



CLOSING EQUITY GAPS IN CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING



*Winners of the
Inaugural 2024 CAEL-WICHE
Credit for Prior Learning
Equity Awards and
Their Lessons for the Field*

CPL EQUITY CHAMPION
MIAMI DADE COLLEGE

CPL RISING STARS
LEHMAN COLLEGE
WEST LOS ANGELES COLLEGE

CPL HONORABLE MENTIONS
SALT LAKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
CAPELLA UNIVERSITY
METRO STATE UNIVERSITY
CUNY SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

Tools and Strategies to Recognize All Learning

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and Patrick Lane



2024 CAEL-WICHE Credit for Prior Learning Equity Awards

The CAEL (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning) and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) announce the inaugural winners of the Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) Equity Awards, recognizing strategies that have been proven to put CPL in reach of key adult learner populations and/or increase their CPL credit-earning.

Thematic Highlights Among Winners in their Efforts to Close CPL Equity Gaps

- Collecting data to explore the problem
- Focusing on professional/occupational programs
- Raising the visibility of CPL
- Addressing policy across the institution
- Engaging the whole enterprise
- Defining equity specifically for the institutional context
- Leveraging data systems to track progress and success
- Using CPL creatively to expand access to diverse student populations



CPL EQUITY CHAMPION (\$10,000 prize)

MIAMI DADE COLLEGE – FLORIDA

A comprehensive approach with consistent implementation, data capture, workforce connections, and leveraging technology to create new efficiencies.

Evidence of impact: A 366% increase in CPL awards over a two-year period, with CPL credit-earning reflecting proportional representation of Black and Latino/a students.



CPL EQUITY RISING STARS (\$5,000 prize each)

LEHMAN COLLEGE – NEW YORK

Pilot testing new approaches, engaging faculty, and focusing on regular review of disaggregated CPL data.

Evidence of impact: Dramatic increase in CPL credit-earning, with 93% of CPL students being students of color.

WEST LOS ANGELES COLLEGE – CALIFORNIA

Cross-college planning and oversight, data infrastructure, and intentional expansion within female-dominated technical career programs.

Evidence of impact: A seven-fold increase in CPL credit-earning, with a narrowing of the gender gap and an increase in CPL credit among Latino/a students.



CPL HONORABLE MENTIONS (\$1,000 prize each)

Salt Lake Community College (Utah) and **Capella University** (Minnesota) had clear goals for expanding access to CPL across their institutions, with growing evidence that these efforts are achieving important results. **Metro State University** (Minnesota) and **City University of New York School of Professional Studies** (New York) provided unique and creative applications for CPL that hold promise and can serve as important models for expanding access to postsecondary learning to all.

Introduction: Credit for Prior Learning and Equity

CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING REFERS TO VARIOUS METHODS THAT POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS USE TO EVALUATE AND AWARD CREDIT FOR LEARNING THAT COMES FROM WORK, MILITARY OR LIFE EXPERIENCES — CPL IS ALSO KNOWN AS PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT OR RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING.

The need for postsecondary learning has never been more important in creating opportunities for individual economic mobility. Though results vary significantly by different types of credentials, today's high-quality jobs require some kind of postsecondary learning or credential. To maximize impact for all who want access to these opportunities, institutions must do all they can to provide effective, efficient credential pathways to students. A critical piece of this is ensuring that the growing number of students who enter or return to higher education with significant life and work experience are welcomed with opportunities to recognize and validate the knowledge they bring.

Previous research conducted by the CAEL (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning) and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) has shown that credit for prior learning (CPL) can have a **meaningful impact** on credential completion. Moreover, the positive effect of CPL is particularly pronounced for some of the student groups higher education has historically struggled to serve, including lower-income adults, Black adult students, and community college students. Unfortunately, additional research revealed that these students receive CPL at lower-than-average rates — a finding from 2021 the authors termed the “**equity paradox.**”

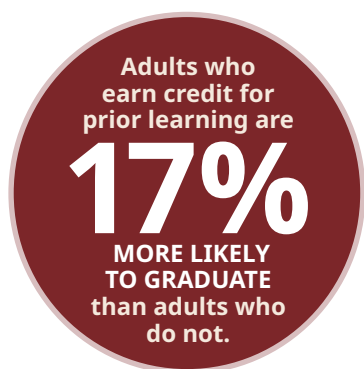
In an effort to identify strategies to close this gap, CAEL and WICHE launched the inaugural Credit for Prior Learning Equity Awards to recognize institutions using CPL to improve outcomes for underrepresented student populations.

