



A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR STATE LEADERS

2015 UPDATE

# STATE POLICY APPROACHES TO SUPPORT PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

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The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) is a national nonprofit organization focused on lifelong learning and the adult learner.

HCM is a public policy consulting and advocacy firm focused on finding effective solutions in health and education.

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# STATE POLICY APPROACHES TO SUPPORT PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

## INTRODUCTION

According to Lumina Foundation’s 2015 *A Stronger Nation* report, the U.S. economy will need 106 million Americans to hold postsecondary credentials in 2025. Based on current attainment rates, the country is projected to fall 19.8 million credentials short of that goal. Increased enrollment in—and successful completion of—postsecondary learning programs is critical to achieving it. Prior learning assessment, or PLA, can help more workers complete training and degree programs sooner by giving them college credit for knowledge and competencies they’ve gained outside of the classroom. PLA can save students time and money, and the boost in credit earning might also have a motivating effect for some students. CAEL’s 2010 multi-institutional study, *Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success*, found that students with PLA credits were *2.5 times more likely to persist to graduation* than students without PLA credits. (See Appendix D for information on how to access the full report.)

State leaders are increasingly aware of PLA’s value in helping adult learners complete a degree faster and at a lower cost. Many are taking steps to encourage the offering and use of PLA throughout entire systems of colleges and universities.

This guide is intended to serve as a resource for state leaders who wish to promote PLA policy, whether through new higher education policy or through legislation. It includes background information on PLA and why a state- or systemwide approach can be helpful, information on the kinds of policies that other states and systems are adopting, and case studies of both general approaches to state- or systemwide PLA and approaches designed specifically to benefit veterans. An appendix provides a sample roadmap, considerations for developing a state- or system-wide policy, a state-by-state list of specific policies currently in place, and additional resources.

## DEFINING PLA

**Prior Learning Assessment is not just one method or tool.**

**It includes methods such as:**

- **Individualized student portfolios** or portfolio assessments, conducted by individual colleges or a third party like CAEL's LearningCounts.org, a national online prior learning assessment service;
- **Evaluation of corporate and military training** by the American Council on Education (ACE); ACE publishes credit recommendations for formal instructional programs offered by noncollegiate agencies, or the ACE Guides;
- **Program evaluations** done by individual colleges of noncollegiate instructional programs that award credit for those who achieve recognized proficiencies, also known as local evaluation of training;
- **Challenge exams** or customized exams offered by some colleges to verify learning achievement; these may be current course final exams or may be other tests developed at the department level for assessing general disciplinary knowledge and skill; and
- **Standardized exams** such as Advanced Placement Examination Program, or AP Exams, offered by the College Board; College-Level Examination Program, or CLEP Exams, also offered by the College Board; Excelsior College Exams (formerly Regents College Exams or ACT/PEP Exams); and The DANTES Subject Standardized Tests, or DSST Exams, conducted by the Chauncey Group International, a division of Thomson Prometric.

## REASONS TO ADVANCE A STATE OR SYSTEM APPROACH TO PLA

A state- or systemwide approach to PLA may be a good option for several important reasons:

- **A state- or systemwide initiative on PLA can help to expand PLA options for all students.** By starting a cross-institutional conversation about PLA, the initiative can educate faculty and administration at each institution about what PLA is, how it meets the needs of students while recognizing college-level learning, and how it can be administered with rigor and academic integrity. This can help dispel misunderstandings about PLA and foster greater acceptance of it among all stakeholders.



- **State- or systemwide policies can establish consistency where there is typically a lot of variation.** Institutional practices vary in terms of which PLA methods are offered and whether offerings are limited to specific majors or degree programs. Institutional policies also vary in terms of how PLA credits can count toward a student’s degree—for example, toward elective credits only or also for meeting general education or major requirements. State- or systemwide policies may refrain from trying to “harmonize” all of these differences, but they may impose some important consistencies in terms of establishing common quality standards, similar assessment fees, a common approach to portfolio assessment or common policies for awarding credit for standardized exams like CLEP or DSST.
- **State- or systemwide policies can address the challenge of students who transfer with PLA credit.** Policies can clarify how the transfer of PLA credits is handled between and among institutions in the system. This policy can then be clearly communicated to students so that they know what will transfer and what may not. Alternatively, the discussion about transfer may lead to changes in transfer policies, particularly if all institutions are adhering to the same quality standards in the administration of the various PLA methods.
- **A state- or systemwide PLA effort can find ways to realize economies of scale and common messaging.** Establishing state- or systemwide policies may lead to collaboration on PLA activities where costs can be shared across multiple organizations, such as joint training of PLA advisors or faculty assessors. Institutions may also join together in developing a common marketing campaign with shared costs as well as consistent messages to students about what PLA is and how to access more information about it.
- **A state- or systemwide approach can lead to common approaches to tracking and reporting how students use PLA to accelerate their degree completion.** State data tracking on PLA allows for better cross-institutional comparisons on PLA usage to better understand trends, particularly related to the use of specific methods of PLA and use within specific degree programs or areas of study.

## FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

Before you examine the various strategies to advance PLA policy, there are several factors to consider about your state’s or system’s current PLA policy and practices. These factors include the accessibility, consistency, transferability and transparency of PLA offerings at colleges and universities in your state or system. It is also important to understand how PLA services are implemented, managed, promoted and supported.

Because PLA policies can be very different across institutions, an important first step is to gather information about current PLA availability, usage and administration. Below are some of the types of questions you might want to consider asking of your college and university and system administrators:

## 1. Gather Existing PLA Policies and Practices at Colleges and Universities

- a. Is PLA offered by all of the institutions?
- b. What specific PLA methods are used to evaluate prior learning and award credit? *As noted above, there are several methods for assessing prior learning, and policies may vary based on the methods.*
- c. What are the costs for PLA, including any fees? *Costs typically include the assessment itself, transcription or posting fees, and other administrative costs. They can vary widely among institutions and systems. They can also vary by PLA method.*
- d. How are credits earned through PLA reflected on the student transcript? *Does it vary by PLA method?*
- e. Do institutions apply their PLA policies and practices consistently across all divisions and departments, or do policies vary within institutions?
- f. Can PLA credits be applied to degree/major requirements? *Many PLA credits become wasted credits because of institutional and system policies that limit their application only to general education and elective requirements. For other institutions, specialized degree completion programs targeted at adult students may enable more recognition of PLA credits. Making this information available and easy for students to understand is very important.*
- g. Is there a cap on the number of PLA credits that can be earned by the student?
- h. Can PLA credits count toward residency requirements? *Most schools have a requirement that a student take a certain number of credits at the home institution, typically based on accreditation requirements. Some institutions allow certain forms of PLA credits to count toward the residency requirement (for example, those involving faculty evaluation of learning). Some institutions treat certain forms of PLA credit as residential or native.*
- i. What are the transfer policies for credits earned through PLA? *Because of accreditation requirements and internal policies, institutions generally have a cap on the number of PLA credits that can transfer from other institutions, or they may not accept any PLA credits in transfer.*
- j. Is there consistency among institutions within the state system? *In many states, each institution sets its own PLA policy, leading to inconsistency and confusion for today's mobile students.*

2. **Authority.** How are PLA policies decided? Are there any statewide PLA policies? How often are they reviewed? States are increasingly considering statewide policies to encourage consistency and ease of transfer of PLA credits.



- 3. Impact.** Do institutions or systems regularly track the usage of PLA by students? Are there data showing overall PLA usage, usage by specific PLA method and usage within specific degree programs?
- 4. Capacity.** Are faculty, advisors and student support staff aware of PLA? Have they received guidance on how to knowledgeably speak about PLA to students or other audiences? Do they support it as an important strategy for degree completion? Do they understand what the specific PLA policies and offerings are at their institutions? Is there a cadre of faculty trained to develop and evaluate challenge exams, or to assess prior learning portfolios? Does the institution invest staff time and resources in the administration and marketing of PLA?
- 5. Business model.** Is there a clearly defined business model for PLA at the institutional level? For example, some institutions may set fees intentionally at a level that would cover all costs associated with PLA offerings, or they may set nominal fees with PLA treated as an important part of the institution's comprehensive support of students' degree completion. How are faculty compensated for assessment of prior learning?
- 6. Transparency.** How do current and prospective students find out about PLA opportunities? For example, is information about PLA opportunities and policies easy to find on your colleges' websites? Is it clear to an inquiring student how PLA credits might count in his or her degree plan? Is there a single point of contact for PLA at each college? If your state or system has a strategy for increasing the number of adult students with degrees, certificates and other credentials, a website devoted to this policy and transparency of information related to PLA is an important communication tool.
- 7. Champions.** Are there other PLA champions in your state, including other legislators, leaders at the higher education institutional or system level, workforce agency, veteran affairs department, business and industry groups, etc.? These champions can help you build the case for improved PLA policies and practices and potentially serve as subject matter experts.
- 8. Faculty Engagement.** Since faculty are critical players in PLA implementation, are there strategies in place to provide them with training and professional development related to PLA? Are faculty members involved in defining PLA policies and procedures?
- 9. Barriers.** Are there any existing policy barriers to PLA? For example, can PLA costs be covered under state financial aid or workforce programs? How can limits imposed by accreditation requirements be addressed?

Determining the answers to these questions will require investigation and cooperation from key stakeholders, including higher education agencies and boards, two- and four-year institutions/ systems and other interested parties such as the workforce system. Some states and systems have found that it can be helpful to move forward on PLA policies by establishing a task force to collect this information and then use that to inform a larger process for developing policies and creating a plan for implementation.



## EXAMPLES OF STATE POLICIES SUPPORTING PLA

CAEL conducted a limited scan of state policies that support PLA and discovered a wide range of approaches. PLA policy can be crafted through legislation or higher education policy. Policies can address a variety of issues regarding PLA in a given state and can address a number of different topics, such as:

- Establishment of PLA policy;
- Transparent institutional policies;
- Assessment processes and methods;
- Fees;
- Transfer of PLA credit;
- Transcription and credit recognition;
- Veterans;
- Raising awareness and encouraging student PLA participation;
- Capacity building; and
- Workforce system and PLA.

Each of these topics is explained in greater detail below, along with references to a few specific examples of states and systems with policies addressing that particular topic.

*A detailed state-by-state list of PLA policies, along with a summary table, is provided in Appendix C.*

### ESTABLISHMENT OF PLA POLICY

State and system policy initiatives sometimes begin with the legislature and sometimes with the governor. One type of PLA policy merely establishes that PLA exists. States vary in their approaches to this issue. Most state policy directs a state-level higher education agency to develop PLA policies, rather than stipulating a statewide PLA policy. This approach reflects long-standing recognition that higher education policy is best determined by the higher education system or by individual institutions. For example, **Colorado** directs the state's Commission on Higher Education as follows: "Beginning in the 2013-14 academic year, each public institution of higher education shall adopt and make public a policy or program to determine academic credit for prior learning." **Washington** similarly directs the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to "develop policies for awarding academic credit for learning from work and military experience, military and law enforcement training, career college training, internships and externships, and apprenticeships." Similar policies are in place for all public institutions in **Oregon** and **Maryland** through their

respective coordinating boards, for the University of **Hawai`i** Community Colleges, and for the Technical College System of Georgia.

Higher education agencies themselves also may take steps to establish a comprehensive and consistent statewide PLA policy. As with the legislative approach, a system may choose to encourage, rather than dictate, the establishment of a PLA policy. Such policies exist for both governing and coordinating agencies. **Minnesota** State Colleges and Universities, for example, is a governing board with a policy stating, "Each system college and university shall provide students with a means for evaluation of prior learning and shall develop policies and procedures consistent with Procedure 3.35.1 Credit for Prior Learning." Such policies have also been adopted by other governing boards such as the **Idaho** State Board of Education, the **Nevada** Board of Regents, the **North Dakota** University System, the **Tennessee** Board of Regents, the University of **Wisconsin** System and the **Kansas** Board of Regents. Coordinating boards such as the **Ohio** Board of Regents and the **Oklahoma** State Regents for Higher Education have similar policies in place.

Often, the system or board will establish a task force to work on establishing state- or systemwide PLA policies and guidelines.

Higher education systems sometimes establish prescriptive systemwide policies. **Colorado's** State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education, a governing board, states, "The State Board supports the concept of life-long learning to meet the retraining, upgrading, and personal enrichment needs of students. It is the policy of the Board that a student's experience outside the college classroom shall be evaluated for college credit at the student's request." The University of **Maine** System's Prior Learning Task Force has made similar recommendations to its systemwide governing board.

## TRANSPARENT INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

In addition to establishing a policy, legislation and regulatory language can address the transparency of those policies to students. This language ensures that students have access to information about what PLA methods are used at each institution, what degree programs accept PLA credit, specific policies regarding the transfer of PLA credit, PLA credit limits, limits on applying PLA credits to major requirements, whether certain types of PLA credits may count toward the residency requirement and so on. For example, transparency is specifically required for all public higher education institutions in **Washington** and **Oregon**, and is also referenced in the policies of the Colorado State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education, the **Minnesota** State Colleges and Universities System and the **Alabama** Community College System. Whether or not a formal policy on transparent PLA policies is in place, state-level agencies or boards could serve as a clearinghouse for this kind of information.

## ASSESSMENT PROCESS/METHODS

State policies can be very specific in defining which methods of PLA are considered to be accepted. For example, the **Maryland** Higher Education Commission, the Board of Regents of the University of **Wisconsin** System and the **West Virginia** Higher Education Policy Commission have state policies on CLEP exam credit; the **Kentucky** Council on Postsecondary Education requires public postsecondary educational institutions to grant credit for Advanced Placement (AP) exams; and **South Carolina** and **Virginia** both require all public postsecondary institutions to have policies regarding both AP and International Baccalaureate (IB) exams. The **Ohio** Board of Regents has state policy for CLEP and AP, and the **Florida** state legislation has set policy on CLEP, AP and IB exams. **Washington** state has a policy stipulating that public institutions are to grant credit for AP, IB and other “recognized college-level proficiency examinations.”

