

CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING MATURITY MODEL RESEARCH PROJECT



Overview of Project

Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) is a proven strategy to help postsecondary institutions engage learners, recognize their college-level learning outside of the classroom and award college credit, and reduce the time and costs associated with college completion. However, little is known about the development trajectory of these programs and the impact of this trajectory on student success.

CAEL is collaborating with Sophia Learning to conduct research that defines different stages of Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) program "maturity" and the implications for CPL use and student success at each stage. CAEL will work with a group of thirty (30) postsecondary institutions to address the primary research questions:

- What are the different stages of CPL program maturity?
- What are the implications for CPL use at each stage of maturity?
- What are the implications for student success at each stage of maturity?

This research will take an empirical approach to defining CPL maturity levels and will involve both quantitative and qualitative analysis of CPL program implementation and student engagement and outcomes. Selected institutions will receive a small stipend upon completion of their participation in the research study.

Benefits to Participating Institutions

Selected institutions will receive several benefits from participation:

- Results from research will provide insights into their efforts to advance CPL on their campus(es)
- Contribution to national research on this important and novel topic
- Acknowledgement in written reports/webinars/conference sessions, etc. and possible speaking engagements associated with these dissemination activities
- Stipend of \$1,000

Expectations of Institutions

Selected institutions will be expected to provide and facilitate collection of qualitative and quantitative data. Please note that all data will be aggregated with the other institutions and anonymized in any subsequent public reporting. Individual institutional data will not be shared publicly in any way.

Collection of this data will include:

- Quantitative program data, including: CPL usage rates over time, and six (6) year graduation rates of CPL vs. non-CPL students. Usage rates and graduation rates will be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and age.
- Qualitative program data including: details on CPL policies, practices, and procedures collected through faculty and staff interviews and program documentation.
- Qualitative student data including: student surveys on the topic of CPL in seven to ten of the participating institutions. Student responses to the survey will be used to identify design elements essential to effective student participation in CPL programs and levels of CPL program maturity, as well as other insights on the value of CPL to student's academic experiences and achievements. Students will be given a small incentive for participation.

Project Timeline

- October 17, 2025: Institutions selected for participation.
- October - November 2025: Collection of quantitative and qualitative data
- January 2026: Additional data collection (if needed)
- June 2026: Draft of report made available to participating institutions
- June 2026: Public release of report

To Participate

If you are interested in participating in this research project, please complete **this short application** by end of day Friday, October 3, 2025. We will select a diverse group of institutions representing different types of postsecondary institutions (community colleges, four-year institutions, regional universities, research universities, online institutions, etc.) and different levels of CPL engagement.

For more information, contact Rachel Hirsch, Vice President, Public Partnerships, CAEL, at rhirsch@cael.org.

