized solution impact

What Could Be Improved:

- **Diverse university representation**: Pilot focused on same institution types; greater diversity would increase scalability conclusions
- **Longitudinal tracking**: Evaluating longer term effect would make continued behavior change more explainable

8.2 Solution Effectiveness Analysis

High Impact Design Decisions:

Visual Progress Tracking:

- **Impact**: Students indicated visualization of progress as primary motivation factor
- **Design Principle**: Concrete progress indicators needed for long term engagement in complex goal achievement
- **Application**: All future education initiatives should incorporate open milestone recognition systems

Peer Led Community Building:

- **Impact**: Ambassador program created true student leadership and long term community engagement
- **Design Principle**: User initiated projects are usually more effective than organizational top down projects
- **Application**: Community projects need to appreciate involving users as leaders, not recipients

Career Outcome Integration:

- **Impact**: Clear career benefit communication dramatically improved initial engagement and sustained participation
- **Design Principle**: Educational programs must clearly connect learning activities to user career goals
- **Application**: Professional development initiatives require explicit value proposition tied to user career aspirations

Areas for Future Development:

Technology Integration:

- **Opportunity**: Enhanced mobile experience with push notifications and offline capability
- **Rationale**:Students needed access to learning content at various schedules and locations

Personalization Features:

- **Opportunity**: Customized learning paths based on individual career goals and learning aptitudes
- **Rationale**: One size fits all approach was not able to fully address different needs and goals of different students

Industry Connection Expansion:

- **Opportunity**: More and varied professional networking experiences
- **Rationale**: Students enjoyed direct industry connection but would have liked more touchpoints throughout their certification journey

8.3 Professional Development Insights

Skills Demonstrated and Developed:

User Research and Analysis:

- **Demonstration**: Conducted comprehensive multi method research in order to understand complex user ecosystem
- **Development**: Enhanced ability to synthesize quantitative and qualitative data into implementable design solutions

Community Centered Design:

- **Demonstration**: Established solutions that addressed individual user needs as well as community dynamics
- **Development**: Perfected balancing personal achievement systems with mutual social aspects

Cross Functional Collaboration:

- **Demonstration**: Successfully collaborated with marketing, university relations, and student success teams
- **Development**: Improved ability in taking user findings to organizational strategy and implementation plans

Program Design and Implementation:

- **Demonstration**: Designed and implemented comprehensive program across multiple institutions
- **Development**:Gained experience scaling user experience solutions from digital interfaces to include community programming and organizational partnerships

Future Application Areas:

Educational Technology Design:

- Interest in designing learning experiences that support individual pace and preference while holding onto community connection
- Application of behavioral psychology principles to sustain long term participation in difficult educational goals

Community Platform Development:

- Designing digital spaces that facilitate genuine peer connections and collaborative achievement
- Design for sustainable user led community development and leadership development

Professional Development Program Design:

- Crafting rich experiences that interlink skills development with career advancement
- Incorporating peer support frameworks with expert facilitation for maximum user success

9. Conclusion and Future Implications

9.1 Project Success Summary

Teradata Campus Certification Initiative successfully transformed a slow certification system into an engaging, community driven experience that addressed both the student career growth and organizational hiring requirements. Through the adoption of user centered design methodology, the initiative was able to achieve measurable improvements in student participation, completion rates, and career self efficacy while creating a replicable model for university collaborations.

9.2 Design Impact Beyond Immediate Outcomes

This initiative demonstrated how UX design principles might be applied beyond typical digital product development to craft end to end community experiences. By placing user motivations at the forefront and

reducing system obstacles, the effort obtained sustained behavior change that extends past the end of certification completion into participation in professional development.

Broader Implications for Educational UX:

Community as Core Feature: Educational technology needs to give community building its own place as core infrastructure, not tacked on social features

Peer Leadership Amplification: User initiated activities tend to produce more genuine and durable engagement than institution organized programs

Career Integration Necessity: Professional development activities need to consciously tie learning activities to user career objectives and offer concrete advancement routes

9.3 Future Research and Development Opportunities

The success of this projects opens several areas for continued development:

Adaptive Learning Community Systems: How can technology more effectively support diverse learning styles while maintaining community cohesion?

Professional Development Lifecycle Design:What support systems and touchpoints most continue to keep career development effort flowing once initial certification is complete?

Cross Institutional Scalability: How do community based education programs retain authenticity and efficacy across diverse institutional contexts?

9.4 Personal Professional Development

This project profoundly impacted my vision for user experience design as an interdisciplinary discipline that extends beyond interface design to encompass end to end user ecosystem creation. The experience reinforced my commitment to community driven design solutions and underscored the need for knowledge of user motivations and systemic barriers rather than superficial symptoms.
The project demonstrated how robust user research, co design techniques, and testing iteratively could yield solutions that suit both user needs and organizational objectives while fostering enduring community participation. I am eager to apply these lessons to future projects focused on empowering users through learning, connection, and achievement in complex work and learning environments.

Appendix

Research Materials

- User survey questionnaire and response data
- Interview protocols and thematic analysis results

- User journey maps and pain point documentation
- Stakeholder interview summaries

Design Documentation

- Wireframes and prototype iterations
- User testing protocols and results summary
- Content strategy A/B testing results
- Platform feature specifications

Implementation Resources

- Campus ambassador training materials
- Program launch timeline and milestone documentation
- Success metrics tracking dashboard specifications

This case study represents a comprehensive analysis of the design process, implementation, and impact of the Teradata Campus Certification Initiative.