

LINKING LEARNING AND WORK



CAEL
Linking Learning and Work



At CAEL, everything we do **supports** one goal: making it easier for people to get the **education** and **training** they need to attain meaningful, **secure employment**.

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Dear Friends,

CAEL helps people attain meaningful learning and credentials that will lead to stable employment. This is especially vital now, but it is not easy. The story of my brother illustrates the struggles many Americans face when pursuing higher education.

experiences, as well as to make their programs and services more adult learner friendly. I also believed we needed to expand our efforts by engaging employers and joint labor-management entities so that front-line workers could get the necessary

A message from the President



When my brother returned from Vietnam, he got a job pouring steel in a foundry and tried to go to community college part-time on the GI Bill. But when his shift changed at the mill, he had to drop the course he was taking. As a result, he was never able to make further progress towards his associate's degree. Back then, there were no weekend colleges or online courses, no colleges with flexible options for working people. By the time my brother's GI Bill benefits finally ran out, he had already started a family and he just couldn't afford to pay for college on his own—and his employer didn't cover tuition costs.

I was selected to become president and CEO of CAEL in 1990. Remembering my brother's struggles with paying for college, I wanted CAEL to help establish a more central place for adult learning in public policy, especially in regard to the financing of higher education, and I wanted to convince employers to provide tuition support for all levels of their workforce.

I believed CAEL needed to continue the work that initially launched the organization—influencing change in higher education institutions to ensure they would award college credit for learning that adults had gained through their work and life

advising and financial support to select appropriate and affordable degree programs and colleges. With our first such project, the UAW-Ford College and University Options program, CAEL began to provide career and educational advising workshops to front-line workers like my brother. In its work with employers like Scott Paper, Levi Strauss & Co., and other manufacturers across several cities, CAEL's focus broadened further to serve workers on the lowest rungs of the employment ladder, whose lack of skills and education threatened their long term employability and made them "at risk" in a skills-centered economy. During the 1990s, CAEL expanded its administration of employer-provided tuition assistance and its provision of career and educational advising services. Later, we began to partner with colleges and industries to build online degree and certificate programs to meet specific industry needs while educating employees for jobs that offer growth and opportunity.

Not only did these initiatives serve to diversify our revenue sources; they helped us reach more adults who needed to advance their education. Revenue generated by CAEL's programs and services grew considerably, from a low of just under \$700,000 in 1983, to more than \$9 million today. CAEL's revenue growth has come largely from an increase in contracts and fees (which increased 22-fold in 20 years) and grants from foundations and the public sector (which increased sevenfold in 20 years).

As CAEL moves into a new phase of our pursuits on behalf of adult learners, may we all endeavor to engage as many as possible in the journey to cultivating meaningful learning, credentials, and work for every adult.

Pam Tate

Pamela Tate, President and CEO

Vision and Mission

CAEL'S VISION

To ensure meaningful learning, credentials, and work for every adult.

CAEL'S MISSION

As a national leader, we strive to lead the evolving national discussion on unique challenges and opportunities linking adult learners and work. We advocate and innovate on behalf of all adult learners, regardless of their socio-economic circumstances, to increase access to education and economic security and to develop and provide effective services and tools. We work to enhance our thought leadership role through our research and work with adult learners, postsecondary education institutions, employers and government.

SOFIA'S PROFILE: JUMPSTARTING THE LEAP TO



MEANINGFUL LEARNING

Having worked in a clerical position at a bank for 4 years, Sofia wanted to advance to a higher-level position there. She **believed a college degree** would be an important step in this endeavor; but because she had emigrated from Argentina, she did not have an American high school diploma. Her dreams seemed much too far-removed from the reality of her circumstances.


Still, despite her circumstances, Sofia took a leap and met with a CAEL advisor. From there, all the pieces fell into place: She attended an open

house at the local university, completed a pre-college assessment to determine her skill level and curriculum plan, **worked with her advisor** to develop her CAEL Learning Plan, earned the GED high school equivalency credential,

**She took a leap and met with a CAEL advisor.
From there all the pieces fell into place.**

completed a certificate program at the university, and applied her earned credits toward an associate's degree. With CAEL's help, Sofia also earned course credit for her previous participation in training and enrichment programs both through her company and on her own, getting her closer to completing her bachelor's degree.

