Council for Adult and Experiential Learning

A 501(c)(3) non-profit, international organization with nearly 40 years of lifelong learning experience

National leader in PLA best practices, research, and writing

Dedicated to removing barriers to adult learning

Meaningful learning, credentials, and work for every adult
in the first paragraph, he refers to…

“the mantra from the Harvard education expert Tony Wagner that the world doesn’t care anymore what you know; all it cares ‘is what you can do with what you know.’...So, more employers are designing their own tests to measure applicants’ skills. And they increasingly don’t care how those skills were acquired: home schooling, an online university, a massive open online course, or Yale.”
NUMBERS

• More than 22% of the working population has some college, but no degree or **37 Million Americans** (age 25 or older).

• There are **46 million adults** who are high school graduates with no college.

• **Nearly half** of all traditional students who start college do not complete.
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION?

The Link to Jobs
CONSIDER THIS.

80% of today’s college students have commitments other than college.

- Working to support themselves and dependents
- Precariously balancing financial commitments – including worrying about the cost of a college degree.
WHY NOW?

Outcomes, Competencies, Accountability, Using Technology to Scale

Significant Learning Outside of Academia

Economic Pressures

Changing Profile of Learners
CHANGE IS GOOD?
LOTS OF BUZZ, COOL NAME, AND?
Prior Learning Assessment helps us identify, demonstrate, and document college-level learning with academic integrity.
WHAT IS PLA?

Prior Learning Assessment or Credit for Prior Learning

Processes for evaluating and demonstrating knowledge and skills in order to award college credit for learning from:

- On-the-job learning
- Employer & Workforce Training
- Independent study, such as OER
- Military service
- Volunteer service
PLA ASSESSMENT METHODS

1. National Standardized Exams
   • AP, CLEP, DSST, Excelsior College Examinations, UExcel Exams

2. Challenge Exams
   • Developed by faculty, similar to end-of-course final exams

3. Evaluated Non-College Programs for College Credits
   • National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS) and American Council on Education (ACE)

4. Individualized Assessments
   • Portfolio Assessment and Performance Assessment
HOW PLA HELPS: Graduation Rates

Associate Degree students are 2 times more likely to persist to graduation.

Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success, CAEL, March 2010
“THE PLA EFFECT”

PLA does not discriminate.

- regardless of institutional size, level (two-year or four-year) or control (private for-profit, non-profit, or public)
- regardless of the individual student’s academic ability or grade point average
- regardless of the individual student’s age, gender, or race/ethnicity
- regardless of whether or not the individual student receives financial aid
- Students with PLA credits are more likely to graduate than those without them (Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success, March 2010)
WHY CPL/PLA?

- Degree/credential completion initiatives
- Focus on retention and persistence
- Leverage learning toward credentials
- Reduce time to completion and student debt
- Maintain academic standards and integrity
- Provides a mechanism to recognize the greater availability of free, open learning opportunities
- Technology to enable scaling
HOW IS IT DONE?

CAEL PLA Quality Principle:

**Credit or its equivalent should be awarded only for learning, and not for experience.**

- For students: Earning PLA credit means demonstrating and documenting your learning -- or essentially making your case and PROVING it!
COLLEGE-LEVEL LEARNING
ALIGNING LEARNING

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Generally mapped to a course
- Understanding of knowledge area combined with the application of it
- What you know and can demonstrate (specific)
- Integrative/reflective
- Documentation/evidence
- Assessed with a Rubric

COMPETENCIES

- Course is not needed, but content leads to an assessment
- What you can do within a knowledge area
- “Direct assessment”
- Evidence
- Competency can be singular
- Mapped to curriculum

How will the learning be recognized and accepted by colleges and universities? Transcripts with competencies, credit hours?
ADMINISTERING PLA PROGRAMS

COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES DIY PLA

• Generally limited to adult programs
• Often consists of only AP or CLEP
• Greater awareness of military training, but still confusion on how to recognize it
• For those offering portfolio assessment, faculty evaluations are often inconsistent if faculty has not been trained
• Students tend to be unaware
• Deadlines and timelines are unknown, as well as policy origination

Training for Registrar, Advisors, Admissions, Marketing,
PLA Credit Predictor, Two Courses
Electronic portfolio
All portfolios are archived
All assessors are faculty trained by CAEL
All portfolio assessments are completed within 2 weeks of submission.
Transcripts
WHY

- Need to ensure consistent standards, a national approach
- Not enough colleges grant credit for prior learning
- Need to build awareness in states and regions
- Need for a national, online approach at scale with easy access
- Need to accelerate adult degree/credential completion
- Ability to use faculty experts nationwide to evaluate learning portfolios according to subject matter/disciplines using a CAEL portfolio assessment rubric for high quality assessments
HOW DOES IT WORK?