The **Minnesota** State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees stipulates that all system colleges and universities must “provide opportunities for an admitted student to demonstrate college-level learning through nationally recognized examinations” such as CLEP, IB, AP and others, and it requires colleges to accept the credit recommendations from ACE, but it allows individual institutions to decide whether to offer other PLA methods such as portfolio evaluation. The **North Dakota** State Board of Higher Education defines “additional forms of degree credit” as including standardized examination, challenge examination, evaluated non-college coursework, portfolio evaluation and “articulated credit.” The **Utah** State Board of Regents has a policy that accepts as valid “the concept of credit by examination,” which includes standardized exams, challenge exams (referred to as “departmentally devised examinations”) and “Prior Learning Assessment developed by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning.”

The **Alabama** Community College System provides guidelines for PLA, along with details on how portfolio assessment is to be administered. The detail addresses staff training, who should be assessing the portfolio, and the circumstances in which the portfolio assessment process is appropriate.

The **Colorado** State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education has a formal document outlining the procedures for PLA, including a standard PLA definition, guidelines for communicating information about PLA to students, standards for awarding PLA credit, approved methods for awarding PLA credit, and guidelines for the student transcript, assessment fees and transfer policies. The policy includes guidelines for portfolio evaluation practices.

## FEES

Some state systems stipulate what their colleges and programs should charge for PLA services. The **Oklahoma** State Regents for Higher Education provides some basic guidelines, in that “Costs to students for establishment of credit should be comparable throughout the State System, and should reflect as closely as possible the actual costs for institutional administration of the program.”

The **Minnesota** State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees policy provides similar guidelines but adds that fees may also be charged for entering the credits awarded into the transcript. The **Colorado** State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education policy stipulates, “The individual college determines fees for evaluation of Portfolio Credit or for Challenge Exams. The per-credit charge will not exceed one-half of the current in-state per-credit tuition.” **Alabama** Community Colleges System policy specifies that the charge for portfolio review shall be \$25 for each portfolio (one portfolio for each course for which credit through experiential learning is requested), and students seeking credit “through examination or nationally recognized guidelines are not charged a fee for PLA or for credits awarded through PLA.”

## TRANSFER AND ARTICULATION OF PLA CREDIT

One challenge for students earning credit through PLA is the reality that many institutions will not accept such credit in transfer. **Oklahoma** State Regents for Higher Education, a coordinating board, addresses this problem directly by stipulating that institutions must accept each other’s PLA credits in transfer: “Credit for extra-institutional learning, once recorded at a State System institution, is transferable on the same basis as if the credit had been earned through regular study at the awarding institution.” In addition, Oklahoma’s policy states that institutions must accept PLA credit that is awarded and transcribed by other accredited institutions. A new policy adopted in 2015 by the **Colorado** State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education also stipulates that PLA credit granted “shall be accepted as transfer credit by all of the State System community colleges.”

Similarly, many students who have participated in non-credit programs may find that those programs represent college-level learning and can be evaluated for credit through PLA. The **Oregon** Higher Education Coordinating Commission’s policy directs institutions that award PLA credit to “work with receiving institutions to promote transferability” of that credit. Similarly, University of **Hawai’i** Community Colleges policy establishes a “college-credit equivalency program” that outlines various methods for awarding PLA credit with the intent of ensuring seamless transfer of credits among participating campuses. Taking a different approach to the needs of transfer students, the University of **Wisconsin** System has a policy that transfer students have the same access to PLA as continuing students.

Both the **Tennessee** Board of Regents’ Prior Learning Assessment Task Force and the University of **Maine** System’s Prior Learning Assessment Task Force recommend that a general transfer of PLA credit policy be adopted.

## TRANSCRIPTION OF PLA CREDIT

States may choose to specify how PLA credit is presented on a student’s transcript. **Minnesota** State Colleges and Universities’ policy states that “Credit awarded for prior learning or earned by examination may be noted either in the term when it was earned or in the transfer section”

and that the type of special credit must be noted in parentheses immediately below the course. Similarly, the **Colorado** State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education policy states simply that the transcript shall note credit only and no grade. These two examples are common approaches for listing PLA credit on the student transcript.

However, some institutions choose to list certain forms of PLA credit as “transfer credit” because it is seen as fundamentally the same idea: credit for learning acquired outside of that institution. This is an option that state leaders could consider including in policy directives as well.

## VETERANS

About two-thirds of all states have established policies—often originating with the legislature—regarding the recognition of skills and other learning that veterans have acquired through training and experience in the military.

Some states require commissions or boards to examine what might be the best process for awarding credit for military training. For example, **Texas** legislation directs the Texas Workforce Commission “to identify, develop, and support methods to maximize academic or workforce education credit awarded by institutions of higher education to veterans and military service members for military experience, education, and training obtained during military service.” A similar measure was passed in 2015 for the **Illinois** Board of Higher Education.

Other states direct their agencies and boards to establish policies for military PLA. **Idaho** legislation, for example, directs the state board of education, the board of regents of the University of Idaho, the board of trustees of a community college and the state board for professional-technical education to develop policies relating to the award of academic credit for military education, training or service, and to “work cooperatively with one another and with other state agencies as needed in the development of such policies.”

Still other states *require* institutions to adopt policies to award credit for learning acquired through the military. One example is **Ohio**, where the Board of Regents issued guiding philosophies around military PLA policies at individual institutions, including that “The policy should recognize prior-learning acquired through military training, experience, and coursework, and Ohio’s public institutions of higher education should award appropriate college credit for such learning.” **Indiana’s** policy also requires the Commission for Higher Education to establish uniform guidelines for state educational institutions to follow when implementing the requirements. Indiana further allows occupational or professional licensure boards to issue a license, certificate, registration or permit to a military service applicant or military spouse who meets certain requirements, or to issue a temporary practice permit or provisional license while the military service applicant or military spouse is satisfying certain requirements as determined by the board.

In addition, some states have launched special initiatives around PLA for military populations. Three examples—the Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit, Minnesota’s Veterans Education Transfer System and Texas’ College Credit for Heroes—are profiled in the case study section of this report.

## **RAISING AWARENESS AND ENCOURAGING STUDENT PLA PARTICIPATION**

Just because an institution offers PLA does not necessarily mean that students will know about it or know how to ask for it. **Oregon’s** legislation directs the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to set goals for increasing student participation in PLA and establish an advisory group to track progress in meeting those goals. Raising PLA participation is also an articulated goal in **Washington** state for the Student Achievement Council, the state board for community and technical colleges, the council of presidents, the four-year institutions of higher education, the private independent higher education institutions and the private career schools.

## **CAPACITY BUILDING**

State policy can also be used to build the capacity of PLA offerings at colleges and universities. **Oregon’s** Higher Education Coordinating Commission is instructed to “improve prior learning assessment practices across all institutions of higher education” and “create tools to develop faculty and staff knowledge and expertise in awarding academic credit for prior learning and to share exemplary policies and practices among institutions of higher education.” Similar legislation was passed in **Washington** directing the various councils, boards and institutions to work together to “Create tools to develop faculty and staff knowledge and expertise in awarding credit for prior learning and to share exemplary policies and practices among institutions of higher education.”

## **WORKFORCE SYSTEM**

The examples so far have focused primarily on the higher education system’s use of PLA. In addition, states might also consider crafting policy that encourages or directs the workforce system to promote and support PLA in its own programs. In **Indiana**, the Department of Workforce Development provided guidance to the state’s workforce investment system on “how Workforce Investment Act Funds may be utilized to provide prior learning assessments to eligible participants enrolled in occupational skills training.”

Launching PLA within a workforce initiative may be a good starting point for PLA in a state. The U.S. Department of Labor’s Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) program has encouraged grantees to incorporate PLA into their grant-funded programs, and several grantees are doing so. For example, the TAACCCT project led by Northeast **Wisconsin** Technical College and involving the Wisconsin Technical College System has PLA as a key focus of

its work, as do the seven technical colleges in **South Carolina's** SC ACCELERATE initiative. The positive experiences with PLA in these initiatives are now creating some political will to advance PLA discussions at the state level.

## CASE STUDIES ON STATE- AND SYSTEM-LEVEL APPROACHES TO PLA

The following case studies provide sample system approaches to PLA. Systems profiled are those in the states of Washington, Tennessee, Montana, Ohio, Texas, Pennsylvania and Vermont.

### WASHINGTON STATE: PLA TASK FORCE

Several states have passed legislation that orders the formation of a task force or working group to assess PLA practices in the state and develop policies and procedures. This interim step is a way to motivate the key players in PLA—higher education institutions, government and employers—to take action without a prescriptive mandate. States that passed this type of legislation include Washington, Oregon and Colorado. The activities in Washington are summarized below.

In 2010, the Washington State Legislature passed a bill (<http://lawfilesexet.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2009-10/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Passed%20Legislature/6357-S.PL.pdf>) that required the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to work with other stakeholders to develop policies for awarding academic credit for experiential learning. Other stakeholders included the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, business leaders and representatives from higher education institutions. It was the intent of the legislature that transparent policies be developed and that PLA activities be consistently applied at all Washington institutions of higher learning. In late 2010 a report was submitted to the legislature with proposed policies and procedures ([http://app.leg.wa.gov/ReportsToTheLegislature/Home/GetPDF?fileName=FINAL%20report%20120610\\_2ebd9942-a301-4966-abfe-d033958a2409.pdf](http://app.leg.wa.gov/ReportsToTheLegislature/Home/GetPDF?fileName=FINAL%20report%20120610_2ebd9942-a301-4966-abfe-d033958a2409.pdf).)

Legislation in 2011, codified as ESSHB 1795 and reaffirmed in 2012 by ESSHB 2483 (codified as <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28B.77.005>), was more direct in its approach. This law abolished the HECB and established the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) as a new cabinet-level agency. The law required WSAC to convene a PLA workgroup comprising representatives of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Council of Presidents, the four-year institutions of higher education, the private independent higher education institutions, private career schools and representatives of the military and private sector. The workgroup is directed to achieve the following goals outlined in RCW 28B.77.230 (<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28B.77.230>)

- Increase the number of students who receive PLA credits;
- Increase the number and type of PLA credits that count toward a major or earn a degree, certificate or credential, while ensuring quality;
- Develop transparent PLA policies and practices in awarding academic credit for prior learning;
- Create PLA tools to develop faculty and staff and share exemplary policies and practices;
- Develop articulation agreements; and
- Develop outcome measures to track progress on goals.

RCW 28B.77.230 defines prior learning as “the knowledge and skills gained through work and life experience; through military training and experience; and through formal and informal education and training from in-state and out-of-state institutions including foreign institutions.”

The workgroup does not set policy. Rather, it facilitates collaboration and communication across the system to implement the goals and develop transparent policies and practices in awarding academic credit for prior learning. WSAC submits an annual report to the legislature on workgroup progress in carrying out its goals.

Pursuant to the legislation, the PLA workgroup has been meeting quarterly since 2012 to address the goals outlined in legislation. Accomplishments to date include:

- Creation of sample coding procedures for colleges to track increases in the number of students receiving PLA credit and increases in the number of PLA credits that count toward their major, degree, certificate or credential among Washington colleges. A coding methodology modeled on these recommendations was adopted by the community and technical college system in 2014 and updated in 2015.
- Significant increase in the number of students receiving PLA credit, and the number of credits awarded: **12,987** students received academic credit for prior learning that counted toward their major or earning their degree or certificate in academic year 2013-2014. This is an increase of 182 percent over the previous year. A total of **306,308 academic credits** were accepted by colleges and universities toward degrees, certificates or credentials in academic year 2013-14. This is an increase of 261 percent over the previous year and equivalent to approximately 6,800 annual full-time equivalent students.
- Review and update of crosswalks between work-based and other common training programs and community and technical college courses. Additional templates for various career clusters—e.g., medical assisting, automotive, business technology, computer information systems and fire science—were developed by colleges to assist others in establishing program articulations with community-based training programs.



- Sharing of examples of college and university websites that provide better information about PLA practices, and encouragement of institutions to incorporate best practices.
- Hosting of an annual statewide PLA conference. Over 120 participants annually gather for a full-day conference to share best practices and develop strategies for increasing PLA opportunities for all students. The 2014 conference focused on implementing SSB 5969—an act related to awarding academic credit for military training that was passed by the legislature in 2014 (<http://app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=5969&year=2013>).
- Development of the Prior Learning Assessment Handbook for faculty and staff. This handbook is the result of cross-sector collaboration by PLA workgroup members and incorporates input from their colleagues and fellow educators to assist all implementing PLA on their campuses.
- Establishment of a PLA Wiki that includes all historical documents of the workgroup, research, annual reports, the PLA Handbook and news about PLA in Washington. In addition, a PLA listserv was established to improve communication across the state. For more information on the workgroup activities, see <http://wa-priorlearningassessment.wikispaces.com/>.

James West, associate director of academic affairs and policy at the Washington Student Achievement Council, who convenes the workgroup, observed several lessons of the group to date:

- 1. Encourage broad workgroup participation.** The broader the workgroup representation, the better the conversation. Representatives from all sectors have been invited: public/private, nonprofit/for-profit, military, workforce and unions, department of labor, apprenticeship programs.
- 2. Invite legislative staff participation.** Staff members have acted as a conduit directly to the legislature, helping the workgroup interpret legislative intent, informing the legislators of progress and improving transparency between the higher education system and legislature.
- 3. Engage both faculty and college administrators.** PLA is faculty-driven in Washington, and college administrators implement policy and help to create workable procedures that benefit students and the institution.

“Progress made by the PLA Workgroup over the past three years has brought a new awareness of the value students with prior learning bring to campuses. Granting PLA credit is a strategy to achieve one of our state’s educational attainment goals: At least 70 percent of Washington adults (ages 25-44) will have a postsecondary credential by 2023. Continued collaboration, integration, and focus will be needed to affect change.”

**JAMES WEST,**  
Associate Director of Academic  
Affairs and Policy, Washington  
Student Achievement Council



4. **Keep open communication.** The group has a robust wiki for workgroup participants to share information and work together on issues. The wiki is public, so information about the group’s goals and progress is widely accessible. You cannot have too much communication, and it takes time.
5. **Maintain momentum.** As West noted, “System change takes time. It is important to manage expectations while continually making progress.” Meetings are time-consuming, but face-to-face work is where progress is made.

