

# Fundamentals of Prior Learning Assessment

February 6, 2017  
Edwardsville, Illinois



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## CAEL's Overarching Goal:

**Meaningful Learning, Credentials, and Work for Every Adult**

For more than 40 years, CAEL has been linking adults' lifelong learning with credits and careers

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## UNIT 1: An Introduction to Prior Learning Assessment

Upon completion of this workshop, you will be able to:

- Identify and explain the principles and value of experiential learning
- Apply the CAEL principles of best practice in prior learning assessment
- Describe and utilize the steps, tools, and procedures in the PLA process with an emphasis on portfolio development
- Articulate the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the PLA process
- Illustrate and employ the administrative principles of prior learning assessment
- Advocate to various audiences the value of prior learning assessment
- Bypass Workshop 1 in the CAEL Online PLA Certification Program and, with successful completion of an assessment exercise, begin with Workshop 2 (see Appendix C for details).

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## New Focus on PLA

The recent focus on increasing college completion and enriching the workforce has led to an emphasis on PLA as an effective strategy linked to both goals.

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## The Time Is Right

Who is addressing adult degree completion and PLA?

- Departments of Education and Labor
- Individual States
- Philanthropic Organizations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Individual Institutions




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## College Completion Matters

In a report released by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce

- **By 2020, 65% of all jobs will require postsecondary education and training beyond H.S.**
- **At current rate of production, U.S. will fall short by 5 million workers with postsecondary credentials**



Source: Recovery: Job Growth and Educational Requirements through 2020, Georgetown University, Center for Education and the Workforce, June 2013.

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## Adult Completion Matters

- Pipeline of young college graduates not enough to meet workforce skill demands
- Adult learners integral to achieving completion goals
- With baby boomers' retirements, knowledge and skills gaps grow
- More than 22% of working population has some college, but no degree
- Nearly half of all traditional students who start college do not complete

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## Exercise 1: A Self-Reflection on Knowledge and Education

- Pages 9-10 in your workbook

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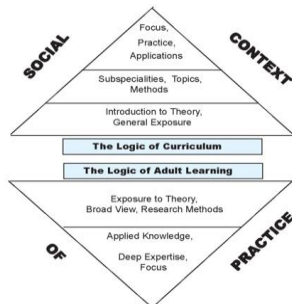
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## The Logic of Curriculum v. The Logic of Adult Learning



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## Theoretical Perspective

- Adults are always learning
- Life experience provides rich resources for learning
- Some of that learning may be college creditable
- **Where** learning occurs is irrelevant
- **That** learning occurs is what counts
- Experiential learning brings great value to the institution
  - Broader base of knowledge
  - More voices and perspectives

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## Assumptions About Adult Learners — Andragogy (Knowles, 1970)

- Adult learners strive toward self-directedness
- Life experience provides a resource for learning
- Adults prefer active, engaged learning, learning that is experiential
- Adults prefer learning that has an immediate application—serves a purpose

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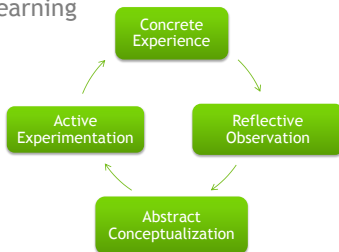
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## Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory & Self Directed Learning



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## A Bit More On What the Research Says



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## Who Is Using PLA?

### 414 Institutions responded to ACE's 2012 PLA Survey

- 92% approved use of one or more PLA methods
- National proficiency exams, such as CLEP or DSST, are the most frequently used form of PLA (83%) followed by ACE military credits (77%)
- Local portfolio and ACE CREDIT awards were used by over 25% of survey respondents
- PLA used at all degree levels, associate to doctoral

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## Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success

### 2010 CAEL Report

- Longitudinal study of PLA outcomes
- 48 Institutions participated
- Outcomes related to all PLA methods
- 62,475 adult students (25 years or older)
- Increased **graduation** rates and **persistence**: these students took *more* courses than adult students who did not receive credit for their prior learning
- Decreased **time to degree completion**



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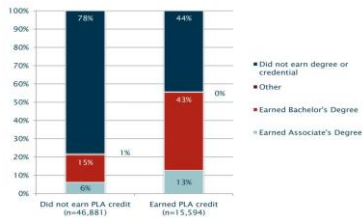
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## PLA Effect on Graduation Rates



Associate degree students are 2 times more likely to persist to graduation

Source: Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success. CAEL, March 2010.

