

CWC Strategy 2.1: Associate of Applied Science in Entrepreneurship – Credit for Prior Learning

CPL as an Acceleration Strategy:

Under the TAACCCT grant, Central Wyoming College (CWC) is required to provide options for students to complete portions of their education through Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) initiatives. CWC currently has a CPL policy in place; however, the policy is under revision. CWC's TAACCCT grant staff is working with administration and faculty to develop CPL processes specific to the Start-Up Institute and the Associate of Science in the Entrepreneurship Program, designed to operate and be marketed independent of the District's general policy.

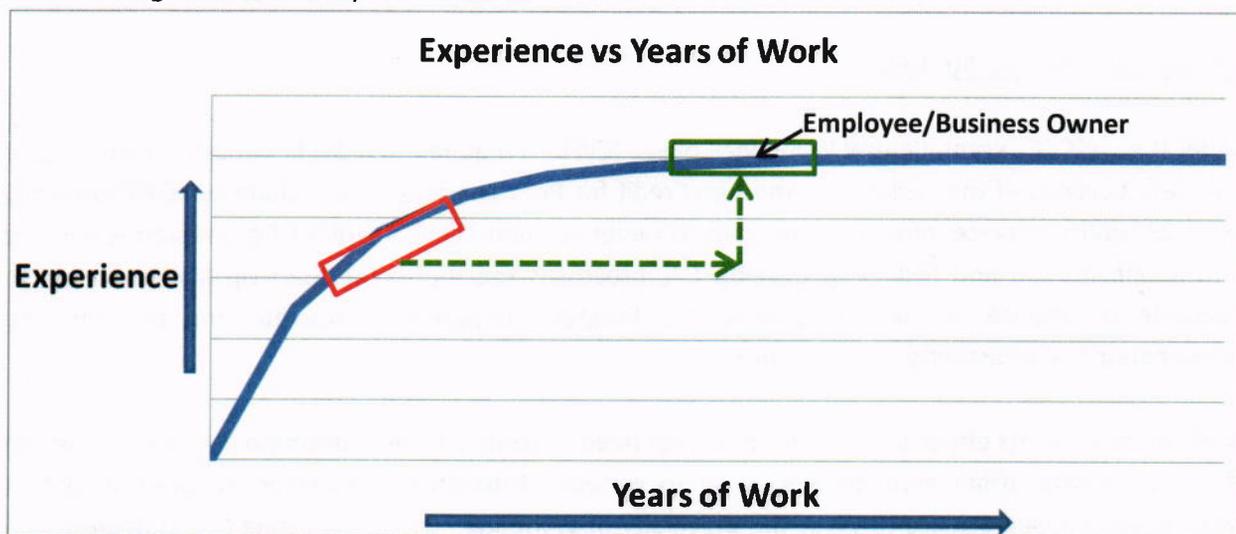
While many students either do not want or do not need to continue their education past the acquisition of the certificate, other students may wish to continue through the Bachelors of Science (BS) or Bachelors of Applied Science (BAS) at the University of Wyoming. By incorporating CPL strategies with the A.A.S. in Entrepreneurship, CWC is capable of providing powerful tool to students and accelerate them on their educational and career pathways.

Targeted Population:

The Start-Up Institute at CWC is designed to attract a particular type of employee. The targeted program applicants are those who have several years of professional experience, and either want to advance within their current company or intend to establish their own business. The Start-Up Institute is designed to provide the tools and training that will help these students accelerate their career advancement. Completion of the accelerated certificate program educates students in: a) the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for advanced positions or as a foundation for establishing their own businesses; b) an educational background that will separate them from other employees vying for the same or similar positions or provide the tools that will assist in keeping a new business competitive; and c) skillsets that will increase their value to their current company or that will assist with the innovation necessary for competitiveness as a new business.

Chart 1 illustrates the experience growth curve anticipated in student knowledge and skills from the entry point in the Start-Up Institute and the completion of the course of education.

Chart 1: Targeted Student Experience Curve



As illustrated above, the process of obtaining the skills and knowledge necessary for success within a business, either as part of an existing company or independently, is dependent on two key, interrelated factors – the acquisition of experience over time. The chart shows a line (blue) representing the experience gained by an employee as the years of work increases. Initially, an employee has no knowledge of the work environment or process, and therefore has zero experience. As an employee begins work he or she gains a tremendous amount of knowledge over a short time span, as shown in the steep part of the experience curve. As an employee matures the acquisition of new knowledge plateaus; in other words, the day-to-day activities and processes become familiar and relatively routine. It is typically at this point that an employee might be considered for a supervisory or managerial position (green box), as they have the experience and knowledge to make decisions that benefit the company, or may consider capitalizing on the experience gained to establish his or her own business and products. Students who enroll in the Start-Up Institute typically have 7-15 years' experience (red box), and are either anticipating starting their own businesses or run their own companies but need additional mentoring and skills to remain innovative and competitive. The Start-Up Institute has been designed to help these highly motivated students attain the skills and knowledge that will help them fast-track their career goals by gaining a level of knowledge employers and customers value and reward. Evidence of the success of this program exists, as several students who have completed the degree have reported increased wages and promotions to supervisory and managerial positions within their companies or within the industry.

Delivery Environment:

Central Wyoming College (CWC) has its campus in Riverton, Wyoming, and an outreach center in Jackson Hole, Wyoming; both locations serve as the delivery environment for the accelerated Start-Up Institute model. CWC's role in the community is to serve the population of Fremont and Teton counties, as well as the Native American population of the Wind River Reservation. While the community of

Jackson Hole is affluent, current businesses have growth potential through diversification of products and services, and there is room for new businesses to establish themselves. Conversely, Riverton and the nearby Wind River Reservation have a more limited economy; there is a demand for new businesses and industries to establish themselves within the community.

Need for Credit for Prior Learning Methods:

One focus of the TAACCCT Grant is to return students to the workforce in the shortest time possible with needed credentials, certificates, or degrees that will support currently held positions or those being applied for. While there are several strategies available to speed students through the educational process – such as an accelerated attendance schedule or online/hybrid delivery format – awarding credit for prior education (such as industry certificates or on-the-job training) or industry experience acknowledges informal or non-traditional means of acquiring knowledge.

Implementation Methodology:

Central Wyoming College is currently in the process of reviewing and designing Credit for Prior Learning Strategies. At present, only minimal credit for prior learning opportunities are available under existing policy. Military Veterans who provide a copy of their DD-214 are able to receive the Wellness Credit for their military experience. Additionally, any student is able to request testing out of any course available at CWC; the final exams are the method by which students are tested, but they must have instructor permission and pass with an 80% in order to receive credit.

Under the Entrepreneurship Program and Start-Up Institute CPA's are able to apply for credit in practical accounting by presenting their license.

Timeframe for Development:

Testing and refinement of the Associate of Applied Science in Entrepreneurship degree program covers the period of April 2012 through September 2015 under the DOL-ETA TAACCCT Round 1 grant award. Final testing and modification of the program will be complete in March 2015, with the remaining time used to evaluate the efficacy of the model through data analysis and reporting.