Sofia has **increased confidence** in her credentials, skills, and knowledge, and believes she is ready to pursue a higher-level position within the bank.

A grayscale photograph of a woman with short dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored shirt. She is sitting at a desk, looking down at papers in front of her. Her hands are clasped together. In the background, there is a computer monitor displaying a web application, a keyboard, and a printer. The image is partially obscured by a large white text box in the lower right.

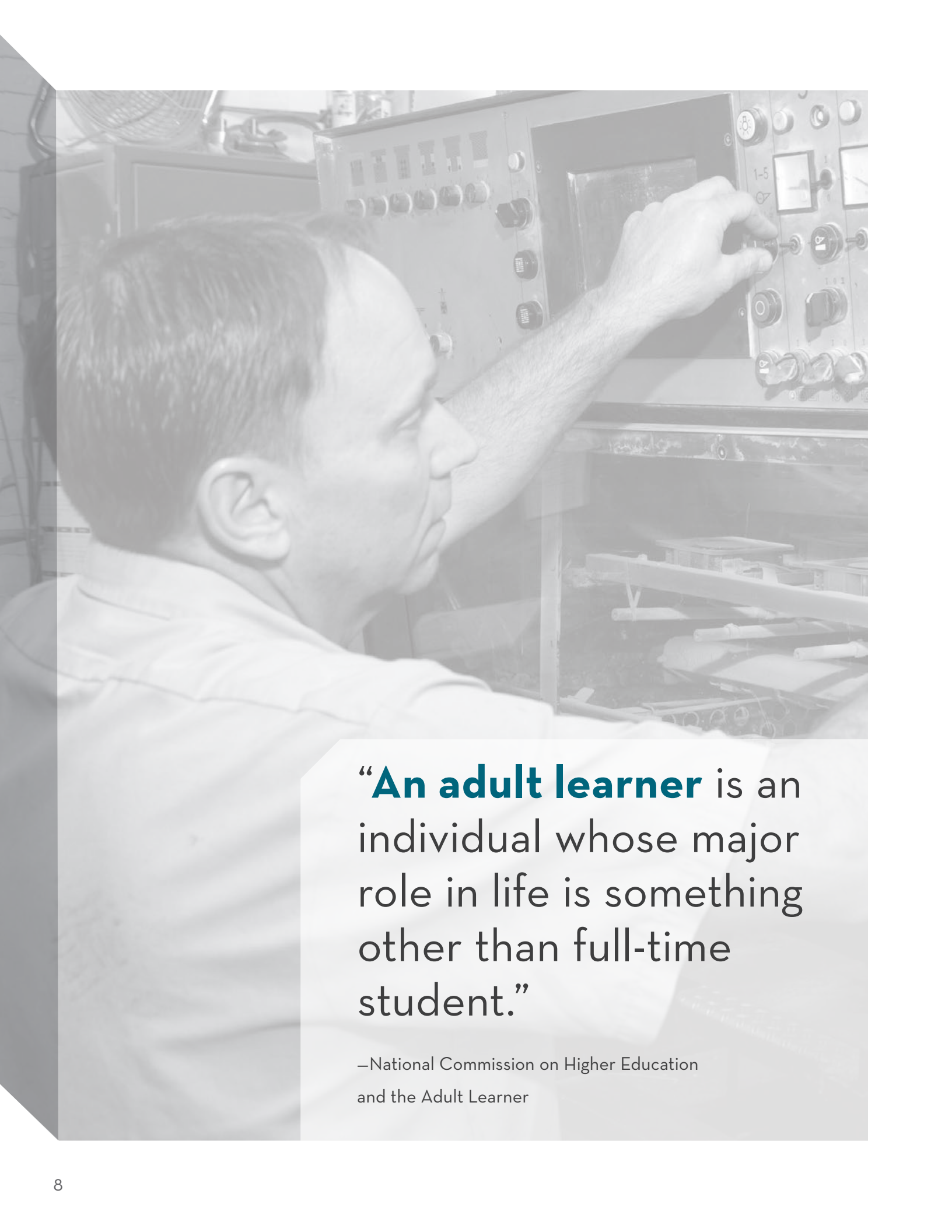
“My CAEL advisor made all the **difference** for me. She helped me identify what I really wanted to do in the company and find a way to get there.”