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### Fueling the Race Study: Key Findings

Outcomes	PLA Students	Non-PLA Students	Notes
Degree-earning rates	56%	21%	Regardless of institution size or level, individual academic ability or GPA, age, race, gender, or income.
Graduation Rates (3.0+ GPA)	66%	35%	
Graduation Rates (2.0-2.9 GPA)	44%	28%	
Graduation Rates for Remedial Students	20%	5%	

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### Fueling the Race Study: Key Findings

Outcomes	PLA Students	Non-PLA Students	Notes
More persistent credit accumulation	56% of PLA students had accumulated at least 80% of the credits for their degree.	22% of non-PLA students had accumulated at least 80% of the credits for their degree.	Those who had not graduated.
Retention of first year students	63%	40%	
Time saved	2.5-10.1 months saved on average	N/A	Depends on how many PLA credits they are awarded
GPA (% of students above 3.0)	70%	64%	PLA itself is usually Pass/Fail

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## Fueling the Race Study: Key Findings

Average institutional credits earned	
PLA Students	Non-PLA Students
53.7 average credits	43.8 average credits

\*Does not include PLA credits (so, these are only faculty-taught, tuition-bearing hours).

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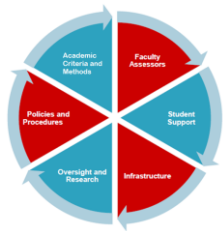
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## Components of a Healthy PLA Program




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## Quality Standards (2017)

1. Credit or competencies are awarded **only for evidence of learning**, not for experience or time spent.
2. Assessment is integral to learning because it leads to and **enables future learning**.
3. Assessment is **based on criteria** for outcomes that are clearly articulated and shared among constituencies.

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## Quality Standards cont'd

4. The determination of credit awards and competency levels are made by appropriate subject matter and credentialing experts.
5. *Assessment advances the broader purpose of access and equity for diverse individuals and groups to support their success.*
6. *Institutions proactively provide guidance and support for learners' full engagement in the assessment process.*

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## Quality Standards cont'd

7. Assessment policies and procedures are the result of **inclusive deliberation** and are **shared with all constituencies**.
8. Fees charged for assessment are **based on the services** performed in the process rather than the credit awarded.

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## Quality Standards cont'd

9. **All practitioners** involved in the assessment process pursue and receive adequate training and continuing professional development for the functions they perform.
10. Assessment programs are regularly **monitored, evaluated and revised** to respond to institutional and learner needs.

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## Methods of Assessing Prior Learning



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## What Is PLA?

A set of *well-established, researched, and validated methods* for assessing non-collegiate learning for college credit.

A process that allows learners to demonstrate knowledge and skill in a particular field or fields and have that learning evaluated for college credit.

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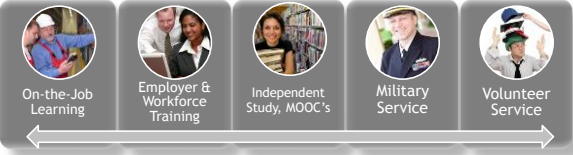
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## Sources of College-Level Learning



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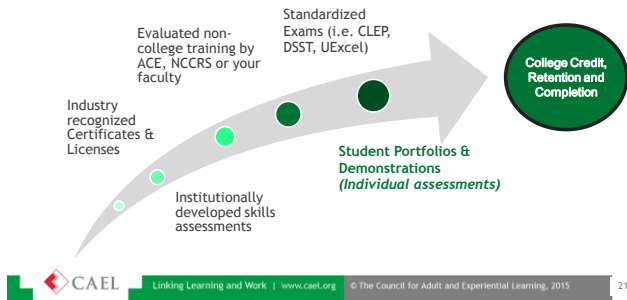
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## PLA Methods




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## Methods of Assessment

### Four Approaches to PLA

1. Evaluated non-college programs
2. Nationally recognized standardized exams
3. Challenge exams
4. Portfolio




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## Provide It!




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## ACE

- **Founded in 1918, the American Council on Education (ACE) is the major coordinating body for U.S. higher education institutions, representing more than 1,600 college and university presidents and more than 200 related associations.**
- **Provides leadership on key higher education issues and influences public policy through advocacy.**

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## ACE Military Guide Online

College and University Resources

### Military Guide



Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services

ACE's Military Guide presents credit recommendations for formal courses and occupations offered by all branches of the military. These credit recommendations appear on the service member's Joint Services Transcript (JST).

All recommendations are based on ACE reviews conducted by college and university faculty members who are actively teaching in the areas they review.

The Military Guide includes all evaluated courses and occupations from 1954 to the present. New courses and occupations are continually being evaluated by ACE, and these entries are added on a daily basis.

<http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Military-Guide-Online.aspx>

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## ACE CREDIT National Guide

the NATIONAL GUIDE TO COLLEGE CREDIT FOR WORKFORCE TRAINING

View organizations below or search for a specific course or area.

ACE Education Solutions  
ACE, Inc. Workforce Development Drivers  
ACEA Corporate (The Core 50)  
ACE Logistics Leadership Center  
American Business Association  
American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Inc.