The state’s 2014 progress report is available at <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2015.PLA.Report.pdf>.

## THE TENNESSEE MODEL: INCENTIVES FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) has introduced transformational change through a compelling model that brought key institutional and system entities together. The Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010 recognized the state’s need to increase degree completion and offer residents opportunities to return to college in order to prepare for new workforce opportunities. Tennessee’s comprehensive approach included a change in how it disseminates funding to its public institutions in order to focus on and incentivize outcomes such as progression and degree completion. The specialized formula provides funding based upon:

- a. Number of degree recipients and successful transfers.
- b. Number of students who achieve progression milestones (such as accumulating 12, 24 and 36 credit hours at community colleges, and 24, 48 and 72 credit hours at four-year universities).
- c. Higher levels of funding for Pell-eligible students and those who are 25 years old or older when they meet the progression milestones and ultimately complete a degree or certificate. Institutions report the number of adults and students from low-income families—identified as subpopulations—who meet the progression and undergraduate degree and certificate completion metrics during the academic year. A 40 percent premium is applied to these outcomes as a way to recognize the added assistance provided to these populations and the importance of success for these populations to state goals. For example, this means that if 100 degrees were awarded to adults at an institution, those degrees are actually reflected in the model as if 140 undergraduate degrees were conferred over that time period.

- d. Other funding incentives aligned with institutional mission. Outcome data are also weighted to reflect institutional mission, indicating both the priority of that outcome at a particular institution and—in the case of universities—an institution’s Carnegie Classification. Higher weights are applied to higher-priority outcomes at each institution. These weights for universities and community colleges were developed in consultation with campus leaders through a funding formula review committee.

In 2011, Tennessee received a Complete College America grant to support a PLA initiative, at the center of which was the formation of a PLA task force, led by THEC with representation from public and private institutions and both higher education systems. The primary purpose of this task force was to develop statewide, comprehensive, high-quality PLA standards and to increase PLA options available to students.

Cooperation and collaboration between the institutions has been remarkable. After three years, Tennessee has seen an increase in PLA participation within its adult student population. Institutions have increased their PLA offerings, implemented more flexible policies and improved the availability of and access to PLA information. THEC staff have visited many institutions and have addressed student advisors, faculty, chief academic officers, presidents, student services professionals and professional organizations on behalf of the statewide PLA initiative.

The Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) has since adopted the PLA Task Force’s recommended standards in their entirety as system policies and guidelines, while certain components (including transferability, tracking and transcription of PLA credits) have also been accepted by the University of Tennessee system. Additionally, the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association (TICUA) has also formally endorsed these recommended standards in PLA policy and practice. In the summer of 2012 the task force also launched a PLA website, where students can access detailed information on PLA, including which institutions will accept certain types of PLA and the ability to conduct a preliminary self-assessment of potential credit.

To improve PLA advising services, college advisors (academic, career, admissions) from many public colleges and universities have been trained in how PLA works, and best practices in advising students about its benefits and utilizing it. Training regarding portfolio assessment as a PLA option was also provided by CAEL to faculty throughout the state.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of the task force’s work was to determine each institution’s policies (including acceptable CLEP scores, credit caps and residency requirements) in order to understand both the variability from institution to institution and the need for updated PLA policies. These conversations were essential among institutional leaders in order to advocate change. For example, in April 2012, the academic affairs subcouncil of the Tennessee Board of Regents focused on CLEP policies, resulting in a standard policy for cutoff scores for the community colleges, hours awarded and course equivalencies for students who pass CLEP exams; in addition, the subcouncil addressed the transferability of CLEP credit between institutions. The credit recommendations for

the AP exam have also been standardized, and those for DDST, UExcel and Thomas Edison Credit by Exam Program (TECEP) exams will soon be standardized as well.

PLA can be utilized as a tool to reach adult learners. Tennessee recognized that partnerships with employers and with the state's Career Centers were important to spread the word about completing a credential and using PLA to do it. THEC hosted three PLA summits in the fall of 2012 to gain more traction among employers. A primary goal was to promote the use of PLA to employers and their inclusion of it in their employee tuition assistance programs; in addition, the summits presented innovative ways to support their employees' pursuit of a postsecondary credential. Also in 2012, THEC partnered with several local workforce investment boards, as well as the Tennessee College Access and Success Network, to host a one-day PLA workshop for more than 100 career center coaches. Co-facilitated by CAEL and ACE, the workshop provided career coaches with information and resources for serving adult clients who want to return to school. More recently, THEC developed the Tennessee Talent Toolkit. The toolkit is targeted at human resource directors, providing information a business may need to institute its own resources and supports for employees returning to higher education.

Changing PLA policy statewide is challenging, yet attainable. The Tennessee effort benefited from recognizing the following lessons:

- 1. Start with champions, but don't ignore others.** The task force comprised representatives who have a strong commitment to PLA, some of whom were champions from the beginning and some who have become so since. Often the biggest champions begin as the biggest skeptics.
- 2. Align with and leverage complementary policy agendas.** In Tennessee, the college completion agenda provided the perfect platform for discussions around PLA policy.
- 3. Make the time to talk with all of the stakeholders.** THEC and the PLA task force have made a concerted effort to engage administrators, faculty, advisors, workforce development professionals and businesses, so that information and messaging about PLA is consistent.
- 4. Frame the conversation about PLA.** The conversation about PLA in Tennessee frames PLA as an existing service that needs better clarity, utilization and consistency, and a tool that institutions can leverage to help native students complete degrees faster and to bring more adult students into their institutions.
- 5. Put policy into practice.** A good set of systemwide policies is just the beginning. Institutions will need support as they implement new programs and expand existing ones.



*The governor's support of PLA has laid the foundation for a comprehensive PLA system as a part of a larger degree completion agenda in Tennessee.*

**JESSICA GIBSON,**  
Assistant Executive Director  
Tennessee Higher  
Education Commission

## MONTANA, OHIO AND TEXAS A&M MODELS: CAPACITY BUILDING

In the past several years, Montana, Ohio and Texas have each initiated system- or statewide initiatives designed to advance the adoption and widespread implementation of PLA. Led by Montana University System (MUS), Ohio Board of Regents (OBOR) and Texas A&M University System (A&M System), these states have engaged in a similar trajectory of activities to increase levels of awareness, acceptance, consistency and professional capacity for PLA practices across their systems.

Within a similar span of time between 2011 and 2013, Montana, Texas and Ohio state legislatures passed the following actions, which demonstrated that state leaders were interested in advancing PLA, especially as it relates to the particular needs of military and veteran students:

- Montana’s legislature passed HB 317 prompting the Board of Regents to update Policy 301.5, which now requires campuses to develop for approval policies to ensure that military/veteran students are offered appropriate and timely access to PLA options for their military experiences.
- In Texas, an initiative called College Credit for Heroes was written into Section 302 of the state’s Labor Code. Although this is a broader initiative than the A&M System-led efforts profiled here, it set the stage for statewide interest in PLA. The program is described in this publication as part of the case study focused on military PLA.
- In Ohio, following a 2013 executive order by Gov. Kasich mandating a state-level review of institutional policies on granting credit for veterans and service members, Ohio’s state legislature passed HB 488. The bill includes provisions for serving and engaging the military community on campuses and requires improved standardization in the way that colleges and universities award college credit for military training and experience.

Around the same time, postsecondary leaders in these three states also began building a state system approach to PLA policies and practices more generally. In May 2013, MUS, OBOR and A&M System were all selected to participate in a two-year, Lumina Foundation-funded State System PLA Adoption project. This project, managed by CAEL, is designed to help guide public higher education systems in supporting the statewide adoption of PLA. That same year, Ohio launched a statewide initiative called PLA with Purpose, which established a PLA network led by OBOR that has been working collaboratively with campuses across the state to identify and promote best practices for PLA in Ohio.

An initial inventory of PLA policies and practices in each of the three systems revealed, among other important results, that PLA practices across campuses were highly varied and decentralized. In response, each system began taking steps toward encouraging standardization. Montana secured a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support this work and created a PLA task force, which developed a set of policy recommendations that were adopted by the Board of Regents. OBOR and Ohio’s PLA network have made significant progress on a guidebook, or “Design

to Delivery” resource, for PLA implementation in Ohio. A&M System is working on a PLA guidebook in Texas that leverages successful frameworks used by other states.

The systems also implemented strategies designed to raise general awareness of PLA among stakeholders throughout their states, including faculty and campus staff. Convened by MUS, stakeholders in Montana gathered in September 2014 for a PLA Summit, which helped to promote greater understanding of PLA across the state. As another way to advance understanding and acceptance, as well as to develop staff capacity to implement PLA, the three systems have dedicated efforts to educating various groups of practitioners through the following professional development trainings:

- A three-part webinar series titled “Becoming a PLA Expert” for faculty and staff;
- Customized training on advising adult students on PLA;
- Upcoming webinar trainings on how to effectively market PLA to students; and
- An upcoming webinar discussion on best practices for tracking PLA.

As part of the Lumina-funded PLA adoption initiative, several schools in each system were supported in becoming Featured Network Institutions in LearningCounts, which is CAEL’s online PLA portfolio development service. Participating in LearningCounts provided an opportunity for the systems to build capacity and understanding around portfolio assessment as an important method of PLA. It has been particularly useful in Texas, where the institutional survey of A&M System campuses indicated that previously there had been very little engagement with the portfolio approach.

Through these efforts to raise awareness, develop consistent policies and practices, and enhance professional capacity and understanding of PLA, Montana University System, Ohio Board of Regents and Texas A&M University System have made significant progress toward advancing PLA on a system level. These successes have come with a number of important lessons:

1. Policy changes in the absence of increased understanding and awareness of PLA are unlikely to have significant impacts at an institutional level.
2. Like any other effort to adopt new practices and systems, it is important to recognize that time and education are critical for addressing resistance and fears around PLA.
3. PLA adoption efforts must ensure transparency and include faculty in all stages.
4. All the appropriate stakeholders must be engaged.
5. There are challenges in implementing a systemwide strategy without a dedicated staff person.
6. Developing consistent policies within systems that are highly diverse and **widespread** presents unique challenges.

## **PENNSYLVANIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE COLLABORATION: COLLEGE CREDIT FASTTRACK**

Given the national imperative for a more skilled and credentialed workforce, the state of Pennsylvania has had an increasing focus in recent years on efforts to accelerate degree and credential completion among its adult students and job-seekers. Postsecondary leaders recognized that opportunities for students to get academic credit for their prior college-level learning was an important way to save them time and money toward completing a degree or credential. However, students across the state have had low levels of awareness and understanding of their PLA options.

In response to these challenges, in February 2015 the Pennsylvania Commission of Community Colleges (PACCC), a membership association that represents the state's 14 community colleges, launched an innovative, systemwide PLA solution called College Credit FastTrack. This program was designed by a task force of postsecondary leaders to provide a streamlined opportunity for adult learners across Pennsylvania's community college system to access PLA. Using a technology-based platform, College Credit FastTrack aims to capture the attention of a broad range of adult students in the state, standardize the PLA experience, ensure the transferability of credits, and collect data to track the progress of participating students systemwide. The program's lead institution is Montgomery County Community College.

The College Credit FastTrack initiative was supported by a \$2.5 million Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. Each community college in the state assigned a representative to a designated working group, which met monthly to identify commonalities in PLA practices across institutions and develop guiding principles for a standardized PLA procedure. About a year after the development process began, the working group engaged AcademyOne, a consulting and software development firm that works exclusively in the higher education space, to build the software infrastructure and user interface for the program. College Credit FastTrack now offers a single, web-based entry portal for all students who are interested in PLA.

The College Credit FastTrack website guides students through a number of stages in exploring their PLA options. After creating an online account, students select a targeted institution (typically the institution at which they are currently enrolled) and can begin exploring existing courses that may correspond with their learning experiences. Students are connected with a PLA advisor who provides a one-on-one consultation about the various PLA options and offers guidance in submitting an application for the program. Each community college has selected a group of internal advisors for this role, which ensures that contextual factors at individual institutions are incorporated into the advising process.

Upon approval of a student's application and the payment of a \$125 assessment fee, the system guides students through a standardized process for developing and submitting an e-portfolio to demonstrate their college-level learning. The portal offers guidelines, tutorials and other materials





to assist students in this process. An assessor is then assigned to evaluate the e-portfolio. Each community college has a designated group of assessors who evaluate all portfolios submitted for their institution. Assessors were provided with systemwide training on portfolio evaluation, and PACCC is expanding the pool of trained assessors.

Following the submission and evaluation of each portfolio, assessors make recommendations for potential academic credit. All participating institutions have agreed that the credit recommendations produced through the College Credit FastTrack system are transferable across all community colleges in the state.

In addition to the portfolio development and assessment system, the website contains a collection of information and resources about other PLA options offered at the state's various community colleges, which students may choose to explore. The College Credit FastTrack system includes mechanisms to track and record the activity of participating students.

As an innovative systemwide strategy, College Credit FastTrack presents an exciting opportunity for a consistent approach to PLA in Pennsylvania. Through its streamlined web-based portal, the program ensures standardized messaging and institutional procedures, as well as a consistent overall student experience and transferable PLA credit opportunities for adults across the state who are interested in engaging in PLA.

## **THE VERMONT MODEL: ONE SYSTEMWIDE PROVIDER**

In 1975, the Vermont State Colleges (VSC) system created its Office of External Programs (OEP), which is responsible and available for the assessment of prior learning in the VSC system. It is administered by the Community College of Vermont, one of the five Vermont State Colleges. Prior Learning Assessment options include individual course challenges, CLEP/DSST testing and two portfolio preparation courses: the Assessment of Prior Learning class (APL) and the Focused Portfolio Development (FPD) class. OEP is also available to assess corporate or other organizational training for credit equivalency.

