MAKING LEARNING COUNT: PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENTS

SEPTEMBER 2011
PRESENTED BY:
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THE COUNCIL FOR ADULT AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
ABOUT CAEL

• CAEL is the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
• A 501(c)3 non-profit organization with 37 years of lifelong learning and workforce development experience
• Mission to remove barriers to learning for the adult workforce
• CAEL connects learning and work
• CAEL has a national network of hundreds of colleges and universities
• www.cael.org
CAEL’s Intermediary Role

CAEL is unique in its knowledge of adult/employee learning practices and in its ability to work as an active intermediary between:

- Colleges & universities
- Corporations
- Public Policymakers
- Government, community and philanthropic entities
- Labor unions
TOPICS FOR TODAY

• Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) overview and research on academic outcomes
• LearningCounts.org
• PLA State Policy
THE CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

AGENDA

US Dept of Labor TEGL 15-10: “To shorten the duration in training, state and local workforce agencies can pursue the following strategies . . .

- Assess prior learning to help adults and dislocated workers obtain academic credit for independently attained knowledge and skills, thereby accelerating the process of credential attainment.”
WHAT IS PLA?

The evaluation for college credit of the knowledge and skills one gains from:

- On-the-job learning
- Military service
- Corporate training
- Opensource Courseware
- Civic activities
- Volunteer service
PLA METHODS

- **Standardized exams**
  - Advanced Placement (AP)
  - College Level Examination Program (CLEP)
  - Excelsior College Exams
  - DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST)

- **Challenge exams**

- **Individual student portfolios**

- **Evaluation of non-college training**
  - corporate or military training

- **Apprenticeships**
WHAT IS A PORTFOLIO?

- A formal written, visual, or spoken communication describing, illustrating, and documenting college-level learning— and requesting college credit.

- Typical components (may vary from school to school):
  - Identification of prior learning- List and describe learning experiences
  - Essay or narrative- Describe goals and reasons for seeking credit for prior learning; demonstrate how prior learning relates to education goals
  - Documentation of knowledge and skills
QUALITY ASSURANCE

The CAEL Standards for Assessing Learning
Credit or its equivalent should be awarded only for learning, and not for experience.

The determination of credit awards and competence levels must be made by appropriate subject matter and academic or credentialing experts.
Fees charged for assessment should be based on the services performed in the process and not determined by the amount of credit awarded.
RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE VALUE OF PLA
FUELING THE RACE TO POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

What we wanted to know:

• Do adults who earn PLA credit have better graduation rates, compared with those who do not earn PLA credit?
• Do they have better persistence?
• Do they earn their degrees in a shorter period of time?
FUELING THE RACE TO POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

• 48-institution study of PLA and academic outcomes (funded by Lumina Foundation for Education)

• 62,475 total adult students in our sample (adult = age 25 or older)

• 15,594 (25%) had earned PLA credit between 2001 and 2008
GRADUATION RATES

Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success, CAEL, March 2010
When students earn credit for what they already know, they are 2½ times more likely to persist to graduation.
TIME TO DEGREE

Average Months to Bachelor’s Degree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Average Months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No PLA (n=5,341)</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-6 PLA (n=860)</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12 PLA (n=781)</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-24 PLA (n=1,170)</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-36 PLA (n=668)</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37-48 PLA (n=161)</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 or more PLA (n=219)</td>
<td>29.6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
TIME TO DEGREE

When students earn credit for what they already know, IT SAVES TIME.
OTHER RESEARCH SUPPORTING THE VALUE OF AND NEED FOR PLA
COMMUNITY COLLEGE PLA SURVEY

- Spring 2010 CAEL survey
- 88 respondents

Do you think your institution will see increased demand for PLA options in the future?

- Yes, definitely: 28%
- Yes, possibly: 44%
- No: 12%
- I don’t know: 16%
ADULTS CARE ABOUT PLA

A College Board study of 1500 adults rated “credit for prior learning policy” as more important than “small class size” or “availability of financial aid.”