Equity is the practice of recognizing, accounting for, and working to remove barriers to equal opportunity faced by individuals due to factors outside their control (e.g., low-income family background, first-generation college student, diverse populations). Our efforts to support adult learners and workers should insist on equitable outcomes, where every individual from every demographic can reach their full potential, resulting in economic mobility for everyone.

Equity means different things in different contexts. For the purposes of the 2024 CPL Equity Awards, CAEL and WICHE identified the following populations that are of particular interest:

- Black or African American adult learners
- Native American or Alaska Native adult learners
- Latino/a adult learners (of any race)
- Low-income adult learners
- Adult learners at community colleges

The diverse range of nominations submitted offered a range of CPL approaches designed to serve one or more of these important student populations. A panel of experts reviewed the nominations and selected a CPL Equity Champion, two CPL Equity Rising Stars, and four Honorable Mentions. (All received national recognition and a cash prize.) The report that follows distills key takeaways from all nominees that can be used across contexts and highlights the unique approaches of the award-winning institutions.



2024 CAEL-WICHE Credit for Prior Learning Equity Leaders



CPL EQUITY CHAMPION

MIAMI DADE COLLEGE – FLORIDA

A Comprehensive Approach with Consistent Implementation, Data Capture, Workforce Connections, and Leveraging Technology

“From our efforts, data now show that CPL was a) widely visible, b) better promoted, and c) easily accessed with seamless processes for requesting credit awards.”

Excerpt from their nomination materials

DEFINING THE CPL EQUITY GAP

Miami Dade College (MDC) serves a large population of low-income, first-generation, non-traditional students (adult learners, part-time students, students who work full-time). Many of its students are Black or Latino/a, reflecting the county’s demographics.

Analysis in 2019 showed that MDC’s existing CPL program was not being used to its fullest potential, particularly by Black and Latino/a students. The college saw this as a problem since studies have shown that CPL can help these students reduce time to degree completion.

EXPLORING THE PROBLEM

An internal evaluation that included student focus groups found:

- Low usage due to a lengthy, complex process
- Inconsistent application across campuses
- Lack of awareness and promotion among students, faculty, and staff

CHANGING THE APPROACH

- **Phase 1: Centralized the CPL office** for consistent administration that allowed MDC to improve data collection, identify best practices for referring CPL students, develop targeted recruitment plans for varying industries and student populations, develop consistent CPL policies and credit articulations, and ensure equitable administration of CPL across each of MDC’s campuses
- **Phase 2: Assessed the viability of MDC’s CPL modalities** and classified their efficacy across the college, in partnership with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness
- **Phase 3: Leveraged technology** to develop interactive websites with explainer videos, front-facing CPL databases, a faculty repository, and discipline specific portfolio-based assessment programs. See mdc.edu/pla

Continued



MIAMI DADE COLLEGE – FLORIDA

FOSTERING INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

A focus on integration with workforce development: The college explored ways to close its CPL equity gap by engaging with its workforce partners' job readiness and upskilling programs, and by promoting credit articulations for state-recognized industry certifications.

ACHIEVING IMPACT

Evidence of impact includes:

- A 366% increase in students awarded CPL over a two year period
- Student population earning CPL credit more closely reflects population served, especially with respect to Black and Latino/a students
- Faster processing times for CPL credit requests

LOOKING AHEAD

Miami-Dade College is striving to:

- Implement a CPL indicator in student records to track demographics and outcomes
- Develop better methods to address departmental concerns about CPL.





CPL EQUITY RISING STAR

LEHMAN COLLEGE – NEW YORK

Pilot Testing New Approaches, Engaging Faculty, and Focusing on Regular Review of Disaggregated CPL Data

“We assess...data informally on a semester-by-semester basis and formally on an annual basis. Our results have exceeded all expectations.”

Excerpt from their nomination materials

DEFINING THE CPL EQUITY GAP

The college’s total undergraduate population has an average age of 27 years old, with almost 90% of students coming from underrepresented backgrounds: 51% Latino/a, 33% Black, and 8% Asian (with most of the Asian students hailing from countries where opportunities for higher education are not readily available). In addition 60% of students work, and 60% are Pell eligible.