The APL class is a one-semester, three-credit course that guides students through the creation of a portfolio that articulates and documents their college-level learning from experience. Students may request credits from any academic discipline. There is no limit to the amount of credit students may request. Portfolios are submitted to OEP, which sets up advanced standing committees of four faculty members (or occasionally credentialed practitioners) to determine the award of appropriate college credit. Students can earn credit for the cost of the three-credit course tuition and a \$300 fee to cover the faculty evaluator honorarium. Eighty percent of students who take the class complete it successfully and earn an average of 30 credits.



The FPD class is an eight-week, one-credit course. Students prepare a focused portfolio, requesting up to 12 credits in one academic discipline. These portfolios are reviewed independently by two faculty members from the appropriate department, hired by OEP. The assessment fee for Focused Portfolios is \$200.

Credit awarded through portfolios is transfer credit and recognized throughout the VSC system and at many colleges in the state. CLEP/DSST credit is also transfer credit. Course challenges at the Community College of Vermont are transcribed as institutional credit.

To date, more than 7,000 Vermonters have gone through the portfolio process. Offering PLA through one institution for the statewide State College system makes the portfolio process effective and efficient. Students can transfer the credit anywhere in the system, as long as those credits fit into degree programs.

Recommendations from the Vermont program are:

1. Have one institution/program/office administer PLA systemwide. It makes the portfolio process effective and efficient and uses resources and input from all involved colleges. It also allows for consistency, reliability and fairness.
2. Transcribe PLA as transfer credit. Students receive a transcript with transfer credit. Most colleges in Vermont accept the credit.
3. Use data to prove the effectiveness of PLA. This program has documented its graduates successfully transferring credit and completing subsequent course work for four decades. Using data can help make a program sustainable and create buy-in.
4. Build support for PLA by including detractors. Involve leaders and faculty in the review process. Recruit them to serve on advanced standing committees or invite them to observe the process.
5. Make the process transparent to everyone involved by providing consistency, information, consultation and outcome data.
6. Involve academic advisors, admissions office, registrar's office and other important stakeholders in the process.

“*Sound institutional support and the variety of accessible PLA options at the Vermont State Colleges have empowered our adult students for over 40 years.*”

**GABRIELLE DIETZEL**  
Director, Office of External  
Programs, Vermont State Colleges



# CASE STUDIES ON STATE APPROACHES TO PLA WITH MILITARY AND VETERAN POPULATIONS

Several states have also launched special initiatives to address the specific issue of recognizing the prior learning of service members and veterans. Three very different approaches are profiled here: the Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit, Minnesota's Veterans Education Transfer System and Texas' College Credit for Heroes.

## THE MULTI-STATE COLLABORATIVE ON MILITARY CREDIT

The Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit (MCMC) was initiated in March 2012 by the state higher education executive officers (SHEEOs) in Illinois, Indiana and Ohio in partnership with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) and generous support from Lumina Foundation and USA Funds. The initiative, which has grown to 13 states, allows states to exchange information and best practices in the areas of military credit, certifications/licensures and technology, with the ultimate goal of helping to remove barriers that service members may encounter and increase access to and participation in higher education. In order to achieve this, the MCMC has set four primary goals:

1. Maximize ways for student service members and veterans to transition to college;
2. Create models for consistently, transparently and effectively awarding credit for military training and experience that can be scaled regionally and nationally;
3. Establish strong partnerships with institutions and organizations for the purpose of promoting shared interests; and
4. Generate a system for documenting and tracking academic progression at the state level.

### MCMC MEMBERS

Illinois	Missouri
Indiana	Nebraska
Iowa	North Dakota
Kansas	Ohio
Kentucky	South Dakota
Michigan	Wisconsin
Minnesota	

The MCMC hopes to address these issues with a comprehensive approach that involves all types of institutions, including certification and non-diploma credential programs, technical colleges, community colleges and four-year universities. The group will employ a multipronged strategy that will a) encourage departments and institutions to learn from one another, b) build on the existing body of work and c) include and advance various methods of PLA.

This approach will be supported by the input of the four working groups that have been created so far:

- **Articulation of Academic Credit:** Identify policies and promising practices that can facilitate the translation of military training and experience into college credit/progress toward completing a certificate or degree program.
- **Licensure and Certification:** Determine how military occupations can or will translate directly into licenses and certifications or as milestones toward college degrees that lead to licensure.
- **Communications and Outreach:** Identify policies that can enhance the ways in which information can be communicated to service members about how their military training and experience can result in progress toward earning a postsecondary certificate, degree or professional license or certification.
- **Data, Technology and Systems:** Develop the metrics and data processes needed to follow service members for purposes of identifying the military occupation and matching with academic credentialing, major and career choice, academic preparation, retention, time to degree, graduation success and enrollment patterns that lead to academic success.

Program materials indicate several specific goals for the initiative, including an increase in:

- Service member degree completion;
- The number of institutions that identify course equivalencies for the ACE military credit recommendations; and
- The number of state licensing boards that are willing to accept military training as a way to accelerate progress toward earning a licensure or certificate.

*Program description and progress metrics obtained from MCMC program materials.*

## **MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES VETERANS EDUCATION TRANSFER SYSTEM (VETS)**

In 2010, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System (MnSCU) established the Veterans Education Transfer System (VETS) to help veterans and members of the armed forces identify how their military occupations can count for college credits at institutions throughout the system.

With the support of a federal grant, MnSCU started by establishing a comprehensive crosswalk between ACE credit recommendations for military training and occupations and the system's academic programs. The system then developed an online user interface linking to a database that allows veterans to find out how their skills and knowledge map to various educational opportunities. The veteran enters details regarding his or her military experience (including branch, occupation, specific training dates and skill levels), and the system's search engine produces a list of education and training programs that grant college credit for that veteran's college-level learning

in the military. The initial search result page shows how many prior learning credits the veteran would receive for each program, the degree or credential awarded upon completion of the program, and the specific college offering the program.

If there is a program of interest, the veteran then has the option to read more about the individual program, the course requirements and the specific courses for which he or she would receive prior learning credit. If a military occupation has not been evaluated by one of the MnSCU colleges or universities, the veteran can send a message requesting a review of his or her military occupation(s). The veteran is connected to the Online Support Center for advising services. Veterans can also take advantage of navigational support through a phone or chat with an Online Support Center eAdvisor.

Between 2011 and 2015, MnSCU developed articulations to more than 18,000 military occupations through looking at similarities between military occupations and course recommendations from ACE.

## **TEXAS COLLEGE CREDIT FOR HEROES**

Across the nation, state officials and other stakeholders are increasingly focused on promoting education and training programs that lead to sustainable employment opportunities for returning veterans. Particularly, there is a need to recognize the significant transferable skills and knowledge that veterans gain through their experiences in the military, and devise ways to translate those competencies into industry-certified credentials.

With these goals in mind, the state of Texas initiated a program called College Credit for Heroes (CCH). Administered by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), the initiative's launch was supported by approximately \$5 million in state Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds that were allocated for a TWC Comprehensive Veterans Initiative. The program was officially authorized in May 2011 under the state's Senate Bill 1736. With a goal to "maximize college credits awarded to veterans and service members for their military experience in order to expedite their transition into the Texas workforce," the CCH program has supported a selection of institutions in developing new models for assessing and awarding credit for military training experience.

In the first phase of this initiative, seven community colleges were selected to begin developing new programs and models that support the goals of CCH and could potentially be replicated or expanded to other institutions in the state. Phase I activities focused on the allied health professions, and a number of the selected institutions developed accelerated degree programs that were designed to streamline the transfer of military training credits and facilitate degree completion. Other important developments from Phase I of the CCH initiative include the following:

- An Individual Education Plan program, which promoted the use of PLA options among student veterans, including credit-by-exam;
- The Inter-College Council on Veterans, composed of representatives from each of the seven CCH partner institutions, which provided monthly opportunities to discuss successes and challenges and to share ideas; and
- A comprehensive needs analysis of all of the community college-level allied health programs in the state, which highlighted gaps and opportunities in the state's training offerings and credit-transfer opportunities, as well as the barriers to degree completion experienced by military and veteran students.

An additional outcome of the first phase was the development and launch of the College Credit for Heroes website (<https://www.collegecreditforheroes.org/>), developed by Central Texas College. This centralized web portal allows service members and veterans in Texas to request an official evaluation of their military training, which can potentially result in credit toward a civilian degree or credential. After setting up an account in the CCH system, users are guided through a process to request an evaluation of their military training experiences. From there, they can have those evaluations sent to any Texas college of their choice. They are prompted to contact the advisor at their selected school in order to determine the potential credit awards resulting from their military training evaluation, and to discuss their options for moving forward.

Phase II of the CCH initiative began in May 2013 and was designed to broaden the scope and impact of the program to new types of institutions, additional targeted professions and diverse regions across the state. Eleven partner colleges were identified for Phase II; these have implemented new veteran-focused, accelerated degree programs in high-growth fields such as information technology, manufacturing and firefighting. A number of partner institutions have also established veteran resource centers to provide on-campus support for military and veteran students.

Among the added partner institutions in Phase II is one state university accredited through the doctoral level, and several partner institutions have executed articulation agreements to facilitate the transferability of credits into bachelor- and master-level degree programs in the state. In December 2013, all 13 colleges in the Texas A&M University System were added as participating CCH institutions, which means that they all agree to accept credits recommended through the CCH system, where appropriate.

Phase II also supported the continued development and enhancement of the College Credit for Heroes website.

The initiative has achieved impressive results to date:

- As of March 2015, more than **44,000** veterans had created accounts through the portal, and more than 7,300 veterans had completed requests for transcripts. Evaluations requested through the site had resulted in an average of 25 credit hours awarded per veteran.
- As of April 2015, 12 Texas colleges and universities have completed 13 accelerated curricula development projects resulting in 76 individual accelerated curricula in fields such as emergency medical services, respiratory therapy, nursing, cyber security, information technology, firefighting, advanced manufacturing, wind engineering and oil field technology. On average, qualified veterans and service members can earn over half of the credits needed for completing these programs through their military training and experience.

Phase III of the CCH initiative began in February 2015. The project selected five institutions to create new accelerated degree models and work with partner institutions to replicate existing CCH programs.

## NEXT STEPS

States and systems wanting to advance PLA have many options. Appendices to this report provide several additional resources for such initiatives: a roadmap or guide to getting started, suggestions for what to include in a state- or systemwide policy, and a state-by-state reference list of PLA policies with hyperlinks leading to the original legislation and/or policy statement.

It is clear from the range of PLA policies described in this report that there is no “one size fits all” approach to PLA policies. Each state or system will have different reasons for advancing PLA, and each will have different contexts in which PLA would be implemented. State leaders can benefit from learning what other states have done and develop an approach that is customized to the specific state or system circumstances.

## APPENDIX A: SAMPLE ROADMAP TO GUIDE STATEWIDE OR SYSTEMWIDE PLA POLICY

The experience of several states such as Tennessee, Ohio and Washington suggests a possible roadmap to systemwide PLA policy and practice.

**Step 1: Conduct an inventory of PLA policies and practices at each institution in the system.** Use this inventory to identify common practices and areas where better harmonization of policies could benefit students.

**Step 2: Establish a systemwide PLA task force.** This task force would have representation from each institution and would be responsible for coordinating all statewide PLA communication and policy discussions. The task force might consider establishing subcommittees to focus on specific issues such as CLEP cut scores, guidelines for conducting portfolio assessment or policies regarding transfer of PLA credits. The task force and its subcommittees would make decisions about which PLA policies should be systemwide and which could be defined by individual institutions.

**Step 3: Educate faculty, advisors and administrators about PLA.** Not everyone in the system will be supportive of PLA from Day One, so it will be important to provide information and training on what PLA is, why it is important for students and how it can be an important way to carry out an institution's educational mission. While PLA experts may be useful for getting the educational effort started, the goal should be for internal champions to eventually take on the responsibility for peer-to-peer PLA advocacy and education.

**Step 4: Develop tools and materials for systemwide communication about PLA.** For institutions, this may take the form of a formal PLA handbook on recommended best practices or a guidebook on statewide PLA standards. For students, the system may choose to develop a common approach to informing students about their PLA options.

**Step 5: Establish expectations and a process for tracking and reporting PLA data.** Develop common practices in the tracking of PLA data, particularly the tracking of PLA credit earning by method. This will help to support common reporting practices on PLA to allow for cross-institutional comparisons of PLA use among students. States and systems can also use reporting to examine the variation of PLA use by student demographic categories and by areas of study. Over time, a standard approach to PLA data collection can allow the system to examine the relationship between PLA credit earning and student academic outcomes such as persistence and degree completion.

## APPENDIX B: SAMPLE PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT POLICY

A comprehensive approach to state or system PLA policy might provide framing information along with guidance on the full range of policy topics discussed in the Resource Guide. Specific policy language might include:

- **Purpose.** A policy document might provide context and framing by discussing the reasons why the state or system values PLA. Context may cover economic and social drivers. A purpose statement might also define PLA's value proposition for the student, for institutions, for the system and for the state.
- **Goals.** The policy could provide common goals for a PLA initiative. These goals might include specific targets for adult degree completion, reducing the time to degree and reducing the cost of a degree. Additional goals may concern issues around social justice or diversity/equality.
- **Guiding principles.** States and systems may want to articulate the importance of specific principles such as academic rigor in evaluation and assessment, cost-efficiency, student support or institutional autonomy.
- **Policies and procedures.** A state- or systemwide policy could provide guidance or recommendations on:
  - Target student populations and enrollment requirements for PLA applicants;
  - Limits on the number of PLA credits that can count toward a degree (this may be defined by regional or other accrediting bodies);
  - How PLA credits can be applied within a student's degree plan (e.g., electives, general education, major requirements);
  - Transfer of PLA credits between institutions;
  - How specific PLA methods are administered (especially those developed by the individual institutions);
  - Fees charged for PLA courses, assessments, course evaluations and transcript review;
  - How PLA credits are shown on the transcript;
  - How information about PLA policies and procedures is shared with various constituencies, particularly students; and
  - How often the policies and procedures are to be reviewed and re-evaluated.
- **Data and tracking.** States and systems might specify what kind of PLA data to track and what kind of standard analysis and reporting will be required.
- **Compliance.** A policy document might articulate the extent to which PLA policies are to be standardized across all institutions.

