

Wisconsin Career Pathways Technical Assistance Policy Brief

Credit for Prior Learning

JANUARY 2018

Background

To accelerate student completion postsecondary institutions and states have been adopting credit for prior learning (CPL) providing options for students to earn academic credit for learning outside traditional coursework and classroom seat time. CPL is also referred to as Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). This brief summarizes some recent statewide policy initiatives, postsecondary institution advances in CPL, including research/reports.

Policy and implementation issues vary from state to state and from institution to institution. Some common themes include:

- Availability of faculty time required to complete student assessments and how faculty are paid to complete assessments;
- Assessment rigor and CPL evaluation standards to ensure credit awarded reflects competencies of given coursework;
- Transcription of CPL credits and how credits are interpreted cross-institution including transcription process;
- Testing out of courses variation by degree program and from year to year depending on industry needs.

The Wisconsin Technical College System is currently focused on policy and implementation of CPL statewide including military transcribing. This technical assistance brief supports the progress underway with these efforts. The brief is ordered with national resources first, followed by regional consortiums and states. An addendum is included in this brief of resources of potential sources of open source online intake and assessment tools for students to compare their knowledge with the competencies of various courses.

| PROJECT & INITIATIVE | SUMMARY / DESCRIPTION | RESOURCES / CONTACT |
|---|---|--|
| National Resource Center for Prior Learning | Website that is national in scope to provide resources in the development and implementation of prior learning assessment. Includes resources on institutional alignment, marketing, infrastructure, evaluating PLA, business model, professional development. | Additional national resource: <i>PLA Inside Out: An International Journal on the Theory, Research, and Practice in Prior Learning Assessment</i> www.plaio.org |
| Global Learning Qualifications Framework | Assists students to document their verifiable college/university level learning for academic credit and to provide an academic framework to evaluate student learning. | Nan Travers Director, Center for Leadership in Credentialing Learning SUNY Empire State College Nan.Travers@esc.edu (518)-587-2100 ext. 2728 (518)-580-4933 (direct line) |
| Learning Counts | A comprehensive one stop prior learning assessment (PLA) resource for adult learners, offering PLA guidance, prior learning portfolio development courses, and portfolio assessment services. Focuses on translating the experience and knowledge adult learners acquire outside the classroom into college credit. | Council for Adult & Experiential Learning (CAEL) (funded by Lumina & Kresge Foundations) |
| Alternative Credit Project | Encourages greater acceptance of students' alternative credit and creates a more flexible pathway towards post-secondary education attainment. 37 colleges and universities and three systems agreed, up-front, to accept ACE CREDIT recommended courses from non-accredited providers in the project for transfer credit. Institutions agree to provide anonymized data to ACE regarding amount of credit their institution accepts through the Alternative Credit Project, as well as persistence and success rates of students transferring in courses from the project. ACE will track number of ACPE courses a student requires through an ACE transcript, receive data from receiving institution about credit acceptance, and student persistence, retention, and success. | Connecting Credentials Webinar (3/16): <i>The Rise of "Alt Credit": Why, Who, What's Next" Webinar (1 hour)</i> Burck Smith CEO Straighterline bsmith@straighterline.com |