The college’s CPL offerings were limited to the 1,200 students in its Adult Degree Program, thereby denying CPL access to more than 90% of the college’s students.

EXPLORING THE PROBLEM

The college conducted a pilot to test ways of expanding CPL access to students outside of the Adult Degree Program. The college worked with faculty in their School of Health Science, Human Services, and Nursing to articulate CPL credit for Red Cross First Aid and CPR Certification, then offered Lehman College Foundation scholarships to cover the cost of the CPR and First Aid credentials for near completers. Over 80% of the students who were invited to complete their degree by earning CPR and First Aid certification did so.



LEHMAN COLLEGE – NEW YORK

CHANGING THE APPROACH

Prong 1: Getting Buy-In from Faculty:

- Collaborated with faculty to identify common student hurdles (e.g., missing electives, financial aid running out)
- Developed CPL solutions like FEMA courses for electives and Coursera courses for liberal arts requirements
- Framed the program as “Accelerated Degree Completion Strategies” to increase faculty support

Prong 2: Engaging Students:

- Launched a communication plan to introduce CPL opportunities to students via email, text, website, and advisor training
- Partnered with the financial aid office to allow students to use CPL activities to maintain aid eligibility

Prong 3: Creating New CPL Offerings:

- Established equivalencies for various exams (CLEP, Empire State College) and certifications (FEMA, A+)
- Expanded opportunities for credit by departmental examination

FOSTERING INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

Starting small with one target population within one degree program: offering CPL credit to students in health care programs who were near graduation and who needed only a few credits to graduate.

ACHIEVING IMPACT

Evidence of impact includes:

- Since Fall 2020, over 3,000 students received CPL credit, totaling over 16,000 credits
- 57% of students with CPL credit used it to complete their degrees
- 93% of students were students of color, including Native American, Asian, Black, or Latino/a students

LOOKING AHEAD

The college is in the process of articulating its Continuing Education Bulletin to offer course credits wherever possible. Presently 11 programs are under consideration.





CPL EQUITY RISING STAR

WEST LOS ANGELES COLLEGE – CALIFORNIA

Cross-college Planning and Oversight, Data Infrastructure, and Intentional Expansion within Female-dominated Technical Career Programs

“We recently were recognized as the Mapping Articulation Pathways (MAP) college of the year for our CPL outcomes.”

Excerpt from their nomination materials

DEFINING THE CPL EQUITY GAP

Prior to 2021, very few students used CPL at West LA — just 35 CPL students in three disciplines over three academic years at an institution that annually serves more than 18,000 undergraduates. In addition, prior CPL credit earners had disproportionately lower numbers of Black, Latino/a and female students.

EXPLORING THE PROBLEM

Barriers identified include:

- Limited methods of CPL were available
- Students lacked awareness of CPL options and the process was confusing
- Few disciplines offered industry CPL or military CPL
- Faculty had limited understanding of and engagement with CPL

CHANGING THE APPROACH

A collegewide CPL workgroup reviewed state rules and created faculty training on approving CPL. The workgroup focused initially on one department: Dental Hygiene, which was launching a new bachelor’s degree. The faculty reviewed the criteria for the dental hygiene license against its curriculum and approved CPL for five courses (16 units). Then the program was heavily promoted in information sessions for the new degree program. This model was then followed by dental assisting and allied health. Dental hygiene and dental assisting students are predominantly women, helping to address the institution’s CPL gender gap. Key elements of implementation were:

- Streamlined processes for review, approval, and award of CPL credit
- A website which clarified CPL types, approved courses, and petition procedures
- Dedicated Academic Affairs staff who were assigned to guide students and manage CPL inquiries and assist students with applying for awards once their CPL and other requirements are met
- A cloud-based system that stores and manages CPL awards and allows for easier analysis of CPL student demographic data
- Articulation officer provides oversight by double-checking approved CPL before it is sent to Admissions & Records for transcription



WEST LOS ANGELES COLLEGE – CALIFORNIA

FOSTERING INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

Developed a solid model with one discipline/occupational program that can be easily replicated by others, while investing in faculty training and academic advising for cross-institutional support.

ACHIEVING IMPACT

From October 2021 to June 2023, 275 students earned CPL in seven disciplines (totaling 2,876 units) — a seven-fold increase over the previous three-year period.