*Examples of specific state policies can be found in Appendix C.*



**TABLE 1. SUMMARY TABLE OF PLA POLICY CATEGORIES BY STATE.  
(SHADED STATES HAVE NO PLA POLICIES TO DATE.)**

States	Establishment of PLA policy	Establishment of PLA committee or task force	Transparent institutional policies	Assessment process/ methods	Fees	Transfer and articulation	Transcription of PLA credit	Veterans	Raising awareness among students	Building capacity	Work force systems
Alabama	X		X	X	X						
Alaska	X							X			
Arizona				X							
Arkansas	X										
California								X			
Colorado	X		X		X		X	X			
Connecticut								X			
Delaware											
Florida			X	X				X			
Georgia	X										
Hawaii	X					X		X			
Idaho	X							X			
Illinois								X			
Indiana								X			X
Iowa											
Kansas	X							X			
Kentucky				X				X			
Louisiana								X			
Maine	X					X		X			
Maryland	X			X				X			
Massachusetts								X			
Michigan											
Minnesota	X		X	X	X		X	X			
Mississippi								X			
Missouri		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Montana								X			
Nebraska								X			
Nevada	X							X			
New Hampshire								X			
New Jersey											
New Mexico											
New York											
North Carolina											
North Dakota	X			X				X			
Ohio	X			X				X			
Oklahoma	X				X	X		X			
Oregon	X		X			X		X	X	X	
Pennsylvania											
Rhode Island								X			
South Carolina				X				X			
South Dakota											
Tennessee	X					X		X			
Texas								X			
Utah				X				X			
Vermont											
Virginia				X				X			
Washington	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	
West Virginia				X							
Wisconsin	X			X		X		X			
Wyoming											
<b>Total states with this policy category</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>

## APPENDIX C: STATE-BY-STATE REFERENCE LIST OF PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT POLICY

Below are existing PLA policies and legislation collected through an informal scan by CAEL and HCM Strategists. The scan identified legislation passed between 2008 and 2014 as well as policies set by executive agencies or offices. Additional legislation and policies were added where there was professional knowledge. This list is not meant to be comprehensive. A summary table provides a snapshot of the various policy approaches for each state (see Table 1, previous page).

*Legislation passed or policy established after February 2015 may not be included in this list.*

### ALABAMA

#### Policy [Executive branch agency]

##### ***Alabama Community College System Policy 706.01: Credit Awarded Through Non-Traditional Means: General***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy, Transparent institutional policies, Assessment process/methods, Fees

**Summary:** Outlines various ways that credit from outside of an institution can be awarded including AP, CLEP, ACT/PEP, DAN TES, Challenge Exams, ACE PONSI/CREDIT, ACE/MILITARY, portfolio review by a prior learning assessment specialist at a college, or through other statewide programs identified by the Department. (All System institutions will accept for credit a score of 3 or higher on Advanced Placement subject examinations.) (Guidelines for implementation of this policy should be established by the Chancellor.)

**Status:** Adopted 2008

**Links:** <https://www.accs.cc/default/assets/File/Board/Policy/PDFs/706.01.pdf>

### ALASKA

#### Policy [Executive branch agency]

##### ***Board of Regents Policy P10.04.070: Non-Traditional Learning***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy

**Summary:** Each Major Administrative Unit (MAU), in recognition of the validity of credit for experiential learning, credit for prior learning, and credit by examination, may provide students the opportunity to apply for such credit in subjects which fall within the institution's regular curriculum.

**Status:** Adopted 1996

**Link:** <http://www.alaska.edu/bor/policy-regulations/>

## Legislation

### ***Alaska Stat. § 08.01.064 - Military Education, Training, and Service Credit; Temporary License***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Notwithstanding another provision of law, the department or applicable board shall accept military education, training, and service for some or all of the qualifications otherwise required of an applicant for a license or certificate issued under this chapter.

**Status:** Enacted 2014

**Link:** <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/cbpl/ProfessionalLicensing/MilitaryLicensing.aspx>

## ARIZONA

### Legislation

### ***Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. §32-1286 - Recognized Dental Hygiene Schools; Credit for Prior Learning***

**Focus:** Assessment process/methods

**Summary:** Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, a recognized dental hygiene school may grant advanced standing or credit for prior learning to a student who has prior experience or course work that the school determines is equivalent to didactic and clinical education in its accredited program.

**Status:** Enacted 2011

**Link:** <http://www.azleg.state.az.us/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/ars/32/01286.htm&Title=32&DocType=ARS>

## ARKANSAS

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

***Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board Policies for Establishing New Certificate and Degree Programs and Organizational Units – Section 8: Experiential Learning Credits***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy

**Summary:** Institutions may award a maximum of 30 semester credit hours in a certificate or degree program for documented learning or work experiences. At a minimum, credits awarded for prior learning must be assessed and documented by faculty with appropriate subject-area knowledge to determine if the student’s prior learning experiences relate to the content of a particular course listed in the college catalog and if college credit should be awarded for a specific course. Institutions must have written policies, procedures, and criteria for assessing prior learning that are aligned with recognized assessment service organizations such as the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).

**Status:** Revised 2005

**Link:** [https://static.ark.org/eeuploads/adhe/AHECB\\_Policy\\_5.11-Approval\\_of\\_New\\_Degree\\_Programs\\_and\\_Units.doc](https://static.ark.org/eeuploads/adhe/AHECB_Policy_5.11-Approval_of_New_Degree_Programs_and_Units.doc)

## CALIFORNIA

### Legislation

***Assembly Bill 2462 SECTION 1. Section 66025.7***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** By July 1, 2015, the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, using common course descriptors and pertinent recommendations of the American Council on Education, shall determine for which courses credit should be awarded for prior military experience.

**Status:** Enacted 2015

**Link:** [http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201120120AB2462](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201120120AB2462)

## COLORADO

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

#### ***BP 9-42: State Board policy relating to credit for prior learning at Colorado Community Colleges***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy, Transparent institutional policies, Fees, Transcription of PLA Credit

**Summary:** A policy by the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education that states a student's experience outside the college classroom shall be evaluated for college credit at the student's request. This policy applies to the eleven state system community colleges.

The State Board recognizes the value of prior learning in the achievement of academic goals. It is the policy of the Board that a student's college level learning shall be evaluated for college credit at the student's request. Students have the right to clear and concise information concerning how Prior Learning Credit (PLA Credit) might help them reach their academic goals. Prior learning shall be assessed through: portfolio, challenge exam, standardized testing, and the use of published credit recommendations. PLA credit granted shall be accepted as transfer credit by all of the state system community colleges.

The evaluation fee to be charged will be determined by each college, but shall not exceed 50% of the standard tuition rate.

**Status:** Revised 2015

**Link:** <https://www.cccs.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/BP9-42.pdf>

## Legislation

### ***Colo. Rev. Stat. § 23-1-125 - Commission Directive - Student Bill of Rights - Degree Requirements - Implementation of Core Courses - Competency Test - Prior Learning***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy

**Summary:** Beginning in the 2013-14 academic year, each public institution of higher education shall adopt and make public a policy or program to determine academic credit for prior learning.

**Status:** Enacted 2014

**Link:** [http://highered.colorado.gov/CCHE/Meetings/2014/apr/apr14\\_iiiI.pdf](http://highered.colorado.gov/CCHE/Meetings/2014/apr/apr14_iiiI.pdf)

### ***HB 1072 – Concerning credit for prior learning in higher education***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy, Veterans

**Summary:** This legislation requires state colleges and universities to adopt policies for awarding academic credit to students for prior learning, such as professional experience or military training. The policies must be in place by the 2013-2014 academic year.

**Status:** Enacted March 2012

**Link:** [http://www.statebillinfo.com/bills/bills/12/1072\\_enr.pdf](http://www.statebillinfo.com/bills/bills/12/1072_enr.pdf)

## CONNECTICUT

### Legislation

#### ***HB 5207 – College Credit for Military Training***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** This bill allows Connecticut public or private colleges and universities to award academic credit to veterans for military occupational specialty training and experience. If they award credit, institutions must award it in substitution for or fulfillment of degree requirements. The bill also requires any institution that chooses to award such credit to (1) use the course equivalency recommendations adopted by the American Council on Education (ACE) and (2) consider the veteran's military and life experience using Charter Oak State College's prior learning portfolio assessment tool.

**Status:** Enacted July 2014

**Link:** <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2014/fc/pdf/2014HB-05207-R000242-FC.PDF>

## FLORIDA

### Legislation

**Title XLVIII. K-20 Education Code. Chapter 1007. Articulation and Access. 1007.27 Articulated acceleration mechanisms.**

**Focus:** Assessment process/methods, Transparent institutional policies

**Summary:** The Department of Education shall annually identify and publish the minimum scores, maximum credit, and course or courses for which credit is to be awarded for each College Level Examination Program (CLEP) subject examination, College Board Advanced Placement Program examination, Advanced International Certificate of Education examination, and International Baccalaureate examination.

**Status:** Revised 2014

**Link:** [http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?mode=View%20Statutes&SubMenu=1&App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&Search\\_String=1007.27&URL=1000-1099/1007/Sections/1007.27.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?mode=View%20Statutes&SubMenu=1&App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=1007.27&URL=1000-1099/1007/Sections/1007.27.html)

**HB 347: College Credit for military training and education courses**

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** This legislation requires the Board of Governors of the State University System and the State Board of Education to adopt regulations and rules that enable veterans to earn college credit for college-level training and education acquired in the military.

**Status:** Enacted 2012

**Links:** <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2012/0347/BillText/er/PDF>  
<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=47488>

## GEORGIA

### Legislation

#### ***Senate Resolution 13***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy

**Summary:** Encouraging the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia to create policies or programs to award academic credit to students for college-level learning acquired prior to their admission into the university system.

**Status:** Introduced 2015

**Link:** <http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20152016/145298.pdf>

#### ***SB 18***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy

**Summary:** Technical College System of Georgia shall establish policies for granting academic credit to students for college-level learning acquired prior to enrollment from military service, work experience, service in the community, or independent study.

**Status:** Enacted February 2015

**Link:** <http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20152016/145320.pdf>



# HAWAI`I

## Policy [Executive branch agency]

### *University of Hawai`i Community College policy, UHCCP 5.302*

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy, Transfer and articulation of PLA credit

**Summary:** Operationalization of HB 2639 and award college credits to students who are enrolled in a degree or certificate program at the university or community college and have successfully completed, at a high school, business school, trade school, adult education school, or military training program, courses that are equivalent to courses offered for credit in the University of Hawai`i (UH) System.

**Status:** Adopted November 2013

**Links:** [http://uhcc.hawaii.edu/OVPCC/policies/docs/UHCCP\\_5.302-Prior\\_Learning\\_Assessment\\_Program.pdf](http://uhcc.hawaii.edu/OVPCC/policies/docs/UHCCP_5.302-Prior_Learning_Assessment_Program.pdf)

## Legislation

### *HB 2639 – Relating to Higher Education*

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Amends the University of Hawai`i College-Credit Equivalency Program to include professional service in the U.S. armed forces. Requires the program to develop a learning assessment to determine eligibility.

**Status:** Enacted 2012

**Links:** [http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2012/bills/HB2639\\_HD2\\_.pdf](http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2012/bills/HB2639_HD2_.pdf)

[http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol05\\_Ch0261-0319/HRS0304A/HRS\\_0304A-0802.htm](http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol05_Ch0261-0319/HRS0304A/HRS_0304A-0802.htm)

***Haw. Rev. Stat. § 304A-802 : Hawai`i Statutes - Section 304A-802: College-credit equivalency program established; purpose; policies and procedures; eligibility.***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy

**Summary:** University and the community colleges should establish a college-credit equivalency program. The purpose of this program is to award college credits to students who are enrolled in a degree or certificate program at the university or at a community college and who have successfully completed, at a high school, business school, trade school, adult education school, or military training program, courses that are equivalent to courses offered for credit in the University of Hawai`i system. The program shall also award credits for professional experience gained through service in the United States armed forces. Credits may also be awarded for work or other experiences at the discretion of the university. The university shall be responsible for the establishment of policies and procedures to administer the program.

**Status:** Enacted 2009

**Link:** [http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol05\\_Ch0261-0319/HRS0304A/HRS\\_0304A-0802.htm](http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol05_Ch0261-0319/HRS0304A/HRS_0304A-0802.htm)

## IDAHO

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

***Idaho State Board of Education Governing Policies and Procedures Section III-L - Continuing Education and Credit for Prior Learning***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy, Veterans

**Summary:** All credit for prior learning must be guided by approved institutional policies and procedures. These policies and procedures must include the awarding of credit for education, training or service completed by an individual as a member of the armed forces or reserves as outlined in Section 33-3727 Idaho Code. Institutions shall make no assurances regarding the number of credits to be awarded prior to the completion of the institution's review process.

**Status:** Adopted 2013

**Link:** [http://www.boardofed.idaho.gov/policies/documents/policies/iii/iiril\\_continuing\\_education-off-campus\\_instruction\\_1213.pdf](http://www.boardofed.idaho.gov/policies/documents/policies/iii/iiril_continuing_education-off-campus_instruction_1213.pdf)

## Legislation

### ***Title 33, Chapter 37 – Miscellaneous Provisions Relating To State Institutions Of Learning***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Adds to existing law relating to military education training and service to provide that the State Board of Education, the Board of Regents of the University of Idaho, the Board of Trustees of certain community colleges and the State Board for Professional-Technical Education shall develop policies relating to the award of academic credit for certain military education, training, or service.

**Status:** Enacted 2012

**Link:** <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/idstat/Title33/T33CH37SECT33-3727.htm>

## ILLINOIS

## Legislation

### ***SB 1457 – IBHE Military Prior Learning***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Amends the Board of Higher Education Act. Creates the Military Prior Learning Assessment Task Force within the Board of Higher Education to study and make recommendations on how to best effectuate the recognition of military learning for academic credit, industry-recognized credentials, and college degrees through the use of the Prior Learning Assessment. Sets forth the membership of the task force and what the task force's study must include. Requires the task force to report its findings and recommendations on or before December 1, 2016.

