



MAKING LEARNING COUNT: PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENTS

AMY SHERMAN, CAEL

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

Why Does College Completion Matter?

U.S. position as a world leader in education has slipped in recent years, from 4th place in 1997 to 11th place in 2009 in degree completion for 25-34 year olds

By 2018, 62% of jobs will require some college or above

But only 40% of adults 25-34 have attained a post secondary degree



Source: *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018*, Georgetown University, Center for Education and the Workforce, June 2010

In Dollars and Cents

- 58% of a city's economic success, as measured by per capita income, is due to the percentage of college graduates
- Each 1% point increase in college attainment is associated with \$763 increase in per capita income or about \$1,900 to \$2,290 per year for average household (2.5-3 people)
- If the nation's top 51 metro areas increased college attainment by 1%, it would add \$124 billion in personal income every year to our nation's economy
- If Seattle increased its college attainment rate from 36.1 to 37.1 percent (22,538 additional grads), the region is projected to capture a **\$2.5 billion** Talent Dividend

<http://www.forbes.com/2010/02/23/college-attainment-rates-thought-leaders-wnuck-cooper.html>

http://www.noche.org/media/1/TalentDividend_NEO_FINAL.pdf

http://www.ceosforcities.org/td_seattle

Prior Learning Assessment

We Are All Geniuses In Our Own Minds



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
- Evaluation of non-credit instruction

What is a Portfolio?

- A formal, written communication describing, illustrating, and documenting what a student has learned – 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

