Exploring Credit for Prior Learning
Featured Speaker

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(Gateway Technical College logo)
Today’s Session

We’ll discuss:

• How to utilize national, state and local data to share the value of Credit for Prior Learning (CPL)
• Best practices related to the development of Prior Learning Assessments (PLA) and a sustainable CPL system
• How to overcome barriers related to CPL/PLA development at your institution
Gateway Technical College

- One of 16 technical colleges in Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS)
- Founded in 1911
- Serve approximately 22,000 students
- 3 main campuses
- 6 centers
Definitions

- Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) is proven college-level knowledge and competencies gained from education and experiences gained outside of a postsecondary institution. The source of CPL ranges from postsecondary courses, college level examinations, military education and training, national examinations and prior learning assessments (PLAs).
- At Gateway, we refer to PLAs as the faculty-driven and designed assessments (exam, portfolio, demonstration) used to confirm a student’s level of knowledge in a particular course/subject area.
How does CPL fit into Career Pathways?

- CPL — first step in a student’s pathway
- Opportunities to demonstrate/validate external learning experiences allow students to expedite progress
- Complete credential(s) and enter workforce sooner
Gateway’s Renewed Focus on PLA

January 2016 – only 39% of programs offered a faculty-developed PLA for at least one technical-specific course

Several factors influenced efforts to expand PLA offerings:

- Career Pathway Manager funded by DOL TAACCCT grant
- Career Pathways Steering Committee goal: all programs that can provide PLA will develop assessments for at least 25% of technical-specific courses
- Awarded The Right Signals grant through American Association of Community Colleges in April 2016; set goal to increase programs with PLA from 39% to 75%; provided dedicated resources/focused efforts
National Data Supporting PLA

2010 CAEL Study:

- PLA earners with AAS earned degrees between 1.5 and 4.5 months faster, on average, compared to non-PLA students earning degrees.
- Looking at all degrees, 56% of PLA students earned a postsecondary degree, compared to 21% of non-PLA students.
- Financial aid recipients earning PLA had dramatically higher graduation rates than non-PLA counterparts (72% compared to 16%), and graduation rates were higher than students who did not receive financial aid (33% for PLA students and 10% for non-PLA students).
- More than half of all PLA students who had not yet earned a degree by end of 2008 (56%) had accumulated 80% or more of the credits toward a degree, compared with 22% of non-PLA students with no degree.

*Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success*
Benefits of Prior Learning Assessment

75% of Americans said they would be more likely to enroll in higher education if they could receive credit for what they already know.

Research has shown PLA:

- Inspires those hesitant to enroll in higher education
- Increases persistence
- Fosters higher completion
- Saves time and money
- Improves retention

CAEL, 2010: Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success
Gateway PLA Data 2015-2016

• 63% of students who passed at least one CPL opportunity graduated from Gateway (*increase from 52% in 2014-15*)
• 29% of students who passed at least one CPL opportunity continued studies at Gateway for at least one semester after receiving CPL (*increase from 17% in 2014-15*)
• 8% of students who passed at least one CPL opportunity did not continue studies at Gateway (*decrease from 32% in 2014-15*)
• In the last two reporting periods, more students attempted CPL earlier in their studies
PLA Development at Gateway

Career Pathways Mgr. contacts Dean and Curriculum Chair with suggestion for PLA

Faculty express interest in developing PLA; receive approval from Dean to move forward

Dean selects faculty expert to engage in PLA development

Faculty and Deans confirm courses eligible for PLA

Faculty work with Asst. Registrar to confirm correct assessment type and document PLA components

PLA approved by Asst. Registrar and added to PLA listing

PLAs are reviewed every three years during the program’s curriculum review cycle

Career Pathways Manager provides support during remaining steps of process to ensure successful integration into program’s pathway
Gateway’s PLA Structure

- Formerly called Advanced Standing
- Proficiency credit awarded for proven learning, not for the experience. Distinction between “life experience” and “prior learning.” Students must demonstrate mastery of a percentage of the competencies
- Gateway’s three PLA delivery methods:
  - credit by examination
  - credit by portfolio presentation
  - credit by demonstration
Proficiency Credit by Examination

- A faculty expert-developed examination
- Designed to validate student has successfully mastered course outcomes and learning objectives
- Created in Blackboard
- Exams/answer keys given to Registrar’s Office, then Testing Center
- Written exams administered in Testing Center by testing specialist
- Exams reviewed every three years in conjunction with curriculum review or upon industry demand
Proficiency Credit by Portfolio Submission

A portfolio presentation should...