| PROJECT & INITIATIVE | SUMMARY / DESCRIPTION | RESOURCES / CONTACT |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Parchment Summit on Innovating Academic Credentials</p> <p>2016 & 2017</p> | <p>Website includes report and videos from all summit sessions held on April 22, 2016.</p> <p>2016 Summit Report</p> <p>Reports include: <i>Credentials in the Digital Era, Making Credentials Portable, Credentials & Competencies: The Coming Transformation of the Credit and Degree System in American Higher Education, Extending the Credential: Empowering the Learner, Quality Dimensions for Connecting Credentials</i></p> <p>NOTE: 2017 Summit on Innovating Academic Credentials held in March 2017. Information on 2018 Summit not available yet.</p> <p>Highlights & Lessons Learned Parchment 2017 Summit:</p> <p>https://www.parchment.com/blog/3-trends-driving-credential-innovation-what-we-learned-at-the-2nd-annual-parchment-summit/</p> <p>Three Trends include:</p> <p>1-Creating Education to Career Pathways</p> <p>2-Communicating Soft Skills More Important than GPA</p> <p>3-Employers will demand more and better assessment from colleges & universities</p> | <p>2016 Parchment Summit Resources</p> <p>Relevant 2016 Sessions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovations in the Transcript • Credentials as Labor Market Signals • Higher Education’s Role in Career Formation • Making Sense of Badges, Credentials, & E-Portfolios • Session video link: <p>http://www.parchmentsummit.com/summit-videos/</p> <p>2018 Parchment Summit Program:</p> <p>http://www.parchmentsummit.com/2017-program/</p> |
| <p>Consortium for the Assessment of College Equivalency (CACE)</p> | <p>Established standards for assessment of credentials from non-collegial sources to award credit toward a degree through a Memorandum of Agreement signed by six colleges. Participating colleges accept notarized documents from credential source (a transcript is not required). Six colleges include: SUNY Empire State, Excelsior, Thomas Edison, Granite State, Community College of Vermont, and Charter Oaks College.</p> | <p>Nan Travers Director, Center for Leadership in Credentialing Learning SUNY Empire State College Nan.Travers@esc.edu (518)-587-2100 ext. 2728 (518)-580-4933 (direct line)</p> |

| PROJECT & INITIATIVE | SUMMARY / DESCRIPTION | RESOURCES / CONTACT |
|---|--|---|
| NE Resiliency Consortium | TAACCCT round 3 project. | Nan Travers, SUNY Empire State, developed <i>The Prior Learning Assessment Handbook</i> for the NE Resiliency Consortium. The handbook include the five critical factors of PLA, PLA philosophy, mission, and policies, institutional support for PLA, PLA program practices, professional development, and evaluation. |
| Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit (MCMC) | <p>A 13-state initiative to identify policies and practices to help military service members, veterans and their families to overcome barriers to access, participation, and completion of postsecondary credentials and entrance into the workforce.</p> <p>Thirteen states include: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin</p> | Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit Midwestern Higher Education Compact (funded by Lumina Foundation) |
| C4 Initiative: Community College/Career Collaboration | <p>Promotes Goodwill/community college partnerships that use prior learning assessment to accelerate student completion of credentials. Launched in 2009 with three pilot colleges: Northern Virginia Community College, The Alamo Colleges (TX), and Forsyth Community College (NC).</p> <p><i>Goodwill's Operation: GoodJobs</i> focused on skill attainment and employment program for veterans and military families urges Goodwill organizations to facilitate prior learning assessment opportunities.</p> | Partners: Goodwill International, American Association of Community Colleges, Achieving the Dream, Walmart. Link above provides project summary and video. |
| College Credit Fast Track | A collaborative partnership among Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges has launched an online workflow helping current and prospective students obtain college credit at Pennsylvania community colleges based on prior learning and work experience. | Website geared directly to students includes: how it works, program descriptions for the 14 colleges, other options, and ability to get started by signing in. Funded by U.S. Department of Labor. |

| PROJECT & INITIATIVE | SUMMARY / DESCRIPTION | RESOURCES / CONTACT |
|---|---|---|
| Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) Office of Community Colleges | The Oregon Legislature passed H.B. 4059 in 2012 to advance Credit for Prior Learning in Oregon’s community colleges. The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) approved Oregon Credit for Prior Learning Standards in May 2014. The HECC’s CPL Advisory Committee is currently preparing a report for legislature including a CPL environmental scan. | Oregon Credit for Prior Learning Standards (requires log in) Donna J. Lewelling HECC, Office of Community Colleges Education Division Director 503-947-2428 Donna.j.lewelling@state.or.us |
| TAACCCT Grant Awards | Throughout four rounds of funding to U.S. community colleges, a number of projects were funded to increase CPL opportunities by the U.S. Department of Labor. | Refer to Acceleration Strategy Series Brief #1 prepared by Jobs for the Future by U.S. Department of Labor. Chippewa Valley Technical Colleges (WI) and Colorado Advanced Manufacturing Program (CHAMP) are featured. |
| Council of Adult Experiential Learning (CAEL) | CAEL is national organization leading prior learning assessment methods and strategies. | State Policy Approaches for Prior Learning Assessment 2015 Update |

