

Prior Learning Assessment: Quality Standards

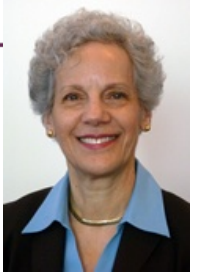


January 14, 2014

*Judy Wertheim
Vice President, Higher Education Services*



Presenter



Judy Wertheim, Ed.D.

Vice President, Higher Education Services

CAEL

jwertheim@cael.org



What Is CAEL?

- Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
- A 501(c)3 non-profit, international organization with 40 years of experience
- Dedicated to removing barriers to adult learning:
 “Meaningful Learning, Credentials, and Work for Every Adult”

What Is Prior Learning Assessment

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is a process for evaluating knowledge and skills in order to award college credit for learning from:



On-the-job
learning



Corporate
training



Independent
study



Military
service



Volunteer
service





Methods of Assessment

Four Approaches to PLA

1. Evaluated non-college programs
2. Standardized exams
3. Institutional challenge exams
4. Individualized assessments



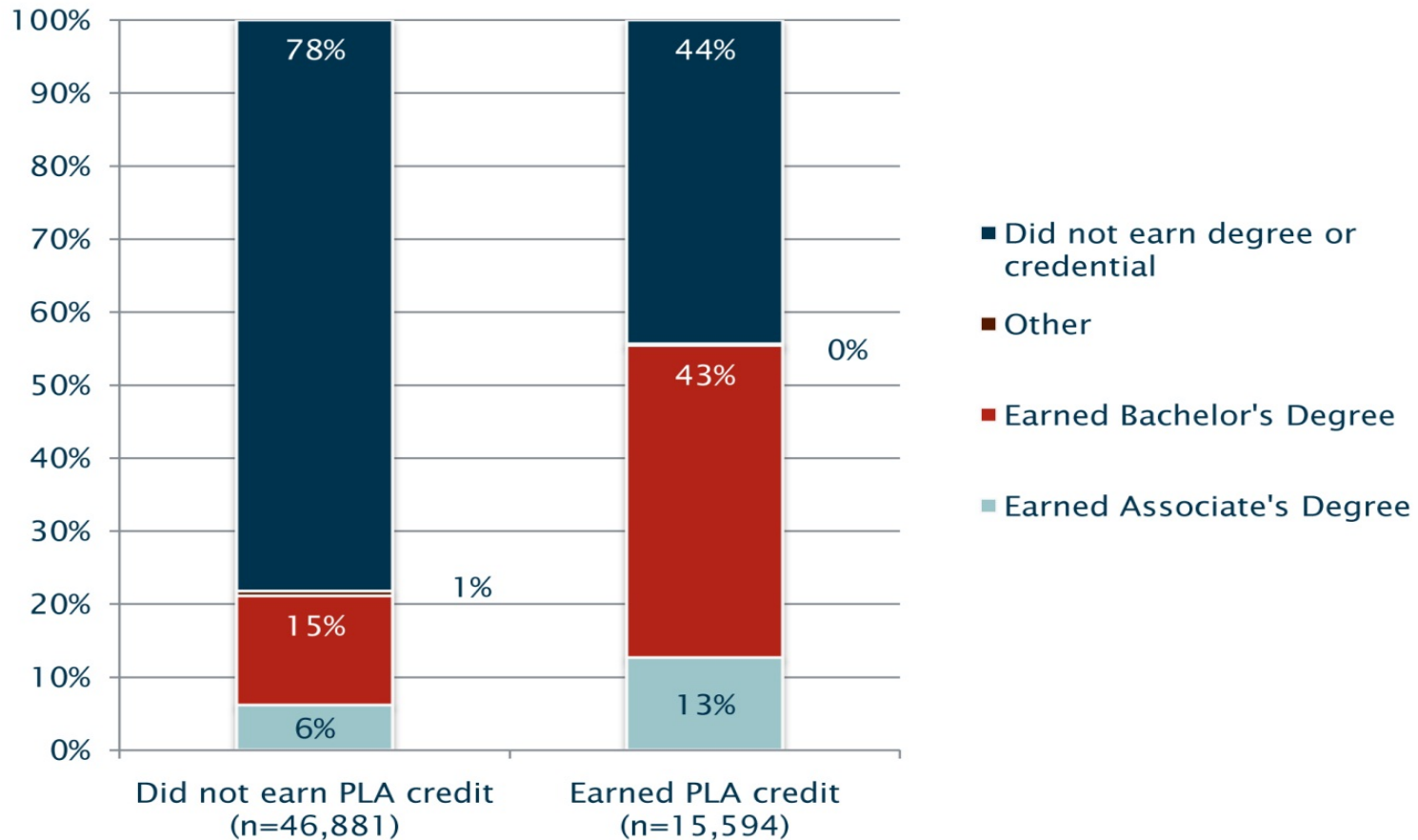
CAEL Research on PLA

*Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success:
A 48-Institution Study of PLA and Adult
Student Outcomes, 2010**

