

# Level Up: Using Digital Badges and Gamification Strategies to Increase Student Engagement and Achievement

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## Author Biography

Dr. Neil Rigole has decades worth of instructional technology, online learning, and information technology experience teaching and leading initiatives and programs in higher, K12, and adult/technical education. He is currently an Associate Professor in the School of Computing at Middle Georgia State University where he is the Coordinator for the Masters of Science in Information Technology program. He has also been named a USG Chancellor's Learning Scholar for the 2019/2020 academic year.

## Introduction

Motivation is a key factor behind what drives a person to complete an activity, whether that motivation is intrinsic or extrinsic. Digital badges serve as motivators and they are being utilized by a variety of social media, entertainment, educational platforms, and health activity trackers to reward the user for their achievements and involvement in an activity. They are useful in not only helping motivate a learner, but can also promote an atmosphere of valued learning. Digital badges can also be a way for the learner to showcase their skills and achievements while also encouraging the learner to gain more knowledge as they advance forward in the learning process. Digital badges and gamification strategies can be integrated into coursework to ensure enhanced engagement and motivation to increase student learning and achievement in online and traditional face-to-face learning environments.

## Structure of the Activity

For my classes in Interactive Digital Media, digital badges are awarded through the D2L Brightspace Learning Management System for project-based assignments (not for assignments such as quizzes or traditional discussion posts). The badges were created through the Digital Badge Designer (<http://openbadges.me>), which is accessible via Brightspace as well as with Adobe Photoshop. Each badge represents a significant milestone for the course in projects related to the course content.



Figure 1: Examples of Project Badges

I also provide a total of six "Level Up!" badge opportunities with each counting as an additional point added to the student's final grade (for a possible additional six points). Together, these six "Level Ups!" theoretically may allow a student to move up one letter grade (i.e. B to an A, or C to a B).



Figure 2: Examples of Level Up Badges