**Status:** Enacted August 2015.

**Link:** <https://legiscan.com/IL/bill/SB1457/2015>

***Executive Order 2. Applying Relevant Military Education and Training Obtained by Illinois Service Members to Professional Licensing Standards***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** To establish a statewide mechanism and process for determining how training and education acquired by service members during service in the military may be applied towards requirements for state licensure in certain civilian fields. All state licensing agencies are directed to assist in identifying gaps between, on the one hand, military education and training that is potentially relevant to a civilian field for which licensure is required, and, on the other hand, state licensure requirements in that field.

**Status:** Enacted 2013

**Link:** [http://www.illinois.gov/Government/ExecOrders/Pages/2013\\_2.aspx](http://www.illinois.gov/Government/ExecOrders/Pages/2013_2.aspx)

## INDIANA

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

***Indiana Commission for Higher Education: Resolution recognizing the value of student service members and veterans***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** The Commission calls upon Indiana's colleges and universities to a. attract, retain, and graduate more student veterans, b. have higher visibility for student veteran contacts, c. ensure support services, and d. give specific credit for military training and experience.

**Status:** Adopted December 2014

**Link:** Page 17 - [http://www.in.gov/che/files/December\\_2014\\_Commission\\_Agenda.pdf](http://www.in.gov/che/files/December_2014_Commission_Agenda.pdf)

***Policy 2011-14: Department of Workforce Development Policy on Using Workforce Training Funds for Prior Learning Assessment***

**Focus:** Workforce system

**Summary:** Policy to provide guidance on how Workforce Investment Funds can be utilized to provide prior learning assessments to eligible participants enrolled in occupational training.

**Status:** Adopted 2012

**Link:** [http://www.in.gov/dwd/files/DWD\\_Policy\\_2011\\_14.pdf](http://www.in.gov/dwd/files/DWD_Policy_2011_14.pdf)

***Indiana State Workforce Innovation Council (SWIC) Resolution***

**Focus:** Workforce system

**Summary:** Formal resolution to encourage the use of PLA for WIA participants. Policy document that provided guidance to local and regional Workforce Investment Boards on implementation and how WIA training funds can be utilized for PLA activities.

**Status:** Adopted 2011

**Link:** <http://www.in.gov/dwd/files/swic/Resolution--PLA--121511.doc>

## Legislation

***Senate Bill 331 – An act to amend the Indiana Code concerning higher education***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Requires a state educational institution to adopt a policy to award educational credit to a veteran or an individual serving in the armed forces of the United States or the Indiana National Guard who completes certain college equivalency examinations that meet the state educational institution's role, scope, and mission. Provides that the state educational institution's policy must provide that educational credit awarded to an individual applies to the individual's degree requirements if the credit is comparable and applicable to credit necessary for the individual to meet the individual's degree requirements.

**Status:** Enacted 2014

**Links:** <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2014/bills/senate/331/#>

<http://iga.in.gov/static-documents/9/1/f/5/91f559d2/SB0331.06.ENRS.pdf>

### ***HB 1116 – Military Education and Training***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Requires a state educational institution to adopt a policy to award educational credit to an individual who successfully completes courses that are part of the individual's military service; meet the standards of the ACE for awarding academic credit... requires that the commission for higher education adopt rules that establish uniform guidelines for state educational institutions to follow when implementing the requirements.

**Status:** Enacted 2012

**Link:** <http://www.in.gov/apps/lisa/session/billwatch/billinfo?year=2012&session=1&request=getBill&doctype=HB&docno=1116>

## **KANSAS**

### **Policy [Executive branch agency]**

#### ***Kansas Board of Regents: Credit for Prior Learning: Best practices for Kansas public institutions***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy

**Summary:** The Steering Committee developed a guidebook to ensure consistent practices and quality standards are used across institutions, and trainings regarding the guidebook's use and implementation are ongoing.

**Status:** Adopted 2014

**Link:** <http://www.kansasregents.org/resources/PDF/3036-KansasCPLGuideMay2.pdf>

## Legislation

### ***HB 2078 – Licensing Bodies and Licensure for Military Service Members***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Introduced to enact a new law and amend existing requirements for licensing bodies updating the licensing of practical nurses and emergency medical technicians for military service members.

**Status:** Enacted 2013

**Link:** [http://kslegislature.org/li/b2013\\_14/measures/documents/ccrb\\_hb2078\\_01\\_0001.pdf](http://kslegislature.org/li/b2013_14/measures/documents/ccrb_hb2078_01_0001.pdf)

### ***SB 334 – Exempting military drivers from CDL testing requirements***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Introduced to allow the skills-test portion of the Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) exam to be waived if the applicant provides evidence of military commercial vehicle driving experience.

**Status:** Enacted 2012

**Link:** [http://www.kslegislature.org/li\\_2012/b2011\\_12/measures/sb334/](http://www.kslegislature.org/li_2012/b2011_12/measures/sb334/)

## KENTUCKY

## Legislation

### ***Kentucky HB 301 (2011): Relating to professional licensure and certification.***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** In recognition of their sacrifice, the General Assembly finds that active duty members of the military or their spouses, who are engaged in professions which require professional licensure or certification, shall be allowed considerations in their licensure or certification requirements in order that they may continue to maintain their professional licensure or certification.

**Status:** Enacted 2011

**Link:** <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/record/11rs/HB301.htm>

## Policy [Executive branch agency]

### ***Council Policy 13 KAR 2:025 – College preparatory education***

**Focus:** Assessment process/methods

**Summary:** Kentucky state law requires the Council to disseminate an administrative regulation requiring public postsecondary educational institutions to grant academic college credit toward graduation for students taking AP courses and scoring three (3) or higher on the AP exam.

**Status:** Enacted 2003

**Link:** <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/kar/013/002/025.htm>

## LOUISIANA

### Legislation

#### ***HB 500 – Student Military PLA***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** An act to require that each college/university board should adopt by 1/1/2012, a policy requiring each institution to award educational credits to a student at the institution who is also a veteran, for courses that are part of the student's military training or service and that meet certain academic standards; to limit tuition and mandatory attendance fee amounts applicable to a student who is not a resident of the state and who is a veteran.

**Status:** Enacted 2011

**Link:** <http://legiscan.com/LA/text/HB500/id/263418>



## MAINE

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

#### ***UMS Prior Learning Assessment Task Force: Revised Recommendations and Next Steps For Prior Learning Assessment In The University Of Maine System***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy, Transfer and articulation of PLA credit, Veterans

**Summary:** Recommends a. general transfer of PLA credit, b. credential review for credit for external training, c. award credit for military training and occupations, d. allow transfer of portfolio credit, and e. acceptance of standardized test credit.

**Status:** Revised June 2013

**Link:** <http://umaine.edu/facultysenate/files/2014/12/PLA-final-copy-june-2013a-copy.pdf>

## MARYLAND

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

#### ***MD Higher Education Commission Regulation – Veterans Full Employment Act***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** In accordance with §15-113 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the governing board of each public institution of higher education in the State shall develop and implement a policy in accordance with these guidelines to go into effect during the 2014-2015 academic year. The policy shall be designed to maximize the awarding of academic credit to service member populations.

**Status:** Adopted 2014

**Link:** <http://www.mhec.maryland.gov/higherEd/about/Meetings/CommissionMeetings/5-28-14/VFEAAISMemo.pdf>

### ***MD Higher Education Commission Regulation - Credit for Prior Learning***

**Focus:** Assessment process/methods

**Summary:** An institution may grant credit for prior learning or experience based upon successful completion of an acceptable standardized examination such as the College Level Examination Program.

**Status:** Adopted October 2013

**Link:** [http://www.mhec.state.md.us/higherEd/COMAR/COMAR\\_CH\\_02\\_Web.pdf](http://www.mhec.state.md.us/higherEd/COMAR/COMAR_CH_02_Web.pdf) (Page 32)

## **Legislation**

### ***HB 1288: Education Article Annotated Code of Maryland §15-113***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** The Commission shall develop and adopt guidelines on awarding academic credit for a student's military training, coursework, and education. In accordance with the guidelines developed by the Commission the governing body of each public institution of higher education in the State shall develop and implement policies governing the awarding of academic credit for a student's military training, coursework, and education.

**Status:** Enacted 2013

**Link:** <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2013RS/bills/hb/hb1288f.pdf>

### ***Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13B.02.02.16 H Graduation Requirements.***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy

**Summary:** An institution may award credit hours for competency-based education, such as credit for prior learning or demonstration of skills and knowledge in specific areas, based on a recognized PLA method. Institutions that choose to do so must follow nationally accepted standards and create a policy articulating the standards of assessment.

**Status:** Enacted 2014

**Link:** <http://www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/getfile.aspx?file=13b.02.02.16.htm>

## MASSACHUSETTS

### Legislation

***Senate Bill 2254: VALOR Act Academic Credit Evaluation Policy.***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** The Board of Higher Education encourages and expects public higher education institutions to award academic credit for students' previous military occupation, military training, coursework and experiences towards degrees and certificates. The determination of academic credit shall be determined by the receiving institution. The policy shall to the greatest extent possible provide for consistent application by all Massachusetts public higher education institutions.

**Status:** Enacted 2013

**Link:** [http://www.mass.edu/library/documents/AAC13-47ValorAct\\_BoardMotionandattachment.pdf](http://www.mass.edu/library/documents/AAC13-47ValorAct_BoardMotionandattachment.pdf)

## MINNESOTA

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

***Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board Policies. Chapter 3 – Educational Policies: 3.35 Credit for Prior Learning and 3.29.1 College and University Transcripts***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy, Transparent institutional policies, Assessment process/methods, Fees, Transcription of PLA credit

**Summary:** Require system colleges and universities to provide students with opportunities to demonstrate college and university-level learning gained in non-credit or experiential settings and to establish consistent practices among all system colleges and universities for evaluating and granting undergraduate credit for such learning.

**Status:** Adopted September 2008

**Link:** <http://www.mnscu.edu/board/policy/>

## Legislation

### ***Minnesota Statute 197.775 Higher Education Fairness***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Minnesota State Colleges and Universities must recognize courses and award educational credits for courses that were part of a veteran's military training or service if the courses meet the standards of the American Council on Education or equivalent standards for awarding academic credits. In recognizing courses and awarding educational credits, consideration must be given to academic skills developed in all aspects of the training or service course curriculum, and may not be limited solely to the physical fitness or activity components of the course. Private institutions are encouraged to do so.

**Status:** Enacted 2014

**Link:** <https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/statutes/?id=197.775>

## MISSOURI

## Legislation

### ***SB 106: Modifies various provisions relating to veterans and members of the military including the awarding of academic credit***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Requires higher education institutions to accept credits for courses that military personnel passed as part of their military training if the courses meet certain standards for academic credit.

**Status:** Enacted July 2013

**Link:** [http://www.senate.mo.gov/13info/BTS\\_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=R&BillID=17100415](http://www.senate.mo.gov/13info/BTS_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=R&BillID=17100415)

## MONTANA

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

#### ***Montana University System Board of Regents Policy 301.19—Prior Learning Assessment***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy, Establishment of PLA Committee or Task Force, Transparent institutional policies, Assessment process/methods, Fees, Transfer and articulation, Transcription of PLA credit, Building capacity

**Summary:** This policy establishes system-wide PLA guidelines, including educational principles, assessment standards, procedures, reporting, and definitions.

**Status:** Approved September 2015

**Link:** <http://mus.edu/borpol/bor300/301-19.pdf>

#### ***Montana University System Board of Regents Policy 301.5 (E)***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** MUS and community colleges should develop policies to ensure appropriate granting of credit for military training and courses based on American Council of Education recommendations.

**Status:** Approved May 2013

**Link:** <http://mus.edu/borpol/bor300/301-5.pdf>

## NEBRASKA

### Legislation

#### ***Legislative Bill 264***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** This law would require the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, to accept education, training, or service completed by the applicant as a member of the armed forces...toward the minimum standards for the credential.

**Status:** Enacted May 2015

**Link:** <http://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/104/PDF/Intro/LB264.pdf>

## NEVADA

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

**Board of Regents State Policy: Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 22 – Credit by Examination**

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy, Veterans

**Summary:** Institutions within the Nevada state system of higher education permit granting credit for prior learning determined by nationally recognized examinations and ACE military credit.

**Status:** Enacted March 2013

**Links:** [http://system.nevada.edu/tasks/sites/Nshe/assets/File/BoardOfRegents/Handbook/T4CH14NSHEPlanningProgramReviewArticulationandEnrollment\(1\).pdf](http://system.nevada.edu/tasks/sites/Nshe/assets/File/BoardOfRegents/Handbook/T4CH14NSHEPlanningProgramReviewArticulationandEnrollment(1).pdf)

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

### Legislation

**House Bill 519**

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Requires that the Division of Higher Education in the Department of Education develop and adopt a policy on academic credit for a student's military occupation, military training, coursework, and experience, and to consult with institutions of higher education in implementing the policy.

**Status:** Enacted June 2013

**Link:** <http://www.sheeo.org/sites/default/files/New%20Hampshire%20HB%20519.pdf>

## NORTH DAKOTA

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

#### ***North Dakota University System Procedures 441 - Degree Credit, Non-Degree Credit and Non-Credit Instructional Activity***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy, Veterans

**Summary:** This policy defines degree credit and additional forms of degree credit related to prior learning assessments including: standardized examinations, challenge examinations, evaluated non-college coursework (such as previous military training for veterans).

**Status:** Enacted February 2013

**Links:** <http://www.ndus.edu/makers/procedures/ndus/default.asp?PID=454&SID=56>

<http://www.ndus.edu/makers/procedures/ndus/default.asp?PID=323&SID=56>

#### ***State Board of Higher Education Policy 403.6: Course Challenges and Prior Learning Credit***

**Focus:** Assessment process/methods

**Summary:** Institutions may allow students to earn course credits without enrolling in the course offering by evaluating their competency with locally developed tests or other proficiency assessments.