The gender equity gap narrowed and the number of Latino/a CPL students increased dramatically, but more attention is still needed to improve Latino/a and Black student rates of CPL credit-earning.

LOOKING AHEAD

Recognition of where the college's CPL approach has room to grow:

- Insufficient staff for supporting military transcript review, if that option is made more visible to students
- Need to expand CPL options, such as portfolio method and CPL across career technical disciplines
- Lack of a dedicated CPL staff member to handle growing demand and ensure quality control





An Intentional Approach to Expanding Options for CPL at a Community College

HONORABLE MENTION

Salt Lake Community College – UTAH

Target Population: Adult Learners at Community Colleges

Over the past three years Salt Lake Community College (Salt Lake CC) has made significant investments in expanding access to CPL for their adult learners, demonstrating how a focus on CPL can have a meaningful impact for adult students in a community and technical college setting. Looking at their data on CPL credit awarded, the institution realized that despite an average student age of 26 and large adult learner population, the vast majority (78%) of Salt Lake CC's CPL credit awarded came from high-school-focused options such as Advanced Placement (AP).

In response, Salt Lake CC created a dedicated department led by a CPL director and convened collaborative work teams to develop an institution-wide CPL policy. Salt Lake CC went on to make a range of targeted investments including: compensating faculty to develop challenge exams for high-demand courses; expanding credit options for certain licenses, certificates, and military personnel; eliminating student fees for CPL processes; and broadening portfolio evaluation options. They are currently in the process of collaborating with admissions and advising departments to spread the word to students and leverage CPL as a recruiting tool.

Since they began collecting data, Salt Lake CC has seen 84 students complete a portfolio or other nontraditional CPL petition with an average of seven credits awarded per student and 242 students take College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams for an average of six credits per student. As the institution continues to expand their offerings and track their data, they hope to see continued progress in serving their adult learners with effective CPL use including veteran, first-generation, and minority students.





A Comprehensive Communications Strategy to Increase CPL Uptake

HONORABLE MENTION

Capella University – MINNESOTA

Affected Population: Students of Color

Capella University provides an example of how even a large institution with extensive CPL offerings can enhance their practices to close equity gaps. After examining their CPL data, they realized that among newly enrolled students, 7% of white students had CPL, compared to 4% of learners of color. To better understand why learners of color were receiving CPL at lower rates, Capella University talked to students, admissions counselors, academic coaches and teachers and looked at data on how and when students were utilizing CPL. Capella identified a lack of awareness of CPL options among students and staff and a narrow timeframe for CPL to be recognized within their competency-based FlexPath format as key barriers to CPL access.

In response, the institution launched a CPL social media campaign and a dedicated CPL web page which clearly outlines how the program works including a video introduction to CPL, description of the potential savings CPL offers, and programs eligible for CPL. Promising early results show that CPL awards have increased among all students, and at a slightly higher rate for students of color (going from 4% of students earning credit to 10%) compared to white students (7% to 12%), slightly narrowing the equity gap.



Working With a Community Partner on a CPL Pathway for Immigrant and Refugee Populations

HONORABLE MENTION

Metro State University – MINNESOTA

Target Population: Refugee and Immigrant Students

Metro State University (Metro State) shared an exciting model for leveraging CPL to serve refugee and immigrant students in partnership with a community-based provider. An interdisciplinary team of institutional faculty worked with a community-based nonprofit offering English and college readiness coursework for refugees and immigrants to enhance two courses that could be accepted via CPL at Metro State towards the state’s transfer curriculum. While the program has struggled to track data on outcomes, this promising model offers an example of an institution using CPL and their community assets to serve a student population with unique needs in an innovative way.





**Recognizing Learning
for Alternative
Admissions Pathways**

HONORABLE MENTION

City University of New York School of Professional Studies – NEW YORK

Target Population: Adult Learners

The Jump Start program at City University of New York School of Professional Studies (CUNY SPS) aims to replace unforgiving transfer policies that punish applicants for mistakes made years ago with a strength-based approach that recognizes learning acquired outside of the college classroom. The program uses a recognition-of-prior-learning approach to admit students with at least 24 attempted college credits whose former GPAs would have traditionally disqualified them from admission. In this alternative admissions process, prospective adult learners have the opportunity to earn admission by demonstrating academic proficiency through a performance-based admissions process modeled after the institution's CPL portfolio process. Applicants demonstrate competency in knowledge areas such as communication, quantitative analysis, languages, and technical skills. Once admitted, a dedicated College Navigator leverages the information in the application portfolio to advise new students about CPL opportunities.