| PROJECT & INITIATIVE | SUMMARY / DESCRIPTION | RESOURCES / CONTACT |
|---|--|---|
| <p>CPL ONLINE INTAKE & ASSESSMENT TOOLS</p> <p><i>This section outlines open source, online intake and assessment tools that can be customized and used by students to compare their knowledge with the competencies of various courses.</i></p> | | |
| <p>Charter Oak State College</p> | <p>Member of the CACE Consortium listed above.</p> <p>The PLA Audit Tool is one of the projects Charter Oak State College worked on with a Breakthrough Models Incubator (BMI) grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation administered by Educause. The grant allowed the College to focus on how to increase student usage of prior learning assessment options. The three components of the college's BMI grant work were to:</p> <p>1)strengthen internal and external marketing including developing an audit tool; 2) develop a PLA scholarship and assess the impact of having scholarships for PLA options; and 3) looking at return on investment (ROI) for PLA.</p> <p>Anticipated release of the online PLA Audit Tool is Spring 2018.</p> | <p>Contact: Linda Wilder, Director, Prior Learning Assessment, Charter Oak State College</p> <p>55 Paul J Manafort Dr; New Britain, CT 06053</p> <p>860.515.3862 www.charteroak.edu/pla www.charteroak.edu/ccap</p> <p>Example in TAACCCT Skills Commons: https://www.skillscommons.org/handle/taaccct/8568</p> |
| <p>Skills Commons</p> | <p>Repository of products developed by TAACCCT grants. Includes PLA intake and assessment forms/tools. (Not online or open source).</p> | <p>Skills Commons Advanced Search Link to PLA intake and assessment web tools:</p> <p>Resources to review in Skills Commons:</p> <p>Delgado Community College</p> <p>East Central Community College</p> <p>Camden County</p> |

| PROJECT & INITIATIVE | SUMMARY / DESCRIPTION | RESOURCES / CONTACT |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Colorado | Colorado community colleges have developed statewide PLA approach and website. | PLA Credit website for Colorado community college students or prospective students Student Info webpage Bitsy Cohen Director Colorado Community College System Director of Prior Learning Bitsy.Cohen@cccs.edu 720-858-2883 |
| West Virginia | Life Experience Inventory (LEI) for students to complete. | West Virginia statewide website on PLA: Step Up: Make Your Experience Count Bridge Valley Community & Technical College Judy Whipkey judith.whipkey@bridgevalley.edu 304-205-6685 (South Charleston Campus) Kathy Leftwich Kathy.leftwich@bridgevalley.edu 304-734-6639 (Montgomery Campus) |
| Louisiana | Offers PLA services: CLEP tests, College Course Department Exam, DSST, Portfolio Assessment, and ACE Credit | Bossier Parrish, New Orleans |
| Hawaii | Statewide student-oriented PLA website | Prior Learning Assessment Website |

| PROJECT & INITIATIVE | SUMMARY / DESCRIPTION | RESOURCES / CONTACT |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Rhode Island | Adopted CAEL Accelerator Tool | <p>Doug Flor</p> <p>PLA and Career Advancement Coordinator</p> <p>Community College of Rhode Island, dflor@ccri.edu 401-825-2072</p> <p>Three videos:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 minute video provides examples of how to enter information into the Accelerator. Data entry takes less than 20 minutes for the average person. • Introduction to an overview regarding all the various Accelerated Pathways of Prior Learning that are recognized by CCRI. 5 minutes • Financial aid and PLA. |

DOL Disclaimer Statement

This ACT program is 100% funded with a TAACCCT Round IV \$19.9 million grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration.

This workforce product was funded by a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration. The product was created by the grantee and does not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S. Department of Labor. The U.S. Department of Labor makes no guarantees, warranties, or assurances of any kind, express or implied, with respect to such information, including any information on linked sites and including, but not limited to, accuracy of the information or its completeness, timeliness, usefulness, adequacy, continued availability, or ownership.



Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).