**Status:** Adopted February 2002

**Link:** <http://www.ndus.edu/makers/procedures/sbhe/default.asp?PID=97&SID=5>

## OHIO

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

#### ***Ohio Board of Regents PLA with a Purpose Initiative***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy

**Summary:** Chancellor charged more than 140 faculty and staff from campuses throughout Ohio with developing a set of strategic recommendations for advancing and promoting the awarding of credit to students for prior learning based on clear statewide standards.

**Status:** Adopted 2013

**Link:** <https://www.ohiohighered.org/PLA>

#### ***Ohio Board of Regents Statewide Policy: Directive 2011-004***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** College credit will be granted to students with military training, experience, or coursework that is recognized by ACE.

**Status:** Enacted March 2011

**Link:** <https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/default/files/dir-2011-004.pdf>

#### ***System Policy: Awarding of College Credit for College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)***

**Focus:** Assessment process/methods

**Summary:** Awards college credit for nationally recognized testing programs; recognizes prior learning for military veterans, nontraditional students, and many others.

CLEP exams are free for active military service members. Veterans may seek reimbursement. Exam fee is \$77.



**Status:** Enacted 2009

**Link:** <http://www.ohiohighered.org/transfer/military>

### ***System Policy: Awarding Credit for Advanced Placement (AP)***

**Focus:** Assessment process/methods

**Summary:** Students in Ohio who take a College Board Advanced Placement examination and score at least a '3' are guaranteed college credit, usually towards their general education curriculum, upon entering an Ohio Public Institution of Higher Education.

**Status:** Enacted 2009

**Link:** <https://www.ohiohighered.org/transfer/advancedplacement>

## **Legislation**

### ***HB 59 One-Year Option***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy

**Summary:** Requires the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents to establish a One-Year Option credit articulation system by no later than June 30, 2014. This Option will allow graduates of Ohio Technical Centers who complete a 900-hour program of study and obtain an industry-recognized credential approved by the Chancellor to receive 30 college technical credit hours toward a technical degree upon enrollment in an institution of higher education.

**Status:** Enacted 2013

**Link:** <https://www.ohiohighered.org/one-year-option>

### ***Executive Order 2013-05K***

**Focus:** Veterans



**Summary:** Directing State Departments, Boards and Commissions to Streamline the State Licensing Process to Take into Account Relevant Military Education and to Direct the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents, in Collaboration with Presidents of the University System of Ohio, to Simplify the Process for Awarding College Credit for Military Education for Veterans and Service Members.

**Status:** Enacted July 2013

**Link:** <http://www.governor.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Executive%20Order%202013-05K.pdf>

### ***House Bill 488***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Requires the chancellor of the Ohio board of regents to: 1) develop standards and procedures for state higher education institutions to grant college credit for military training, experience, and coursework; 2) create a military articulation and transfer assurance guide for college credit that is earned through military training, experience, and coursework; 3) create a web site that contains information related to the awarding of college credit for military training, experience, and coursework; 4) develop a statewide training program that prepares faculty and staff of state institutions of higher education to evaluate various military training, experience, and coursework and to award appropriate equivalent credit.

**Status:** Enacted 2011

**Link:** [https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/uploads/ATC\\_2014\\_Meeting/Admissions%20and%20Registrar%20Meeting%20-%20Military%20Initiative%20Update%20April%202014.pdf](https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/uploads/ATC_2014_Meeting/Admissions%20and%20Registrar%20Meeting%20-%20Military%20Initiative%20Update%20April%202014.pdf)

## **OKLAHOMA**

### **Policy [Executive branch agency]**

***Policy 3.15: State Regents for Higher Education Policy on Credit for Extracurricular Learning***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy, Veterans, Fees, Transfer and articulation of PLA credit

**Summary:** This policy requires State System institutions to develop institutional policies for evaluating extracurricular learning and for awarding credit consistent with this policy. (Extracurricular learning applies to learning acquired from work and life experiences, independent reading and study, and participation in formal courses sponsored by associations, business, government, industry, the military, and unions.)

**Status:** Enacted 1972. Revised 2006

**Link:** (Page 100) <http://www.okhighered.org/state-system/policy-procedures/2011/AA%20Procedures%20Handbook%20December%202011.pdf>

## OREGON

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

#### ***The Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission: Oregon Credit for Prior Learning Standards***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy

**Summary:** The HECC directed Oregon postsecondary institutions to adopt a set of Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) standards and to use these standards to implement assessment processes for awarding CPL. These standards were developed to recognize and acknowledge that credit awarded for prior learning is granted only for evidence of learning and not solely on the basis of experience. Foundational to these standards is faculty involvement and use of their expertise to assess credit awarded to students. The decision to offer or not to offer CPL to students is solely determined by the institution.

**Status:** Adopted May 8, 2014

**Link:** [http://www.oregon.gov/HigherEd/Documents/HECC/Reports-and-Presentations/CPL\\_Standards\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/HigherEd/Documents/HECC/Reports-and-Presentations/CPL_Standards_FINAL.pdf)

### Legislation

#### ***Or. Rev. Stat. § 351.751 Academic Credit for Prior Learning***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy, Transparent institutional policies, Transfer and articulation of PLA credit, Building capacity

**Summary:** This policy directs the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to carry out goals relating to academic credit for prior learning by students. Goals include increasing the number of students who receive academic credit for prior learning, increasing the number and type of academic credits accepted for prior learning, developing transparent policies and practices in awarding academic credit for prior learning, improving prior learning assessment practices across all institutions of higher education, and more.

**Status:** Revised 2013

**Link:** [https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills\\_laws/lawsstatutes/2013ors351.html](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/lawsstatutes/2013ors351.html)

***Or. Rev. Stat. § 341.533 Credit for education and training received in Armed Forces***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** This policy requires the board of education at each community college district to develop, in consultation with the Department of Veterans Affairs, standards and give credit for education and training obtained by veterans that meets the standards adopted by the board. They must also develop methods to inform veterans of these credit options.

**Status:** Revised 2013

**Link:** [https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills\\_laws/lawsstatutes/2013ors341.html](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/lawsstatutes/2013ors341.html)

***HB 4059***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy, Transparent institutional policies, Raising awareness and encouraging student PLA participation

**Summary:** This legislation directs the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to carry out goals relating to academic credit for prior learning by students. Goals include increasing the number of students who receive academic credit for prior learning, increasing the number and type of academic credits accepted for prior learning, developing transparent policies and practices in awarding academic credit for prior learning, improving prior learning assessment practices across all institutions of higher education, and more.

**Status:** Enacted July 2012

**Link:** <http://www.oregon.gov/gov/docs/OEIB/HECC4.pdf>

### **SB 275**

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** This bill requires the board of education at each community college district to develop standards and give credit for education and training obtained by veterans that meets the standards adopted by the board.

**Status:** Enacted January 2012

**Link:** [https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/citizen\\_engagement/Reports/2012\\_DCCWD\\_Legislative%20Report%20for%20SB275%20Community%20College%20Credit%20for%20Education%20and%20Training%20Obtained%20in%20the%20Armed%20Forces.pdf](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/citizen_engagement/Reports/2012_DCCWD_Legislative%20Report%20for%20SB275%20Community%20College%20Credit%20for%20Education%20and%20Training%20Obtained%20in%20the%20Armed%20Forces.pdf)

## **PENNSYLVANIA**

Pennsylvania currently does not have formal PLA policies. However, with funding from a U.S. Department of Labor TAACCCT grant, a consortium of community colleges has collaborated on the development of a centralized portal and process for PLA as described in the case study presented in the main report.

## **RHODE ISLAND**

### **Legislation**

#### ***Senate Bill S 0638: Academic credit for military service***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Requires that public higher education institutions adopt a policy and promulgate regulations to award educational credits to veterans for courses that were part of the student's military training.

**Status:** Enacted 2013

**Link:** <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText13/SenateText13/S0638A.pdf>

## SOUTH CAROLINA

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

#### *Advanced Placement Credit Award Policy*

**Focus:** Assessment process/methods

**Summary:** Each public institution shall give credit in appropriate courses for scores of three or better on pertinent AP exams, governed by the Commission on Higher Education.

**Status:** Approved 1985

**Link:** [http://www.che.sc.gov/CHE\\_Docs/academicaaffairs/apib\\_policy.pdf](http://www.che.sc.gov/CHE_Docs/academicaaffairs/apib_policy.pdf)

#### *International Baccalaureate Credit Award Policy*

**Focus:** Assessment process/methods

**Summary:** "Each public institution of higher education within the state shall adopt and implement a policy by Fall 2008 for the acceptance of International Baccalaureate credit for first-time freshman students who have scored '4' or above on any higher-level IB course examination." Governed by the Commission on Higher Education.

**Status:** Enacted October 2007

**Link:** [http://www.che.sc.gov/CHE\\_Docs/academicaaffairs/apib\\_policy.pdf](http://www.che.sc.gov/CHE_Docs/academicaaffairs/apib_policy.pdf)

### Legislation

#### *Senate Bill 417*

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Enacts the Military Service Occupation, Education, and Credentialing Act that allows public, post-secondary institutions to award educational credit to an honorably discharged member of the Armed Forces for a course that is part of his or her military training or service, subject to certain conditions.

**Status:** Approved 2013

**Link:** [http://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess120\\_2013-2014/bills/417.htm](http://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess120_2013-2014/bills/417.htm)

## TENNESSEE

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

#### ***Tennessee Board of Regents Policy: Awarding of Credits Earned Through Extra-Institutional Learning to Community Colleges and Universities***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy

**Summary:** The purpose of this policy is to authorize each community college and university governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents to develop procedures for the recognition of equivalent extra-institutional learning processes that include the awarding of credit or advanced placement.

**Status:** Revised September 2013. Enacted March 2006.

**Link:** <https://policies.tbr.edu/policies/awarding-credits-earned-through-extra-institutional-learning-community-colleges-and>

#### ***Recommended Standards In Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Policy And Practice For Tennessee Public Colleges And Universities***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy, Transfer and articulation of PLA credit

**Summary:** The purpose of these standards is to outline the terms and conditions under which Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) and University of Tennessee (UT) universities and community colleges award and/or transfer credits toward a degree or certificate based on Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), and to provide consistent and accessible methods for students to earn these credits. These terms and conditions apply to the entire institution, including all departments and colleges. Exceptions must be approved by the chief academic officer of the institution.

**Status:** Adopted 2012

**Link:** [http://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server\\_files/files/Recommendations%20for%20Standards%20in%20PLA%20-%20Final%20Version%201-1.pdf](http://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/files/Recommendations%20for%20Standards%20in%20PLA%20-%20Final%20Version%201-1.pdf)

## Legislation

***Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-7-1203: Coordination of efforts in developing, administering and implementing a LEAP -- Priorities.***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** In order to become and continue to be a VETS campus, institutions must, among other things, create and maintain a process for the assessment of prior learning that grants academic credit to veterans for transferable training and experience attained through service in the armed forces of the United States.

**Status:** Revised 2014

**Links:** <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/tncode/>

***Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-7-1307: Qualification criteria for VETS campuses***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** The higher education commission shall coordinate certain priorities to encourage workforce development, including offering of prior learning assessment.



**Status:** Revised 2014

**Links:** <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/tncode/>

## TEXAS

### Legislation

#### ***SB 806: Related to the College Credit for Heroes Program***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** This legislation amends the Texas Labor Code pertaining to College Credit for Heroes Program to establish CCH as a permanent program, and to continue developing curricula, running evaluation granting webpage, and the commission shall report to the legislature and governor yearly on the results of grants, best practices, and related measures that facilitate the entry of trained veterans into the workforce.

**Status:** Enacted June 2015

**Links:** <http://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/84R/billtext/html/SB00806I.htm>

#### ***Tex. Labor Code Ann. § 302.0031 - College Credit for Heroes Program***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** This policy pertains to the establishment and administration of the College Credit for Heroes Program and requires a commission to identify, develop, and support methods to maximize academic or workforce education credit awarded by institutions of higher education to veterans and military service members for military experience, education, and training obtained during military service.

**Status:** Enacted June 2011

**Links:** <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LA/htm/LA.302.htm#302.0031>

## UTAH

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

#### ***Board Policy 470-9: To establish the credit by examination policy***

**Focus:** Assessment process/methods

**Summary:** The Board of Regents accepts as valid the concept of credit by examination without equivalent previous college coursework. Because of the variety of testing programs, the domain of individual departments and General Education, the following specific policies shall apply: Examinations that replace specific coursework; departmentally devised examinations; external standardized examinations; advanced placement examinations... students may demonstrate that they have specific subject matter credit through the Prior Learning Assessment developed by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. Institutional departments should evaluate and accept such credit if it meets institutional and departmental standards.

**Status:** Revised March 2011

**Link:** [http://www.higheredutah.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/pff\\_2011\\_r470.pdf](http://www.higheredutah.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/pff_2011_r470.pdf)

### Legislation

#### ***House Bill 254 Substitute – College credit for veterans***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Requires colleges and universities within the state higher education system to award credit for certain military service training and experience as recommended by a postsecondary accreditation agency or association designated by the State Board of Regents.

**Status:** Enacted May 2013

**Link:** <http://le.utah.gov/~2013/htmdoc/hbillhtm/HB0254S01.htm>

***Utah State Board of Regents Policy and Procedures - R473 - Standards for Granting Academic Credit for CTE Course Work Completed in Non-Credit Instructional Formats***

**Focus:** Assessment process/methods

**Summary:** This policy assures the integrity and consistency of the process of awarding credit for instruction received in formal instructional settings where academic credit is not awarded but measured by a non-credit unit (clock hours, continuing education units, competency assessments).

**Status:** Enacted February 2011

**Link:** [http://highereducatoh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/pff\\_2011\\_r473.pdf](http://highereducatoh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/pff_2011_r473.pdf)

## **VERMONT**

Vermont currently does not have formal PLA policies. However, the Vermont State Colleges centralizes its PLA program as described in the case study presented in the main report.