Early results show that this holistic admissions process resulted in a more diverse student pool with retention rates that meet or exceed those of the overall undergraduate population. While not a traditional use of CPL to award credit towards a credential, this focus on CPL principles to make transfer processes more equitable is an exciting demonstration of the wide-ranging positive impacts a commitment to recognizing all learning can have.





Thematic Highlights from the Winners

COLLECTING DATA TO EXPLORE THE PROBLEM

The 2021 CAEL-WICHE *Equity Paradoxes in The PLA Boost* report prompted some of the award winners to pause and consider whether their efforts at providing CPL were reaching enough of their adult learners, and particularly whether specific student subgroups had sufficient access to it.

The colleges dug into their own data, and then several took additional steps to identify why there might be differences among majors or departments. Some talked with students, faculty, and staff (Capella University) or conducted focus groups (Miami Dade College) to hear what students had to say about their challenges with the CPL process.

FOCUSING ON PROFESSIONAL/OCCUPATIONAL PROGRAMS

The *Equity Paradox* observed that certain forms of CPL can have somewhat overwhelming assessment requirements, and that simpler ways to recognize learning is one strategy to expand CPL access. The report also noted the tendency of some institutions to focus on offering CPL primarily for learning related to managerial or white collar jobs.

Our award winners impressed us with their workforce-focused models for developing CPL pathways, such as a dental hygiene license to bachelor's crosswalk (West Los Angeles College), CPR credit for near-completers in allied health programs (Lehman College), and articulations for state-recognized industry certifications (Miami Dade). These colleges started with one program as a pilot test of the approach, which they could then replicate and expand to other offerings. Meanwhile, Salt Lake CC dramatically reduced processing time for a common workforce certification to ensure more students received credit, and CUNY School for Professional Studies integrated knowledge adults gained from past occupational experience and licensure into their admissions consideration.

RAISING THE VISIBILITY OF CPL

A few of the colleges recognized that CPL simply wasn't visible enough, investing in explainer videos and websites (Capella and Miami Dade), enhanced email and text communication (Lehman), integrating information about CPL into advising sessions (Lehman, Salt Lake CC, West LA), external publicity campaigns (Capella), and partnerships with community-based organizations serving target populations (Metro State University).

ADDRESSING POLICY ACROSS THE INSTITUTION

Our award winners include large institutions (Miami Dade, Salt Lake CC) who figured out that equitable access isn't possible if CPL options are limited or if policies vary from one department to another. These colleges focused on taking a close look at the CPL options available and centralizing CPL services to ensure consistency, fairness, better data management, and efficiency across the enterprise.



ENGAGING THE WHOLE ENTERPRISE

Some colleges recognized that CPL visibility and consistent administration would be strengthened by engaging: cross-unit teams to review policies and streamline assessment systems as well as academic affairs staff (West LA); multiple academic departments and administrative leaders, including administrators for articulation, academic pathways, and institutional effectiveness (Miami Dade); and creating a committee of representatives from across the institution (Salt Lake CC).

DEFINING EQUITY SPECIFICALLY FOR THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Who are the students most in need of an institution's focus on equitable opportunities and outcomes? There is no universal answer to that question. Our award winners considered their own contexts for determining which students were the target for expanded CPL approaches. Their target populations of our award winners included Black and Latino/a adults (Miami Dade and Lehman) — relatedly, one award winner focused on a broader communication campaign for all students which had the effect of reducing an equity gap for students of color. We also saw a focus on women in predominantly female-enrolled programs (West LA), adult learners enrolled in mainstream (not adult-focused) degree programs (Lehman), adult learners at community colleges (Salt Lake CC, West LA), adults not meeting admissions requirements through traditional pathways (CUNY SPS), and refugee and immigrant students (Metro State).