Ten Standards of Quality

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

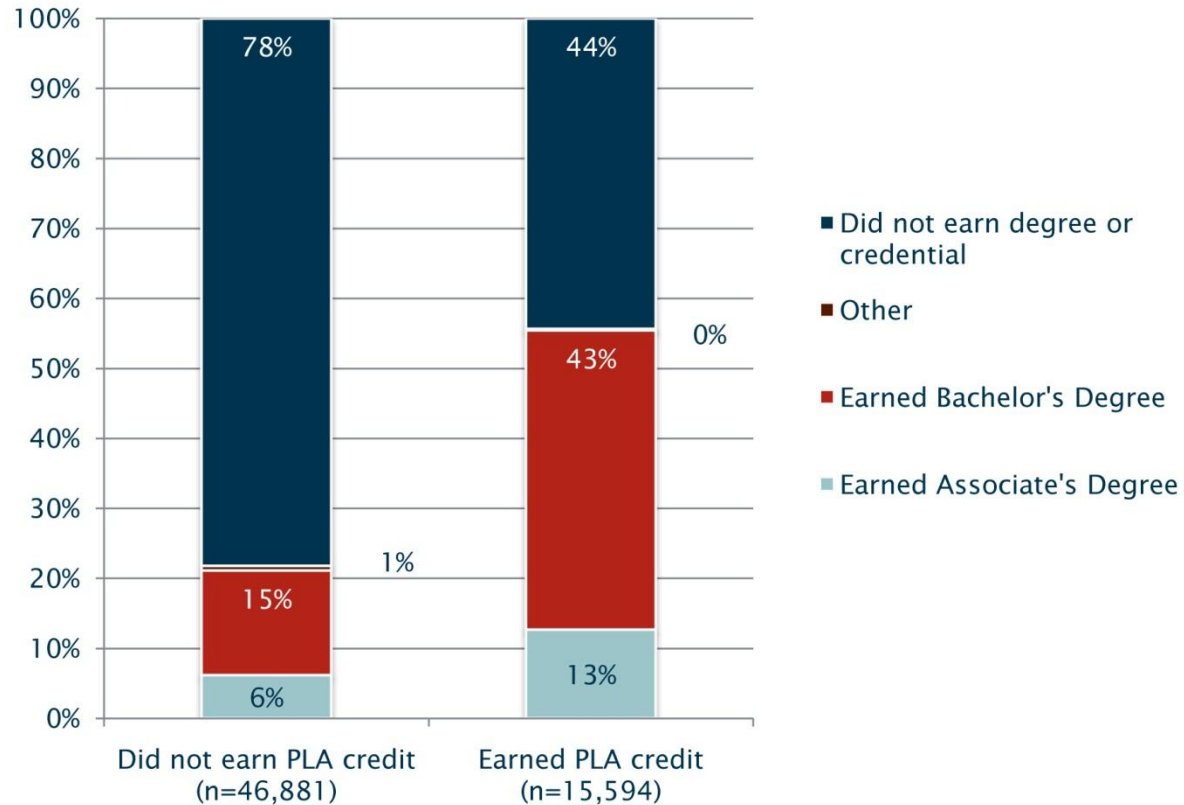
CAEL's Fueling the Race Research

The Study:

- 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

CAEL's PLA Research

Graduation Rates



Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success, CAEL, March 2010

CAEL's PLA Research

Graduation Rates:

PLA students in this study had better graduation rates than non-PLA students:

- 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

CAEL's PLA Research

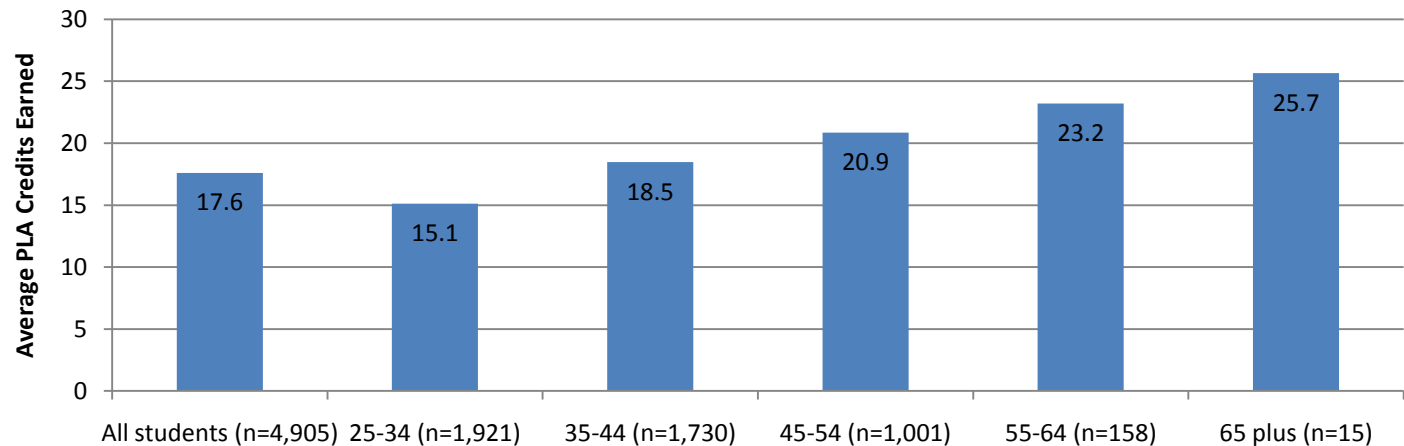
Persistence:

- PLA students have higher rates of persistence compared with non-PLA students

Time to Degree Savings:

- Bachelor's degrees: between 2.5 and 10.1 months
- Associate's degrees: between 1.5 and 4.5 months

