



February 19, 2021

Credit for Prior Learning as an Access and Equity Tool

In November 2019, the Board approved a new policy, [R472, Credit for Prior Learning](#). The policy, updated in January 2021, provided more guidance on institutionally designed portfolio assessments, training for faculty and staff, and communications with students. In the coming year, the Prior Learning Committee, made up of institutional representatives, will be working on implementing the new guidelines.

The purpose of the expanded policy is to make college more accessible and affordable, help students complete degrees as quickly and efficiently as possible, and reduce duplication of learning outcomes achieved in alternate non-academic settings. When properly implemented and widely available, PLA can become a valuable access and completion tool, particularly for underserved populations. Simply put, the ABC's of PLA can transform a student experience:

A = Access	PLA provides an access point that allows individuals to receive academic credit for work completed prior to arriving at the institution. This can be in the form of equivalent academic credit via AP, CE, CLEP or other exams, but it can also be awarded for previous work experience that aligns with program outcomes as demonstrated through a portfolio process.
B = Better Alignment	When programs are aligned with clearly identified outcomes, a student's previous experience can be better aligned with those outcomes through PLA. PLA then allows a student with this previous experience to accelerate through coursework or start at the place in the curriculum where their knowledge gaps align.
C = Completion	According to research conducted by CAEL ¹ , students who receive PLA credits are 2.5 times more likely to graduate than those without PLA credits. Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, 78% of the non-PLA students failed to earn a degree, compared to 44% of the students with PLA credits • 56% of the PLA students earned a degree within seven years, compared to 21% of the non-PLA students

¹ From "Why is PLA Significant for Improving Graduation Rates" by Scott Campbell (2016)
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 43% of students with PLA credits earned a bachelor's degree, compared to 15% of those without PLA credits• 13% of the PLA students completed an associate degree, versus 6% for non-PLA students
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Commissioner’s Recommendation

This is an information item; no action is required.