LEVERAGING DATA SYSTEMS TO TRACK PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

Several of our award winners had taken steps to put systems in place to better track and report on CPL activity at their institutions, and to disaggregate CPL data by method, area of study, and student demographics. We were particularly impressed by our top winner, Miami Dade College, whose Office of Articulation and Academic Pathways is creating a new CPL indicator, which will be a part of the institution's overall record keeping system. This indicator will allow for easier reporting on CPL student demographics and outcomes, including credential completion. Similarly, CUNY SPS and Lehman College, both part of the City University of New York, noted that data systems are in place to ensure that outcomes are equitable. They track data by award type, credits awarded, degree attainment, ethnicity, gender, and age. They review data on a semester-by-semester basis, with a more formal review on an annual basis. West LA, meanwhile, utilizes a cloud-based software system to manage CPL petitions, evidence, and approved courses; they have also improved data coding in their student information system to better track CPL awards.

USING CPL CREATIVELY TO EXPAND ACCESS FOR UNDERSERVED AND UNDERREPRESENTED POPULATIONS

Our top award winners impressed us with the scope of their work, the extent of their impact, and their efforts to create effective systems, processes, and data collection. Yet, the judges truly loved the creativity of all of our award winners. Top creative marks were given for institutions piloting new workforce-focused CPL efforts (see above). But the real standouts on creativity were Metro State's use of CPL as a strategy to build postsecondary pipelines for refugee and immigrant students and CUNY SPS' recognition of workplace learning as an alternative admissions pathway for adult learners with lower GPAs from previous college experiences.



Tools and Strategies for Closing CPL Equity Gaps

Despite the diversity of the institutional approaches described in the award nominations, the common themes that emerged point to specific strategies that other institutions can operationalize to close their own CPL equity gaps. While every strategy described below will not work for every institution, alone or in combination they offer impactful ways to begin or enhance students' CPL experience at your own institution based on the lessons learned from our award winners.



Tools and Strategies for Any CPL Program

Some strategies apply to any CPL approach or program size; in particular, focus on putting data systems to work, planning, program development, and messaging.

- **Develop Systems for CPL Data Collection:** A critical first step is ensuring you have the data you need to answer key questions. Collect baseline data on CPL usage — disaggregated by assessment method, area of study, and student characteristics whenever possible — as well as CPL's impact on student outcomes such as credit accumulation, time-to-credential savings, cost savings, and completion. Student characteristics that are important to examine include: race/ethnicity, gender, age, disability, veteran/military status, dependents, first generation college student, income, employment status, and others defined by the institution. Remember, when focusing on equity it is critical to be able to determine how you are serving different adult student populations rather than assuming they are monolithic. Use this data to conduct a self-study, set specific equity goals for your CPL program, measure your progress, and inform program adjustments as needed.

RESOURCE FOR DATA SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

PLA Data Tracking: Proposing a model for Institutional Tracking and Reporting of Credit Earned through Prior Learning Assessment

cael.org/resources/research/pla-data-tracking

- **Conduct a Self-study:** How well is CPL meeting the needs of your students and of specific student subgroups? Using gap analyses to identify areas where you can improve is a key first step.

RESOURCE FOR CPL PROGRAM REVIEW AND DESIGN

The Four Stages of Building an Effective and Inclusive CPL Program And Why Building Internal Buy-in Is Stage 1 cael.org/lp/cpl-pla



- **CPL Outreach Effectiveness:** Understand how your students and potential students learn about CPL, if at all, and where information might be missing (ex. in the recruitment process, commonly shared by advisors and faculty, used as a tool for employer engagement, a user-friendly and informative web page, etc.).
 - **CPL Methods Offered:** Take an inventory of the CPL methods your institution offers — do they meet the needs of your students? Are they sufficient for recognizing the learning of your various student subgroups — for example, across all disciplines and sources of prior knowledge, different student characteristics and backgrounds? Are you recognizing the certifications and trainings offered by local employers?
 - **CPL Usage:** Look at which student populations are accessing CPL and which are not — explore the differences between groups and seek to understand them. On its own, data can point to differences by department or in how different CPL methods are deployed. Digging deeper to understand the drivers of your CPL equity gaps may require hearing directly from your adult learners, especially those from diverse backgrounds, for example through student surveys and focus groups.
- **Focus on Internal Messaging and Buy In:** Do your administration, faculty, and staff have a common understanding of CPL and the role it plays in the institutional strategy for student success? You may need to launch an internal campaign to educate your leadership about CPL. CAEL has provided some resources for CPL Champions, including a sample one-page business case for CPL, providing evidence from research for the benefits of CPL for both students and the institution (see cael.org/lp/cpl-pla to download a free CPL Champions toolkit).
 - **Identify Resources:** An effective CPL program may require some dedicated staff and resources to establish clear and seamless systems and processes, to track and review data, to improve offerings, and ensure consistency and quality in both assessments and student support. Consider, too, how to lower the out-of-pocket costs; one solution might be CPL scholarships for students who are dependent on financial aid. The buy-in of leadership is critical to this resource question: if CPL is seen as an important part of offerings, it can be built into your institution's overall business model.