—Participant in a CAEL employer-supported advising program

Through its broad array of programs and services, CAEL serves several sectors: businesses and industries, colleges and universities, and workforce development organizations. Ensuring that adult learners earn the credentials they need to reach employment goals is at the center of all our work. **CAEL programs and services** are designed with the intent to actualize some critical elements that adult learners need to succeed:

Empowering adult learners to succeed

- Helping adult learners earn **college credit** for learning they already have from their work and life experiences
- Offering **advising** services to help adult learners make practical, informed choices in meeting their goals
- Uncovering **career paths** that would take adult learners from multiple entry-points to more advanced roles and higher earnings
- Identifying practical solutions to removing learning and education barriers through **research and innovation**
- Promoting informed **public policy** that provides the funding and infrastructure needed to ensure a skilled, qualified, and credentialed workforce
- **Convening** diverse audiences in the interest of meeting adult learners' needs
- Providing **consulting** services that help businesses, colleges and universities, and other institutions meet adult learners' needs



“An adult learner is an individual whose major role in life is something other than full-time student.”

—National Commission on Higher Education
and the Adult Learner

Opening doors

Today's jobseeker has an eye not only on the skills and knowledge required to fill a particular position, but also on the opportunities for advancement within a company.

Often, however, the pathway to such opportunities is not clear or accessible, especially for those workers who have not yet acquired the necessary credentials to advance.

VIVIDFuture.org is one example of how CAEL arms workers and jobseekers with the information they need to plan their educational and career pathways through an online career-mapping tool. VIVIDFuture.org has opened doors for telecommunications workers to chart their own path within their companies, set

practical goals, and earn the requisite credentials that will allow them to advance to higher-paying positions and more senior roles. CAEL's work with various businesses helps these companies ensure that their workers have the right skills and competencies for a productive future, their workers understand the opportunities available to them, and then connect to educational opportunities that maximize their tuition dollars.

"Our industry depends on highly skilled workers. And VIVIDFuture.org is a great training and educational resource for new telecom jobseekers as well as those wanting to grow within the industry." –CAEL business client



An adult student who earns 15 prior learning credits that can be applied toward a degree can save from \$1,605 at a large public university to \$6,000 at other institutions.

—The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning

LearningCounts and Prior Learning Assessment

Prior learning is a term used by educators to describe learning that a person acquires outside a traditional academic environment, such as through work experience, employer training programs, independent study, non-credit courses, volunteer or community service, travel, non-college courses and seminars, or open source courseware on the Internet.

Prior learning assessment (PLA) is the process by which an individual's experiential learning is assessed and evaluated for purposes of granting college credit, certification, or advanced standing toward further education or training.