- demonstrate college-level writing skills including demonstration of research strategies and source analysis
- achieve a variety of purposes: narration, description, process analysis, information, etc.
- address learning objectives stated in course syllabus
- be clear and concise (length, format, etc.)
- be comprised of a well documented, professional summary and resources that speak to student’s learning from an experience or multitude of experiences and not the experience itself
Proficiency Credit by Demonstration

- Demonstrative exams require a student to demonstrate techniques, processes, and procedures that solidify the student has mastered course competencies and learning objectives.
- Clearly indicate what procedure is being demonstrated, the expected outcome, and the actual outcome.
- Excellent avenue to prove applied skills.
- Must include a well-developed rubric (Example: Dental Health Safety).
Example of a Demonstrative Exam

508-101 Dental Health Safety Demonstrative Exam (excerpt)

**Obtaining Blood Pressure Reading on Patient**

*Performance objective: The student will demonstrate the ability to correctly obtain a blood pressure reading.*

3 – Student meets most of the criteria with assistance; 2 – Student requires assistance to meet the stated criteria; 1 – Student did not prepare appropriately for the stated criteria; 0 – not completed/not applicable/did not complete

**Demonstrate**

1. Explain procedure to the patients (*Points: _____*)
2. Position the patient (*Points: _____*)
3. Position yourself (*Points: _____*)
4. Locate the brachial pulse; apply cuff (*Points: _____*)
5. Place diaphragm of stethoscope over brachial pulse (*Points: _____*)
PLA – Faculty Responsibilities

Faculty experts who engage in PLA development must:

1. Support belief that learning can indeed take place outside of classroom
2. Be willing to attend training seminars related to PLA
3. Create exams with appropriate rigor and ensure high standards of academic integrity are maintained
4. Coach/mentor other faculty evaluators
PLA – Faculty Responsibilities (cont.)

In conjunction with Dean, faculty should determine what courses within program are PLA eligible:

1. Have enough theory-based content to offer a written examination AND/OR
2. Have enough application-based content to offer a demonstrative exam or portfolio presentation
PLA – Student Eligibility

To be eligible for PLA opportunities these criteria must be met:

• Student must be accepted to an associate degree or technical diploma program at Gateway

• Student cannot have received a letter grade in the course (including W, WP, WF, AU and Incomplete) from Gateway or any other regionally accredited postsecondary institution

• Student must pay the appropriate fees (examination and/or evaluation)

• Student must apply for and successfully complete PLA within 30 days of first day of class (prorated based on class schedule)

• Student may only earn up to 75% of their credits through PLA
PLA – Student Costs

2017 Gateway Fees:

- Written/computer generated examinations - $15.00
- Skills Performance Test - $27.00/hour
- Portfolio Review - $38.00
- Evaluation of documents - $20.00
- Student billed 25% of current tuition; must be paid within 30 days
PLA – Student/Staff Awareness

- List of PLA opportunities is available on Gateway’s website by typing “PLA” in search box
- Registrar’s Office developing PLA sheets for each program
- Outreach events (new student orientation, transfer fairs, open houses, faculty in-service, deans council, etc.)
- Faculty PLA information sessions, targeted faculty training
- PLA 101 portfolio presentation course
- PLA featured on career pathway maps
Gateway Accounting

**Previous Credit**

There are many opportunities, both in high school and through previous college, work, and/or military experience, to earn credit at Gateway.

For more information about earning credit in high school and opportunities for credit for prior learning, please see reverse side.

**Certificate**

- **Payroll Assistant (12 Credits)**
  - Potential Jobs:
    - Payroll Assistant
    - Time & Attendance Clerk
  - Median Income*: $17.69 per hour
    $36,795 annually
  - *Based on locally reported wage data.

- **Tax Preparer Assistant (11 Credits)**
  - Potential Jobs*: - Tax Preparer - Tax Associate
  - *Potentially seasonal employment
  - Median Income**: $22.86 per hour
    $47,548 annually
  - **Based on locally reported wage data and potentially seasonal employment.

**Technical Diploma**

- **Accounting Assistant (28 Credits)**
  - Potential Jobs:
    - Accounting Assistant
    - Accounting Clerk
  - Median Income: $17.90 per hour
    $37,232 annually
  - Students who complete this program are prepared to earn industry-recognized certifications, including:
    - Quickbooks Certified User
    - Microsoft Office Specialist - Excel

**Associate Degree**

- **Accounting (63 Credits)**
  - Potential Jobs:
    - Accounting Associate
    - Bookkeeper
    - Staff Accountant
  - Median Income*: $23.08 per hour
    $48,008 annually
  - *Based on locally reported wage data.