1. Free PLA College Credit Predictor tool and Guidance

Students talk with a PLA Credit Specialist to see if PLA is right for them and how it fits within their degree plans:

- **Portfolio Assessment** – for subject areas and expertise not covered by national exams or already evaluated by ACE/NCCRS
- **Testing** – CLEP, DSST, AP, ECEs, UExcel Exams
- **NCCRS and ACE CREDIT** – evaluates training by military, employers, government agencies, and professional associations.

Note: NCCRS is the National College Credit Recommendation Service
2. Students select an online for-credit or non-credit course offered by LearningCounts

- Courses teach students about learning theories, the difference between experience and learning, how to document their college level learning, and how to develop portfolios.

- Courses reinforce the importance of advisor support.

- Courses require students to reflect, determine what they have learned, synthesize the information and write at the college level.
3. Create and Submit Portfolios

- **Course match process**: students must demonstrate the same learning outcomes for their portfolios as students who take the course in the classroom (C grade or above).
- Credits earned will have been previously discussed with an advisor to ensure applicability to the degree.
- Portfolios are routed electronically to CAEL-trained assessors with subject matter expertise.
- “All or Nothing” credit awards to students within 2 weeks. Credit is transcribed on a CAEL/LearningCounts Transcript*

*Validated by NCCRS
A CASE FOR CREDIT
ACTUAL STUDENT PORTFOLIO REQUEST

How do students make a case for credit?

What do assessors see?
BUS 3001 Basic Business Law

Course Description:

This course will familiarize students with basic legal principles that affect the everyday procedures in business. The student will understand legal principles in everyday life by utilizing the practical knowledge learned. The student will be introduced to the laws of contracts as the foundation for the legal regulation of business.
Learning Outcome #1
Analyze legal principles related to personal property and their enforcement.

“The concept of **possession** was instituted to **avoid civil disorder** (Clarkson, Miller, & Cross, 2012). Now that we have established possession, personal property is not "real" property meaning that it is not money or investments, but rather movable assets or things. Personal property, fixtures, and chattel property are terms that I explain frequently to my real estate clients. **The reason I have to make sure that my clients understand the differences between these terms is to avoid any misunderstandings that could result in the selling or buying of items that they didn’t intend to buy or sell.** I begin by defining their **personal property** and informing them that if they wish they can sell those items along with the house if they want but are not required to do so. I surprise many by mentioning that the big screen flat panel TV bracketed to the wall is considered a fixture, which is any physical property that is attached to **real property**, and that the TV will convey with the home unless otherwise stated in the contract. Along the same principal of fixture, chattel property is frequently discussed between my clients and I. Chattel property is personal property located within the real property. **Common misconceptions** that occur are assuming something within the home is real property when in fact it is personal property. **One example was** a child’s play house that rested on a foundation of concrete. It is important to add that the play house was not bolted or fixed to the concrete. When the buyers moved in they noticed the play house was gone and raised an objection, however, since the playhouse was not mentioned in the purchase contract and it was not a fixture to the property the sellers were fully entitled to take the playhouse.”
License Status: Active
Expiration Date: xxxxx
Employment History: ABC Company, LLC 4-20-2009

Continuing Education:

- CODE OF ETHICS FOR NAR 6-1-2009
- WRITING RIGHT IS THE LAW 3-10-2010
- OUR MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS FORM--THE BUYER BROKER AGREEMENT 4-21-2010
- PLAYING BY THE RULES-UNDERSTANDING THE AZ REAL ESTATE LAW BOOK 2-2-2010
- LET'S PLAY FAIR/UNDERSTANDING FAIR HOUSING ACT 3-3-2010
- MORTGAGE LOSS MITIGATION: INTRO TO SHORT . . . 7-22-2009
STUDENT’S DOCUMENTATION