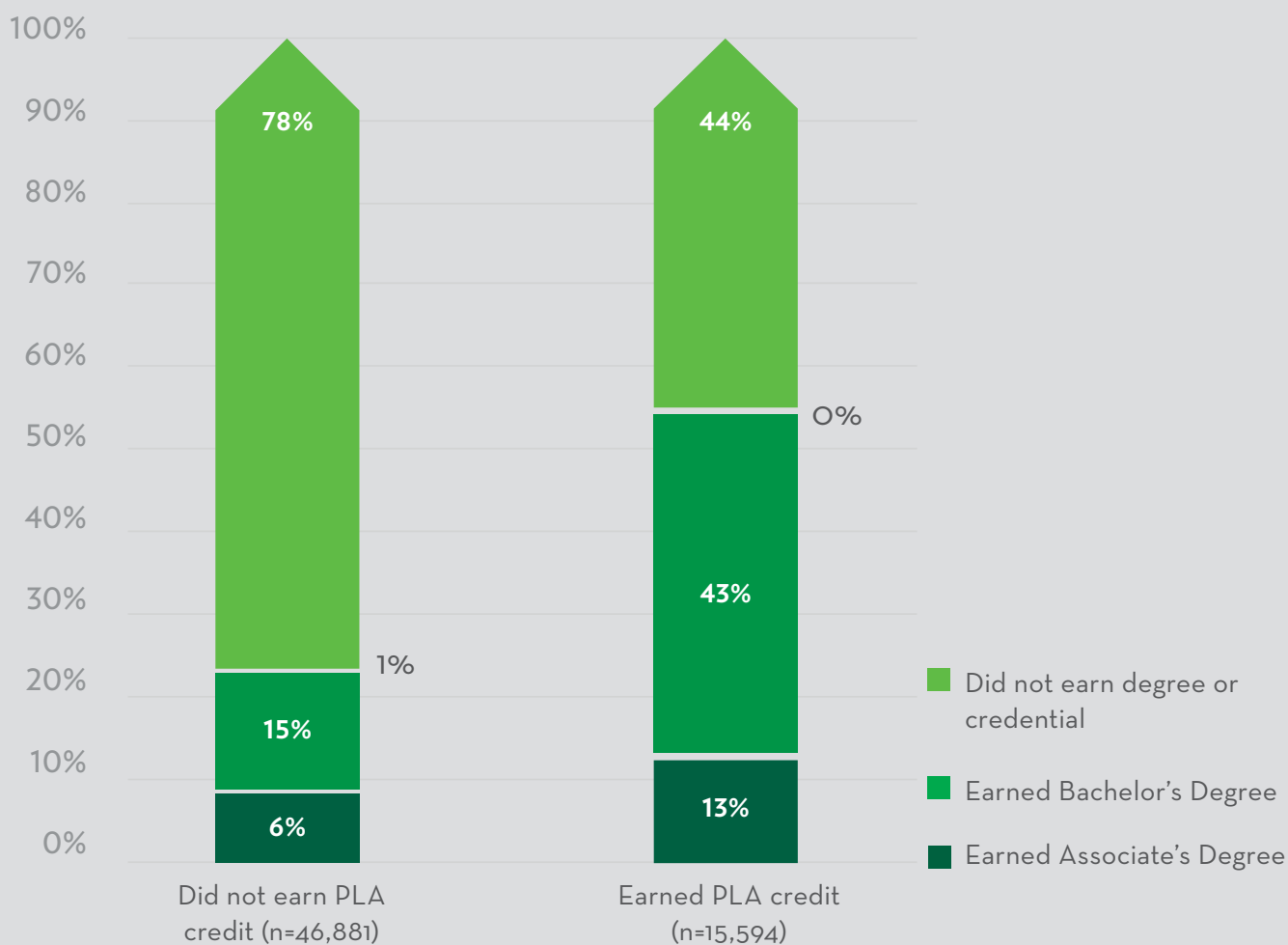
LearningCounts.org uses best practices in PLA to help adult learners earn college credits for their prior learning experiences, accelerating their educational progress and career advancement. Through the service, students take an online course to learn how to prepare a portfolio of their learning. The portfolio they present is then evaluated by an expert college faculty member. If what they have submitted is at the same level as what a successful student in a college-level course could produce, the faculty expert will recommend that they be awarded college credit.

LEARNINGCOUNTS.ORG AND PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Data from CAEL's study* of 62,475 students at 48 postsecondary institutions show that PLA students had better academic outcomes, particularly in terms of graduation rates and persistence, than other adult students. Many PLA students also shortened the time required to earn a degree, depending on the number of PLA credits earned.

- 43% of PLA students earned a bachelor's degree, compared to only 15% of non-PLA students
- 13% of PLA students earned an associate's degree, compared to 6% of non-PLA students

Degree completion rates side-by-side



Source: The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. (March 2010). *Fueling the race to postsecondary success: A 48-institution study of prior learning assessment and adult student outcomes*. Chicago, IL: Rebecca Klein-Collins.

* Supported by Lumina Foundation

MARY'S PROFILE: PRIOR LEARNING CREDITS PUT MARY ON THE FAST TRACK TO THE TOP

For many years, Mary had put off pursuing the degree in economics that she knew she needed to move into a management position at work. She was clearly competent, self-possessed, and well regarded by her colleagues, and yet the thought of college terrified her. She was especially concerned about her ability to compete in the classroom with students much younger than she is.