- N=62,475 adult students
- PLA usage and academic outcomes

[*http://www.cael.org/pdfs/PLA_Fueling-the-Race](http://www.cael.org/pdfs/PLA_Fueling-the-Race)

Graduation and Completion





Summary of Graduation Findings

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



Summary of Persistence Findings

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

- In terms of credit accumulation and progress towards the degree
- In terms of number of years of credit-earning



HLC Recognition

4.A.2.

The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, **including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning**

Quality Assurance Principles



*Assessing Learning:
Standards, Principles, & Procedures (2nd ed)*

by Fidler, Marienau & Whitaker

CAEL

2006



Standard #1

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

Standard #1



“Credit for life experience”

“Credit for work experience”

Standard #1



Reference to HLC:

“...experiential learning or other forms of prior learning”



Standard #2

Assessment should be based
on standards and criteria
for the level of acceptable learning
that are both agreed upon
and made public

Standard #2



What is college-level learning?



Standard #2: HLC Weighs In

- The institution makes **readily available to students and the general public clear and complete information** including:
 - policies on acceptance of transfer credit, including how credit is applied to degree requirements. (Except for courses articulated through transfer policies or institutional agreements, the institution makes no promises to prospective students regarding the acceptance of credit awarded by examination, credit for prior learning, or credit transfer until an evaluation has been conducted.)



Standard #3

Assessment should be treated
as an integral part of learning,
not separate from it,
and should be based on an
understanding of learning
processes

Some of the Values of PLA



- Motivates adults
- Validates adult learning
- Contributes to the institution and the community, as well as to the individual student
- **Transforms thinking**

Standard #3



Students submit a stack (hard copy or electronic) of certificates, job descriptions, work samples, resumes, and/or evaluations



Standard #4

The determination of credit awards and competence levels must be made by appropriate subject matter and academic or credentialing experts

Standard #4



Institutional faculty or credentialed adjunct faculty evaluate prior learning

Standard #4



PLA advisor evaluates all portfolio submissions



Standard #5

Credit or other credentialing should be appropriate to the context in which it is awarded and accepted

Standard #5



- Will the credit for prior learning apply to the degree plan?
- Is the level of prior learning consistent with college-level learning?
- Is the content of prior learning consistent with the institutional offerings?
- Is the assessment method appropriate to the learning outcomes?



Standard #6

If awards are for credit, transcript entries should clearly describe what learning is being recognized and should be monitored to avoid giving credit twice for the same learning

Standard #6



- Involve the registrar in planning for PLA
- Avoid duplication of credit
- Permit data collection and analysis
- Clarify area of learning



Standard #7

Policies, procedures, and criteria applied to assessment, including provision for appeal, should be fully disclosed and prominently available for all parties involved in the assessment process

Standard #7



Processes are consistent with institution's other academic policies



Standard #8

Fees charged for assessment should be based on the services performed in the process and not determined by the amount of credit awarded

Standard #8



- Why is this standard important?
- Is this the practice at your institution?
- How are assessment fees determined?



Standard #9

All personnel involved in the assessment of learning should pursue and receive adequate training and continued professional development for the functions they perform

Standard #9



- PLA policies in academic handbook but lapsed
- No consistent rubric for individual assessments
- No collegial discussions about PLA
- PLA “owned” by only a few on the campus



Standard #10

Assessment programs should be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated, and revised as needed to reflect changes in the needs being served, the purposes being met, and the state of the assessment arts

Slide #10



- What is a reasonable schedule for review?
- What can we learn from other institutions and states about their PLA policies and practices?
- Are there additional stakeholders to be included in discussions?



Questions about the Quality Standards?

- Quick access to the standards

<http://www.cael.org/Whom-We-Serve/Colleges-and-Universities/Prior-Learning-Assessment-Services>

- Questions about the 10 standards?
- Other questions about ensuring academic quality?
- Other questions about PLA?