**Career**

Students are prepared to enter their career field at any point along the pathway and advance as they complete higher-level credentials.

**Bachelor’s Degree**

Transfer up to 63 credits via existing articulation agreements with colleges such as:

- Cardinal Stritch University
- Herzing University
- Lakeland College
- MSOE
- UW-Oshkosh
- UW-LaCrosse
- UW-Parkside
- UW-LaCrosse (2+2 agreement)

Salary and employment data for the Gateway district courtesy of EMSI.

gtc.edu/accounting
Gateway Accounting Career Map

Have questions or need assistance with getting started?
Gateway’s New Student Specialists are ready to help. Call 1-800-247-7122 or stop into any Student Services Center to make an appointment or register for an upcoming new student event.

Elkhorn Campus
400 County Road H
Elkhorn, WI 53121

Kenosha Campus
3520 30th Ave.
Kenosha, WI 53144

Racine Campus
1001 S. Main St.
Racine, WI 53403

Accounting

Credit for Prior Learning
Experience Pays! You’ve been there . . .
You’ve done that . . . Let us give you credit for it!
Gateway Technical College recognizes you have knowledge and skills gained through previous educational, life and work experiences. We want to help you receive credit for those experiences—saving you time, money and helping you enter your new career more quickly.

There are various ways to earn credit including Degree Course Substitution, Prior Learning Assessment and Transfer Credit. Credit for Prior Learning opportunities for this program include:

- 101-104 Income Tax Accounting
- 101-106 Accounting Spreadsheet Apps
- 101-114 Accounting Principles
- 101-143 Payroll Accounting
- 101-154 Accounting Software Apps

For more information visit gtc.edu/cfpl or contact the Registrar’s Office at cfpl@gtc.edu or 262-619-6366.

Earn College Credit in High School
Get an edge by earning college credit before you graduate and save money at the same time.

There are many ways to earn college credit while you’re still in high school, including transcripted and advanced standing credit, Youth Options and youth apprenticeship. Suggested courses to take in high school for this program include:

- 101-114 Accounting Principles
- 101-143 Payroll Accounting
- 101-104 Income Tax Accounting

For more information on earning college credit in high school connect with your high school counselor or the Gateway New Student Specialist at your high school. Visit gtc.edu/highschool.
PLA Transparency

Registrar’s Office prepares PLA data reports each semester:

- frequently requested test-out options
- PLA pass/fail rate
- PLA generated revenue
- PLA graduation rate (recent graduates who earned some form of PLA)
- PLA retention rate (returning students with some form of PLA)
- PLA test type

PLA review incorporated in curriculum review process to ensure PLAs meet Gateway, WTCS and industry standards
Challenges ➔ Successes

- Faculty may believe awarding PLA means a less-qualified student will enter their program and/or their enrollment will be significantly impacted — provide supporting data, both national and institution-specific, to show benefits and ease concerns.
- Faculty have a lot on their plates; PLA often takes a back seat — ask deans to make time for PLA during professional development weeks/in-service and include time to address concerns and help faculty feel comfortable with process.
- Faculty may be resistant to engage, or struggle with how to design an effective assessment — provide regular training and access to peer faculty who have experienced success.
Success Story — Automotive

One year ago:

- No program-specific PLA, but wanted to engage
- Initial plan: develop demonstrative PLA for each technical-specific course
- Example: Brake Systems — designed assessment requiring students to complete brake job to Gateway’s standards; took several hours of instructor time (set-up, administration of assessment, clean-up)
- No current requirement that faculty are to be paid for administering demonstrative exams; concerns over time to administer, etc.
Success Story — Automotive (cont.)

Today:

• Finalizing approval process of portfolio assessment for each class

• Portfolio requirements:
  – resume and cover letter clearly identifying knowledge gained
  – current ASE certification aligned with course
  – at least 3 years total verified work experience within last 5 years and at least 1 full year with same employer (employer receives NATEF task sheet)
  – student completes all online course-specific Mopar/FCA CAP Local modules and required prerequisite modules before credit is awarded
Lessons Learned

- Systems alignment within college is critical to developing sustainable CPL system
- Need champion to “sell” benefits of PLA; role within organization isn’t critical, but reputation is
- Help faculty and administrators find the “why” most important to them (student success, higher retention and completion rates)
- This work is complicated at times, and that’s okay
- Publicly highlighting success of other programs helps to engage stragglers (no one likes to be left behind!)
- Training is crucial – it’s your job to be the navigator
Learn More

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cte.ed.gov

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