RESOURCES FOR BUILDING LEADERSHIP BUY-IN

- The Four Stages of Building an Effective and Inclusive CPL Program And Why Building Internal Buy-in Is Stage 1
- How To Build a Case for CPL on Your Campus
- Sample 1-Page Business Case/ CPL Value Proposition

Above resources accessed at cael.org/lp/cpl-pla



- **Tell Your Story.** The data you are collecting on CPL use and outcomes at your institution can be used to help tell the story of the impact of CPL on your students and their success. Consult your institution’s institutional research and communications teams to learn how you can tell the story more effectively through infographics, visual aids, and/or student stories.

RESOURCES FOR DATA STORYTELLING

- *How to Effectively Tell a Story with Data* (Harvard Business School Online) online.hbs.edu/blog/post/data-storytelling
- *How to tell a great story with data* thoughtspot.com/data-trends/best-practices/data-storytelling
- *Don't Be a Hero: The Key to Good Storytelling* dar.uga.edu/2019/dont-be-a-hero-the-key-to-good-storytelling



Small Steps Toward Big Impact

Not every institution can immediately tackle a complete overhaul of their CPL policies and programs and expand CPL opportunities institution-wide. Our award winners showed that sometimes starting with one degree program or one new CPL method can get the ball rolling. Others recognized that sometimes closing the equity gap is a matter of better communication strategies. Here are some steps you can consider:

- **Adding New CPL Methods:** Are there any CPL methods that could be added or expanded in response to student need? Providing multiple assessments offers different options for students to demonstrate their knowledge. Consider developing challenge exam options for high-demand classes or developing credit crosswalks for common employer certifications in your local job market.
- **Expanding Marketing and Outreach:** Are there simple ways to spread the word about CPL? Examples include training admissions and advising staff to discuss CPL options in their introductory sessions with students, enhancing your website, and making sure there are clear instructions for what students need to do to access the various CPL opportunities.
- **Targeting Important Student Demographics:** Are there student groups coming in with significant potential CPL opportunities such as veterans or multilingual students?
- **Targeting Key Programs:** Are there programs that are meeting critical employment needs that could benefit from CPL opportunities/partnerships with your institution?

RESOURCES FOR MARKETING AND OUTREACH

- Miami Dade’s CPL video and website: mdc.edu/pla
- Capella’s CPL video and website: capella.edu/cpl
- *How to Use CPL to Attract and Retain Students: A Student Outreach Communications Toolkit for CPL Champions:* cael.org/lp/cpl-pla





Achieving Scale in CPL

Some institutions can commit to expanding CPL institution-wide. Those institutions should seek out available resources to guide the planning process, such as the various offerings from CAEL (see box). Many resources are openly accessible and will guide the institution through various considerations related to CPL policy and practice. In addition, our CPL Equity award winners highlight three important strategies to support equitable CPL:

- **Institutional Prioritization:** Integrating CPL into the strategic planning and goals of the institution can expand its potential impact.
- **Staffing:** A position or department dedicated to CPL can play a key role in cross-institutional coordination across relevant offices while also managing data tracking and identifying new opportunities. Of critical importance is ensuring consistency and attention to quality in the assessments of learning and awarding of credit.
- **Policy Alignment:** Institution, system, and state-level policy can all play a role in encouraging institutions to adopt comprehensive and consistent CPL policies that support both scalability and usability.