Average PLA Credits Earned



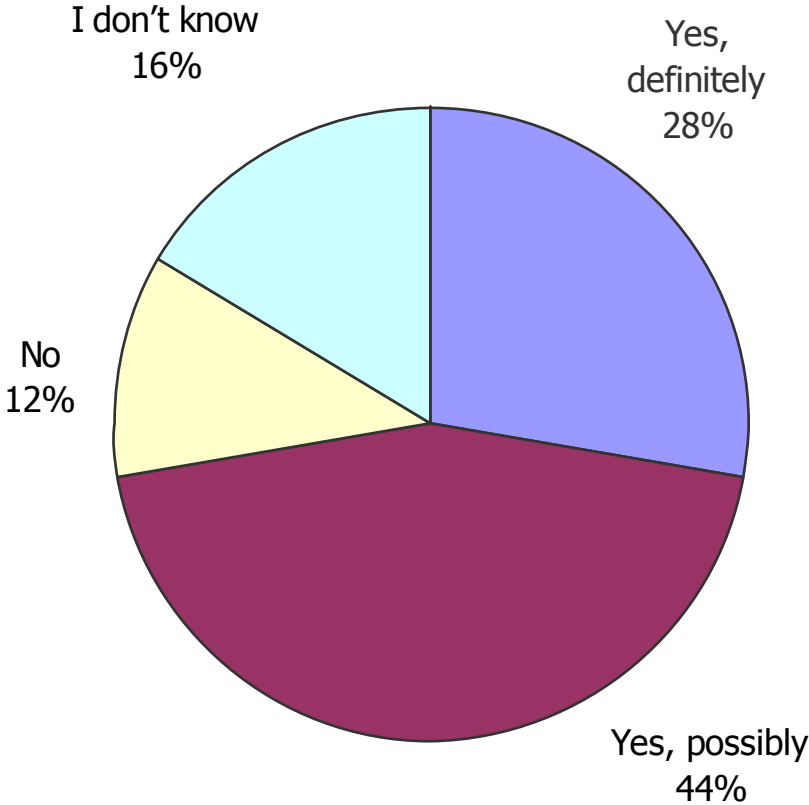
The NACTEL Story

Time = \$

- The National Coalition for Telecommunications Education and Learning (NACTEL)
- CAEL online learning initiative
- Between 2005-11, annual average of over \$4,000 savings per student using PLA
- Average savings ranged from \$4,209 per student in 2005 to \$8,640 in 2007
- The proportion of cost savings per student ranged from 18.8% to 37.5%

Community College PLA Survey

“Use of PLA in the Future”



n = 88 respondents

The logo for Learning Counts.org features the text "Learning Counts.org" overlaid on a graphic of four overlapping chevron arrows pointing to the right. The arrows are in shades of blue and red. The word "Learning" is in a blue serif font, "Counts.org" is in a red sans-serif font, and a small "TM" trademark symbol is to the right of "Counts.org".

**Learning
Counts.org™**

College credit for what you already know™

Scaling Up the Use of PLA Through LearningCounts.org

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

A new national online PLA Center:

- Supported by Lumina Foundation for Education, the Kresge Foundation, the Joyce Foundation and the Walmart Foundation
- Collaboration with ACE and College Board

LearningCounts.org Process

- **Talk to an Advisor** – free option to speak one-on-one with an advisor to find out which PLA option is right for the student
- **Enroll in CAEL 100:** Prior Learning Assessment Theory and Practice: a six-week, three credit, online course
- **Create and Submit Portfolios**
 - Faculty from colleges and universities from across the country evaluate portfolios and make credit recommendations
 - Credits are recorded on an American Council on Education (ACE CREDIT) transcript

Select PILOT Institutions

- Over 160 colleges and universities serving as LearningCounts.org pilot institutions



Examples of Policy Change We Would Like to See

- PLA assessment classified as a core and intensive service in WIA system
- 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
- Allow state financial aid to pay for assessment fees
- PLA assessment covered by GI benefits
- PLA assessment covered by federal financial aid

Examples of Promising States

- Arkansas
 - Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges (AATYC)
 - AT&T Foundation Scholarship
- Minnesota
 - 2007 Higher Education Fairness Statute, directing state colleges and universities to award credit for military training experience
- Vermont
 - Central assessment system for state colleges
- Washington
 - PLA is in the WIA Strategic Plan
 - PLA legislation passed last session



Questions? Contact

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