American Recognition Association  
American Period Association (APA)  
American Register of Management  
Business Group, Technologies  
American Society of 1800cc  
Carpenters  
American Society of Public  
Performance & Service (ASPP)

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## Evaluated Training: ACE

American Council on Education (ACE)

Program Evaluations (faculty driven)

- Military Programs
- Corporate Programs (ACE CREDIT®)

Evaluation Activities

- Evaluate formal military training and occupational specialties
- Evaluate formal workplace training courses, certifications, apprenticeship programs, government agencies, examinations, and MOOCs

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## National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS)

- Formerly National PONS!
- Evaluates training programs offered by corporations, unions, religious organizations, and proprietary schools
- Over 1,500 cooperating colleges and universities consider granting college credit based on NCCRS recommendations and in accordance with their own transfer policies
- Conducted by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York

<http://www.nationalccrs.org/>

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## Local Evaluated Training

- College faculty assess local employer-provided training or union apprenticeship programs
- College faculty evaluate and articulate college's own noncredit courses/programs to credit courses/programs
- Colleges establish credit awards and, in some cases, develop course crosswalks for industry certifications:
  - Florida Department of Education Gold Standard Career Pathways Articulation of Industry Certification to AAS/AS Degree

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## Other Assessment Methods



CollegeBoard

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## CLEP

### CLEP - College Level Examination Program

- Nationally recognized
- Annual average of 185,000+ exams administered
- 30% of CLEP administered to **military service** members
- 2,900 colleges grant credit for CLEP exams
- \$80 CLEP Exam fee
- More than **600 faculty** contribute to the development of and standard-setting for CLEP examinations.
- Standing **faculty committees** oversee ongoing test development, shape content, review data, set exam policies.

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## Advanced Placement Exams

- Produced by the College Board
- 34 exams in 19 subject areas
- 2012: 3.7 million exams were taken by more than 2 million students at over 18,000 high schools
- More than 3,800 colleges & universities annually receive AP Exam scores. Most 4-year colleges in U.S. provide credit or advanced placement for qualifying scores
- ACE-reviewed and recommended for college credits

<http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/home>

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## DSST: DANTES Subject Standardized Tests

### Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Support (DSST-DANTES)

- Developed for the military, available to civilians
- 38 exams for upper and lower division courses
- Administered by Prometric
- Recognized by over 2,000 colleges and universities for awarding of college credit for passing scores
- ACE-reviewed and recommended college credit for all exams

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## UExcel® & Excelsior College Examinations (ECE)

### UExcel Excelsior College Examination Program

- Credit by examination program offered by Pearson VUE at thousands of test centers globally
- UExcel currently offers over 50 exams in five subject areas: Business, Humanities, Natural Sciences/Mathematics, Social Sciences and History, and Nursing

### Excelsior College Exams (ECE)

- Specifically for Excelsior College associate and bachelor degree program nursing students with prior clinical experience

<http://www.excelsior.edu/>

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## Challenge Exams

- At discretion of institution
- Uses locally-developed tests/exams
- May be existing final exams
- Used by 57% of postsecondary institutions



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## Prove It!

- Prior Learning Portfolio
- Demonstration of Skills



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## Individualized Assessment

- **Learning Portfolio:** Most common individual approach to demonstrating college-level learning
- **Other Methods:** Simulations or demonstrations, formal presentations, performance demonstrations, and faculty interviews
- **Course-Match Approach:** Most often used, with growing use of discipline or competency-based approach to documentation and evaluation of learning portfolios for college credit
- **Discipline-Specific Faculty:** Critical to portfolio and other individualized assessments

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## Portfolio Assessment

### What is a portfolio?

- Formal communication prepared by a student as part of a petition requesting credit or recognition for learning outside of a college classroom
- Must make case for credit by identifying learning clearly and succinctly - usually through a learning narrative
- Provides sufficient supporting information and documentation so that faculty can use it as basis for evaluation

A portfolio course or noncredit workshop is usually used to help students prepare portfolios.

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## Scale—LearningCounts.org

- College credit predictor and access to a college credit specialist
- PLA portfolio development course
- Individualized portfolio assessment
- Credit recommendation

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## Learner Path and Advisor Role

### CASE Study

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## Learner Path and Assessor Role

### CASE Study

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## Parking Lot

### Final Reflections and Questions

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## Thank You!

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## The Learner's Path and the Advisor's Role CASE Study

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## The Learner Path's and the Assessor's Role CASE Study

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## The Institution's Path: Gaining Buy-In and Positioning PLA at Your Institution CASE Study

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# Ongoing Learning

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# Parking Lot

## Final Reflections and Questions

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# Thank You!

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