RESOURCES FOR ACHIEVING SCALE IN CPL

- DIY Program Development: Four Stages of Building an Effective and Inclusive CPL Program cael.org/lp/cpl-pla
- CAEL membership resources on CPL, including: sample CPL staff job descriptions, webinars, peer learning groups, microcourses, toolkits, and discounts on professional development cael.org/membership
- CAEL Annual Conference cael.org/cael-conference
- Credit Predictor Pro, an online tool for managing CPL data and student processes cael.org/what-we-do/credit-predictor-pro
- Professional development courses for CPL administrators and faculty assessors cael.org/events/professional-development-and-training
- CAEL Technical Assistance on CPL policy and practice cael.org
- *Assessing Learning: Quality Standards and Institutional Commitments* amazon.com/Assessing-Learning-Standards-Institutional-Commitments/dp/1524917532



Resource List



Equity Paradoxes In The PLA Boost: Opportunity Unrealized For Some Students Despite The Potential For Improved Credit Completion. CAEL and WICHE.

cael.org/news-and-resources/pla-cpl-equity

The PLA Boost: Results from a 72-institution targeted study of prior learning assessment and adult student outcomes. CAEL and WICHE. cael.org/pla-impact

CPL Champions Resource Kit cael.org/lp/cpl-pla, which includes:

- *The Four Stages of Building an Effective and Inclusive CPL Program And Why Building Internal Buy-in Is Stage 1*
- How To Build a Case for CPL on Your Campus
- Sample 1-Page Business Case/ CPL Value Proposition
- How to Use CPL to Attract and Retain Students: A Student Outreach Communications Toolkit for CPL Champions
- CPL Process Map

CAEL members have access to resources on CPL, including: sample CPL staff job descriptions, free Credit Predictor tool, webinars, peer learning groups, microcourses, toolkits, and discounts on professional development. cael.org/membership

CAEL Annual Conference cael.org/cael-conference

Credit Predictor Pro, an online tool for managing CPL data and student processes cael.org/what-we-do/credit-predictor-pro

Professional development courses for CPL administrators and faculty assessors cael.org/events/professional-development-and-training

CAEL Technical Assistance on CPL policy and practice cael.org/lp/pla

PLA Data Tracking: Proposing a model for Institutional Tracking and Reporting of Credit Earned through Prior Learning Assessment cael.org/resources/research/pla-data-tracking

Assessing Learning: Quality Standards and Institutional Commitments amazon.com/Assessing-Learning-Standards-Institutional-Commitments/dp/1524917532



CPL VIDEO AND WEBSITE EXAMPLES

- Miami Dade's CPL video and website mdc.edu/pla
- Capella's CPL video and website capella.edu/cpl
- *How to Use CPL to Attract and Retain Students: A Student Outreach Communications Toolkit for CPL Champions* cael.org/lp/cpl-pla

STORYTELLING

- *How to Effectively Tell a Story with Data* (Harvard Business School Online) online.hbs.edu/blog/post/data-storytelling
- How to tell a great story with data thoughtspot.com/data-trends/best-practices/data-storytelling
- *Don't Be a Hero: The Key to Good Storytelling* dar.uga.edu/2019/dont-be-a-hero-the-key-to-good-storytelling



Acknowledgements

Enormous thanks to CAEL for funding this award! 2024 marks CAEL's 50th anniversary. Given that CPL is part of CAEL's origin story and one of the key focuses of its work, it is fitting that part of CAEL's celebratory year includes this inaugural CPL award to institutions striving to recognize all learning.

A special thanks goes to our judges: Amelia Parnell of NASPA; Matthew Bergman of Student-Ready Strategies; Patrick Lane, Christina Sedney, and Peace Bransberger of WICHE; and Gloria Mwase, Becky Klein-Collins, Wilson Finch, Lana Munip, and Allymyr Atrero of CAEL.

The authors are grateful to all of the institutions who are focused on creating equitable CPL programs and opportunities for all learners.



About CAEL

Recognizing that adult learners and workers are the backbone of the U.S. economy, CAEL helps forge a clear, viable connection between education and career success, providing solutions that promote sustainable and equitable economic growth to those who face barriers due to racial/ethnic, gender bias and socioeconomic status. CAEL opens doors to opportunity in collaboration with workforce and economic developers; postsecondary educators; employers and industry groups; and foundations and other mission-aligned organizations. By engaging with these stakeholders, we foster a culture of innovative, lifelong learning that helps individuals and their communities thrive. A national, nonprofit membership organization established in 1974, CAEL is part of Strada Collaborative. To learn more, visit cael.org and stradacollaborative.org.



About WICHE

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) works collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all residents of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy, WICHE strengthens higher education's contributions to the region's social, economic, and civic life. Visit wiche.edu.