A KY telephone survey indicated that the opportunity to earn credit for prior learning is one of 3 motivators for adults with some college but no degree.
NEED TO SCALE UP PLA

Research indicates a need at institutions for more PLA, but a lack of capacity and resources persists

- Specialized training for assessors, advisors, administrators
- Time intensive program
- Salaries, space, training, marketing
College credit for what you already know®
SCALING UP THE USE OF PLA THROUGH LEARNINGCOUNTS.ORG

- Supported by Lumina Foundation for Education, the Kresge Foundation, the Joyce Foundation and the Walmart Foundation
- Collaboration with ACE CREDIT, the College Board and others
- CAEL is drawing upon faculty experts nationwide for teaching portfolio development course and reviewing adult students’ portfolios
1. Talk to an Advisor

Students have the option to speak one-on-one with an advisor to find out which PLA option is right for them.

- **Portfolio Assessment** – our online process to demonstrate knowledge by creating a portfolio and having it reviewed for college credit.

- **Testing** – students can take a test to demonstrate learning.

- **ACE Credit** – evaluates training by military, employers, government agencies, and professional associations.

- **Cost**: No Charge.
2. Enroll in **CAEL 100: Prior Learning Assessment Theory and Practice**

- A six-week, faculty-lead, online course evaluated by ACE CREDIT (3 credits)
- Course will teach students how to document their college level learning and lead them through the development of their portfolio
- Courses start every few weeks
- **Cost:** $500
3. Create and Submit Portfolios

- Each portfolio may be reviewed for up to 6 credits in any one discipline. Students can submit multiple portfolios.
- Faculty from colleges and universities from across the country will evaluate portfolios and make credit recommendations.
- **Cost:** $250 for 1-6 credits attempted in the same discipline.
STEP BY STEP: USING LC.ORG

4. Transcription of Credit

- ACE will transcript course and portfolio credit recommendations made by LearningCounts.org/CAEL faculty for partner institutions.

- For Partner Plus institutions credit is transcribed through that schools usual process.
NEW DEVELOPMENTS:
WALMART LEARNING STIPENDS

- 114 stipends to cover cost of CAEL 100 and assessment fees for 1-6 credits
- Targeting low-income, underserved adults
- Working with Veterans Upward Bound and The Cara Program
Website first online class launched January 24, 2011
Classes begin every few weeks
Over 125 faculty assessors (over 600 applications!)
Over 300 partner school and association members
SAMPLE PILOT INSTITUTIONS

Over 300 colleges and universities serving as LearningCounts.org pilot institutions
POLICY TO SUPPORT PLA

Workforce
Higher Education
Corporate
EXAMPLES OF POLICY CHANGE WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE

- General Policy letter in support of PLA
- PLA in State WIA Plan and other state plans
- State or local policy letter from State WIB/Governor to agencies/contractors/providers verifying ITA usage for PLA
- PLA Assessment classified as a core and intensive service in WIA system
- Allow state financial aid to pay for PLA assessment fees
- Acceptance of PLA credits at institutions
- Transparent articulation/transfer policies for PLA credits
WASHINGTON

• PLA is in the WIA Strategic Plan

• South Seattle Community College is a LearningCounts.org Partner Institution

• PLA legislation passed last session
HB 1795: Tasks the Higher Education Coordinating Board and other stakeholder to collaborate to:

- Increase the number of student who receive credit for prior learning toward their major or degree, certificate or credential
- Increase the number of institutions accepting PLA
- Develop transparent PLA policies and practices
- Create tools to develop faculty and staff knowledge and expertise
- Develop articulation agreement
- Develop outcome measures to track progress
- Convene PLA workgroup
- Submit annual report
CALIFORNIA

Assembly Bill 372 (R. Hernandez – D)

• Subject to federal funding, requires that veterans receive prior learning assessments as part of community college matriculation process

• In 2009, more than 26,600 veterans utilized education benefits at a California community college.
OTHER PROMISING INITIATIVES

Arkansas
  • Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges (AATYC)
  • ATT Foundation Scholarships

Vermont
  • Central assessment system for state colleges

Tennessee
  • Systemwide

CEO’s for Cities,
  • Talent Dividend Prize

Achieving the Dream
  • 160 Two-year colleges nationwide
A SPECIAL REQUEST

- Put us in touch with your Higher Education leadership
  - Commissioner
  - Secretary of Higher Ed, etc

- Leadership of your private and public sector Higher Education Association
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