BUS 3001 Basic Business Law

- Articles of incorporation for when the student formed his own LLC

- Copy of a law suit filed by the student for a contractor’s “Breach of Contract”

- Plus a complete “Narrative” that addresses every learning outcome, written at the college level, with citations (8 pages)
THE TRANSCRIPT

Official Transcript

Prepared for: LearningCounts on 03/12/2013
DID#: TYPAQ5L
Docufide Student ID: 7826741
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LearningCounts

Cheri Leader Kelley, Vice President

Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)
55 E. Monroe Street, Suite 2710 · Chicago, IL 60603
312-499-2600

Student Name: Bauer, Jack
Student ID: CAEL/87964321
Address: 13040 S. Mason Avenue
Palos Heights, IL 60463
Birthday: 07/04/1965

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<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Course Description</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Semester Hours</th>
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<td>LCO-0042</td>
<td>03/2013</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>Introduction to Personal Computers: This course introduces students to the various components of a personal computer. It also covers the basic features of Microsoft Windows and MS Office products. The course leads to basic competency in the use of Word, Excel, and Outlook.</td>
<td>P</td>
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<td>LCO-0040</td>
<td>02/2013</td>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Effective Communication for Business: This course requires the student to apply fundamental principles of English composition to a specific setting: business correspondence. Students will develop skills in writing and formatting business letters, employment applications, and other formal business correspondence.</td>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
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SUCCESSFUL STUDENT PROFILE

- Has 5 years or more of work experience, breadth/depth
- Has taken a college course before, preferably online
- Understands the time commitment involved in building a portfolio
- Has selected a portfolio development course with advising assistance
- Has strong writing skills
- Has a degree plan (no duplicate courses) and understands how PLA will apply (or not) to her/his degree requirements
PORTFOLIO SUCCESS RATES

- No Credit Earned: 87%
- Some Courses Earned Credit: 7%
- Full Credit Earned: 6%
- Reduce Costs? **YES**
- Improve student persistence? **YES**
- Increase graduation rates? **YES**
- Is academic integrity preserved? **YES**
- Does it work for diverse populations? **YES**
- Is it applicable for new forms of learning? **YES**
- Ready to serve virtually thousands of students? **YES**
- How do we know for sure? **Compelling Research**
OUTCOMES AND COMPETENCIES

RIDDLE:

If LearningCounts student outcomes and competencies are equal to or more rigorous than taking a course in a traditional way, why is portfolio assessment so controversial?
QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO PONDER....

INSTITUTIONS WORRY ABOUT THESE ISSUES
POLICY QUESTIONS

✓ When are students eligible for PLA?
✓ Does financial aid cover it?
✓ Who accepts PLA credits within a college?
✓ Are PLA credits accepted in transfer?
✓ Will PLA credits within associate degrees transfer to 4-year colleges and universities?
✓ Do PLA credits count toward Gen Ed/Major Requirements?
✓ How should the credits appear on the transcript? Block credit, course match credits, transfer credits or competencies? Can and should they be discriminated against?
ACCREDITATION QUESTIONS

1. How many PLA credits can be awarded by a college or university?
2. Is PLA credit considered transfer credit?
3. If we use LearningCounts to provide PLA services for us, including teaching the course, do we need to write a letter to our accreditors?
4. How do we transcribe PLA (especially portfolio) credit so that it will transfer? (commonly asked by community colleges)
MORE QUESTIONS FOR YOU

- CAEL will archive portfolios for 10 years, so that if an accrediting team wants to see what’s behind the credit award, CAEL will provide the portfolio and answer questions. We think this is important. Do you?
- Is it time to allow graduate-level PLA?
- Colleges and universities point out that PLA cannot be used for specialized accreditations like AACSB or ACBSP. Because the learning outcomes are equivalent, why can’t PLA be used?
FOUNDATION SUPPORT

Lumina Foundation

The Kresge Foundation

State Street Foundation

The Joyce Foundation

The Brown Foundation, Inc.

Walmart

Houston Endowment Inc.

USA Funds