Mary's CAEL advisor assured her that college was no longer just for 18-22 year olds and, in fact, that many colleges now designed programs for students just like her. She was a working adult with years of professional experience and training, much of which was equivalent to college-level learning. The advisor set up diagnostic tests in reading, critical reasoning, and mathematics to help Mary assess her competency levels, and together they explored local degree program

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offerings. She settled on a state university close to work, where she earned more than 20 credits by taking the College Board's College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests in Spanish and English Composition—before she ever stepped into a classroom. And **with support and guidance from her CAEL advisor**, she submitted a portfolio describing her prior college-level learning and earned additional credits toward her degree.

Mary unexpectedly found herself on an accelerated pathway to earning the degree she had put off for so many years. Before long, she was promoted to the position of Vice President at her company.

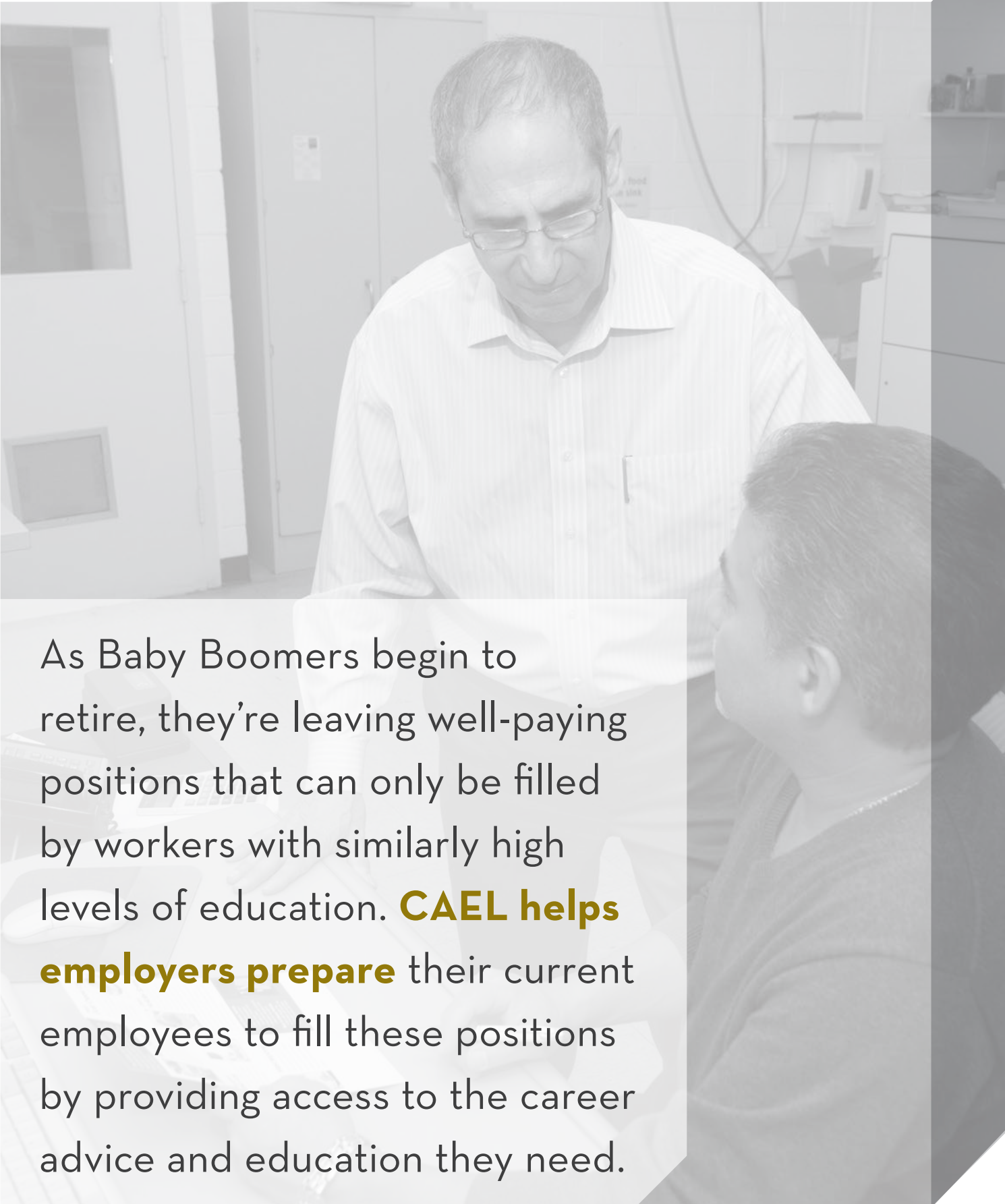
Renzo's profile: Inspiring creative solutions for business, higher education, and workforce developers to help adult learners succeed