## **VIRGINIA**

### **Legislation**

***SB 1335 State Board for Community Colleges; policy for the award of academic credit for military training***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Requires the State Board for Community Colleges to adopt, no later than December 31, 2015, a policy for the award of academic credit to any student enrolled at a comprehensive community college who has successfully completed a military training course or program as part of his military service that is applicable to the student's certificate of degree requirements and is recommended for academic credit by a national higher education association that provides academic credit recommendations for military training courses or programs, noted on the student's military transcript issued by any of the armed forces of the United States, or otherwise documented in writing by any of the armed forces of the United States.

**Status:** Enacted March 2015

**Link:** <http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?151+sum+SB1335>

### ***HB 195: Higher Education Military Experience Course Credit***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Requires the governing boards of each public institution of higher education, in accordance with guidelines developed by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, to implement policies that award academic credit to students for educational experience gained from military service.

**Status:** Enacted March 2012

**Link:** <http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?ses=121&typ=bil&val=hb195>

### ***Va. Code § 23-9.2:3.7 - Course Credit; Veterans; Active Duty Military Students***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** This policy requires all public institutions of higher education to provide opportunities for all military students to earn full course credit when called to active duty during an academic semester; award academic credit to students for educational experience gained from service in the armed forces; and recognize the difficulties and obligations encountered by active duty members of the U.S. armed forces.

**Status:** Revised 2012

**Link:** <http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?000+cod+23-9.2C3.7>

### ***SB 209 International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement courses; course credit***

**Focus:** Assessment process/methods

**Summary:** Requires the governing boards of each public institution of higher education to implement policies to grant a minimum number of undergraduate semester credit hours to entering freshman students who have successfully completed the IB diploma program or AP exams.

**Status:** Enacted April 2010

**Link:** <https://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?101+sum+SB209>

## WASHINGTON

### Legislation

#### ***Senate Bill 5969: An act relating to awarding academic credit for military training***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** Requires each public institution of higher education to adopt a policy to award academic credit for military training courses or programs before a specified date, and to submit the policy to the Prior Learning Assessment workgroup for evaluation

**Status:** Enacted April 2015

**Link:** <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2013-14/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/Senate/5969%20SBA%20HIE%2014.pdf>

#### ***Wash. Rev. Code § 28B.10.057 - Academic Credit for Military Training***

**Focus:** Veterans

**Summary:** This policy states that by 12/31/2015, each institution of higher education must adopt a policy to award academic credit for military training applicable to a student's certificate or degree requirements.

**Status:** Revised 2014

**Link:** <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28B.10.057>

### **HB 2483**

**Focus:** Establish PLA committee, Raising awareness and encouraging student PLA participation, Transparent institutional policies

**Summary:** Reaffirmed HB 1795 to establish a task force to: increase the number of students who receive PLA credits; increase the number and type of PLA credits that count towards a major or earn a degree, certificate, or credential, while ensuring quality; develop transparent PLA policies and practices in awarding academic credit for prior learning; create PLA tools to develop faculty and staff and share exemplary policies and practices; develop articulation agreements; and develop outcome measures to track progress on goals.

It also defined Prior Learning as “the knowledge and skills gained through work and life experience; through military training and experience; and through formal and informal education and training from in-state and out-of-state institutions including foreign institutions.”

**Status:** Enacted 2012

**Link:** <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=2483&year=2011>

### ***Wash. Rev. Code 28B.10.053: Postsecondary credit for high school coursework***

**Focus:** Assessment process/methods

**Summary:** By December 1, 2011, and by June of each odd-numbered year thereafter, the institutions of higher education shall collaboratively develop a master list of postsecondary courses that can be fulfilled by taking the advanced placement, international baccalaureate, or other recognized college-level proficiency examinations.

**Status:** Enacted 2012

**Link:** <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28B.10.053>

***Wash. Rev. Code § 28B.77.230 - Academic Credit for Prior Learning - Goals - Work group - Reports***

**Focus:** Establish PLA committee, Raising awareness and encouraging student PLA participation, Capacity building

**Summary:** This policy requires the council, state board for community and technical colleges, council of presidents, four-year institutions of higher education, private independent higher education institutions, and private career schools to collaborate to carry out goals such as: increasing the number of students who receive PLA credit, increasing the number and type of academic credits accepted for PLA, developing transparent policies and practices for awarding PLA credit, creating tools to develop faculty and staff knowledge and expertise in awarding PLA credits, and more.

**Status:** Enacted 2011

**Link:** <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28B.77.230>

***HB 1795***

**Focus:** Capacity building

**Summary:** Required the Higher Education Coordinating Board, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Council of Presidents, the four-year institutions of higher education, the private independent higher education institutions, and the private career schools to work together to improve the administration of PLA statewide.

**Status:** Enacted 2011

**Link:** <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?year=2011&bill=1795#documents>

***SB 6357: An act relating to policies for the academic recognition of prior 2 learning; and creating new sections***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy

**Summary:** The legislation directed the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to consult with a variety of specific stakeholder groups and develop policies for awarding academic credit for learning from work and military experience, military and law enforcement training, career college training, internships and externships, and apprenticeships.

**Status:** Enacted March 2010

**Link:** <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2009-10/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Passed%20Legislature/6357-S.PL.pdf>

## WEST VIRGINIA

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

***West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission - Procedural Rule Title 133, Series 16: CLEP***

**Focus:** Assessment process/methods

**Summary:** Students in West Virginia state colleges and universities may be awarded credit for the successful completion of any or all of the CLEP Subject Examinations presently offered or developed in the future.

**Status:** Enacted June 2002

**Link:** <https://www.wvhepc.org/resources/133-16.pdf>

## WISCONSIN

### Policy [Executive branch agency]

***University of Wisconsin System Regent Policy 7-1 - University of Wisconsin System Undergraduate Transfer Policy***

**Focus:** Establishment of PLA policy, Transfer and articulation of PLA credit



**Summary:** UW institutions should provide transfer students the same opportunities as continuing students to demonstrate their competence through the use of internally and/or externally developed tests, portfolio assessment procedures, and/or other competency-based alternatives.

UW institutions may grant credit for educational accomplishment attained in extra-institutional settings (e.g., military, professional development, work-place training, etc.) on the basis of an internally developed assessment such as department exams and portfolio review; internal review of recommendations from organizations, or externally assessed standardized exams such as Advanced Placement (AP) or College Level Examination Program (CLEP). All credits awarded by the institution based on extra-institutional accomplishment must be clearly indicated on the student transcript.

**Status:** Revised 2015

**Link:** <https://www.wisconsin.edu/regents/policies/university-of-wisconsin-system-undergraduate-transfer-policy/>

### ***UW System Policies – Prior Learning Assessment Methods***

**Focus:** Assessment process/methods, Veterans

**Summary:** All UW System institutions offer the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and evaluations of military transcripts and service. In addition, credit can be earned at the discretion of the academic department using various exam and non-exam methods.

**Status:** Adopted May 2011

**Link:** <http://web.uwsa.edu/assets/sites/pla/docs/pdfs/PLA%20Task%20Force%20Report%20v.7.7.8.11.pdf> (page 6)



## APPENDIX D: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### STATE PLA GUIDE EXAMPLES

**The following are sample publications from various states regarding their systemwide approaches to PLA.**

**Ohio:** *PLA With a Purpose: Prior Learning Assessment & Ohio's College Completion Agenda*, April 14, 2014, [https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/uploads/PLA/PLA-with-a-Purpose\\_Report\\_FINAL\\_041614\\_0.pdf](https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/uploads/PLA/PLA-with-a-Purpose_Report_FINAL_041614_0.pdf)

**Oregon:** *Oregon Credit for Prior Learning Standards*, May 8, 2014, [http://www.oregon.gov/HigherEd/Documents/HECC/Reports-and-Presentations/CPL\\_Standards\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/HigherEd/Documents/HECC/Reports-and-Presentations/CPL_Standards_FINAL.pdf)

**Tennessee:** *Recommended Standards in Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Policy and Practice for Tennessee Public Colleges and Universities*, August 7, 2012, [https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server\\_files/files/Recommendations%20for%20Standards%20in%20PLA%20-%20Final%20Version%201-1.pdf](https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/files/Recommendations%20for%20Standards%20in%20PLA%20-%20Final%20Version%201-1.pdf)

**Washington:** *Assessing and Awarding Credit for Prior Learning: A Handbook for Faculty and Staff*, Revised October 2013, [http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/education/pla\\_handbook\\_oct2013.pdf](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/education/pla_handbook_oct2013.pdf)

### GUIDANCE ON PLA IMPLEMENTATION

#### From American Council on Education

##### **A Transfer Guide: Understanding Your Military Credit Recommendations**

This guide is based on the simple principle that if you have a clear understanding of your military transcript and basic information about transfer policies and issues, you can more successfully navigate your way through the process of transfer credit for military training and experience. This publication will serve as your resource for understanding military credit recommendations, transcripts, and their use when you wish to transfer to an academic institution.

<https://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Transfer-Guide-Understanding-Your-Military-Transcript-and-ACE-Credit-Recommendations.aspx>

##### **American Council on Education (ACE) Credit Recommendation Service**

<http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/College-Credit-Recommendation-Service-CREDIT.aspx>

## **ACE Military Guide Online**

<http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Military-Guide-Online.aspx>

## **Credit for Prior Learning from the student, campus, and industry perspectives.**

<http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/ACE-Research-Brief-Explores-Credit-for-Prior-Learning-Practices.aspx>

## **From Council for Adult and Experiential Learning**

### **Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, & Procedures**

Since CAEL first published Urban Whitaker's book *Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, & Procedures* in 1989, the landscape of higher education and adult learning has changed dramatically. While respecting the Whitaker framework and the fundamental principles, authors Morry Fiddler and Catherine Marienau have added important perspectives and contexts that bring the assessment of learning to new venues, including work-based learning and non-credit-based learning. This second edition provides an updated set of standards for the assessment of learning and the awarding of credit for learning gained from experience.

<http://www.kendallhunt.com/store-product.aspx?id=4333>

### **CAEL Prior Learning Assessment Services**

Provides basic information on PLA, CAEL's quality standard for PLA, information about online portfolio assessment initiative LearningCounts.org, and faculty/staff PLA professional development opportunities.

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

### **Earn College Credit for What You Know**

This book offers information on prior learning assessment (PLA) for adult learners, professionals, evaluators, administrators, faculty and training managers. Prior learning assessment is a valid, yet underused, process of evaluating and recognizing learning that helps adults to earn credit for knowledge acquired through work, training, volunteer and union activities, hobbies and other life experiences.

<http://www.kendallhunt.com/cael/>

## **LearningCounts.org**

A national online PLA service offering portfolio development services to expand capacity of colleges and universities wanting to offer PLA portfolio option to students. [www.learningcounts.org](http://www.learningcounts.org)

## **RESEARCH ON PLA**

**Accelerating Degree Completion for Latinos through Prior Learning Assessment: A Policy Brief.** The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. [http://www.cael.org/pdfs/latinos\\_and\\_pla\\_2014\\_policy\\_brief](http://www.cael.org/pdfs/latinos_and_pla_2014_policy_brief)

### **Employer Views on the Value of PLA, February 2012**

This CAEL research brief, produced in partnership with Prometric, presents highlights from conversations with 19 U.S. employers representing a range of industries on the topic of PLA. The conversations address the value of PLA to workers and corporations, as well as employers' views on PLA as an allowable expense within their tuition assistance programs.

[http://www.cael.org/pdfs/PLA\\_Employer\\_Research](http://www.cael.org/pdfs/PLA_Employer_Research)

### **Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success**

With support from Lumina Foundation for Education, CAEL collected data on 62,475 students at 48 higher education institutions that offer prior learning assessment (PLA). The report presents our findings on the comparison of PLA students with non-PLA students in terms of earned degrees, persistence and time to degree.

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

### **Moving the Starting Line Through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), 2011**

This research brief provides an analysis of the average number of credits students earn for what they already know. It offers information on the average number of PLA credits earned by a subgroup of 4,905 students, looking at how the average number of credits differs by institution type and by students of various demographic groups.

[http://www.cael.org/pdfs/PLA\\_research\\_brief\\_avg\\_credit](http://www.cael.org/pdfs/PLA_research_brief_avg_credit)



### **PLA is Your Business: Pricing and Other Considerations for the PLA Business Model**

As more institutions embrace PLA, two of the questions they frequently have are, “What should my organization be charging for the various PLA services we want to offer?” and “What are the costs to my organization?” This 2015 publication shares findings from a national institutional survey and individual case studies on how institutions should approach the business model for PLA.

[http://www.cael.org/pdfs/2015\\_CAEL\\_PLA\\_Business\\_Model](http://www.cael.org/pdfs/2015_CAEL_PLA_Business_Model)

### **Random Access: The Latino Student Experience with Prior Learning Assessment**

This report presents research on the Latino student experience with PLA in ten postsecondary institutions. Researchers examined student record data and interviewed Latino students to learn about their experiences. [http://www.cael.org/pdfs/latinos\\_and\\_pla\\_2014](http://www.cael.org/pdfs/latinos_and_pla_2014)

### **State System PLA Adoption: Lessons from a Three-System Initiative**

This 2015 publication shares details on and lessons from three state systems moving forward on developing statewide PLA policies.

[http://www.cael.org/pdfs/2015\\_CAEL\\_State-System-PLA-Adoption](http://www.cael.org/pdfs/2015_CAEL_State-System-PLA-Adoption)

### **Underserved Students Who Earn Credit Through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Have Higher Degree Completion Rates and Shorter Time-to-Degree, 2011.**

In this research brief, CAEL showcases findings from our 2010 PLA study by race/ethnicity and income—two demographic categories often used to define underserved student groups. The data show that black non-Hispanic, Hispanic and low-income students with PLA credits have better academic outcomes than similar students without PLA credits. The positive findings for low-income, black non-Hispanic and Hispanic students suggest that awarding college credit for significant life learning could be an effective way to accelerate degree completion, while lowering the cost, for underserved student populations.

[http://www.cael.org/pdfs/126\\_pla\\_research\\_brief\\_1\\_underserved04-2011](http://www.cael.org/pdfs/126_pla_research_brief_1_underserved04-2011)









The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) is a national nonprofit organization focused on lifelong learning and the adult learner.

HCM is a public policy consulting and advocacy firm focused on finding effective solutions in health and education.