Renzo Lopez, a former car salesman and family man, **decided to transition** into the energy industry after seeing the benefits and stability it offered. Not long after starting a new career at an energy supply company as a meter reader, **he learned about online education programs** sponsored by the Energy Providers Coalition for Education (EPCE), another signature CAEL initiative. Renzo had taken several college courses before and earned credit for that work, but he had not completed a degree. He seized the opportunity, immediately enrolling in the Electric Power Technology degree program at the local community college.

Renzo was married, with two young children and a mortgage, so going to school was a balancing act for him. Yet the extra effort

both he and his family put forth was worth it. He believes that his new degree gives him an edge when applying for positions. “Before I enrolled in the program,” he says, “I was inexperienced and knew very little about the industry. But now I’ve learned a lot.”

CAEL consults with businesses and organizations like the company Renzo worked for to determine staffing and workforce needs, connecting these companies with colleges and universities to create programs specifically designed to meet those needs. **CAEL helps** with designing curriculum and instructional delivery and provides advising and career path guidance that, together, put adult learners like Renzo on the path to earn the degrees businesses seek in prospective and current employees.



As Baby Boomers begin to retire, they're leaving well-paying positions that can only be filled by workers with similarly high levels of education. **CAEL helps employers prepare** their current employees to fill these positions by providing access to the career advice and education they need.

Building the workforce, one innovation at a time


CAEL's approach of designing and implementing programs that work, demonstrating their effectiveness through sound research, and widely disseminating best practices and policy recommendations, lends itself to helping create systemic change to support adult learning and its linkages to work.

CAEL is poised to help strengthen the U.S. workforce and restore our nation's global standing in postsecondary degree production. By working with businesses, non-profits, labor unions, government

agencies, colleges and universities, and advocacy groups to tackle the practical challenges adult learners face, **CAEL is able** to design innovative solutions that take global, national, local, and individual needs into consideration.


CAEL's customized programs ensure that learning, credentials, and work are connected in meaningful ways for every adult, ultimately resulting in a more knowledgeable and educated workforce overall.

* Source: Carnevale, A. P., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (June 2010). *Help wanted: Projections of jobs and education requirements through 2018*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce.

A grayscale photograph of three people—two women and one man—leaning over a table and looking at a document. The woman on the left is older with short, light-colored hair and is wearing a dark scarf. The woman in the middle has blonde hair and is looking down at the document. The man on the right is younger, with short dark hair, and is resting his chin on his hand while looking at the document. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an office or library setting with shelves and papers.

By 2018 we will have a shortfall of workers with postsecondary degrees of about 3 million, assuming we maintain our current rate of degree production.

—Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, 2010



“Going back to college meant giving up **quality time** with my family and other activities in life. LearningCounts.org gave me back some of that time. They **acknowledged my past work experiences** and made me feel **proud** of the work I did. They really helped me realize my goal of **acquiring my college degree.**”

—LearningCounts.org student

“Anyone seeking CAEL’s assistance and expertise will receive a quick follow-up, careful attention to problems and issues, and creative solutions—both practical and visionary.”

—CAEL business client



Contact us

CAEL National Headquarters
55 East Monroe Street, Suite 2710
Chicago, IL 60603
312-499-2600

CAEL Denver Office
6021 South Syracuse Way, Suite 213
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
303-773-3950

CAEL Philadelphia Office
1608 Walnut Street, Suite 1404
Philadelphia, PA 19103
215-731-0191

cael@cael.org
www.cael.org