



RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Recognizing Prior Learning in the COVID-19 Era: Helping Displaced Workers and Students One Credit at a Time

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This brief is one part of a broad landscape analysis focused on policy and practice issues related to the recognition of prior learning and is published by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), with funding from Lumina Foundation and Strada Education Network. The landscape analysis focuses on issues arising in the practice of the recognition of prior learning, policies that encourage or limit its adoption, and key research needs and future directions for the field. A full series of briefs, as well as original research on the impact of prior learning assessment on student outcomes will be released later this summer. wiche.edu/key-initiatives/recognition-of-learning/

In March 2020, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and the accompanying economic impact changed higher education in the U.S. in unprecedented ways and had severe impacts on students. Institutions moved from offering on-site classes to an exclusively remote learning environment, while students and their families dealt with sudden and massive unemployment; physical distancing policies; changing family responsibilities; illness or death of family members, friends, or colleagues; and anxiety about personal or family health and economic wellbeing. Compounding these challenges is that parts of the country and vulnerable populations may be facing a long-term pandemic threat and a continued need for physical distancing and stay-at-home orders for many months to come.

The recovery from the pandemic and related economic downturn will take years, not months. It is not likely that the country will immediately return to nearly full employment as it was prior to the outbreak. With a large number of displaced workers, re-skilling and up-skilling must be part of the solution, and policies and practices that can help these workers efficiently earn new credentials of value will be a crucial part of the recovery. Policies and practices in which institutions,

employers, and students themselves can recognize and validate learning that takes place outside of the institution can and should be one focus of efforts to accelerate the recovery.

With funding from Lumina Foundation and Strada Education Network, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and numerous partners have recently conducted a landscape analysis to help policymakers, practitioners, and others better understand the current state of the field for recognition of prior learning, opportunities for scaling the practice, current challenges, and recommendations. Additionally, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and WICHE are completing an impact study examining how receipt of credit for prior learning benefits students.¹ This work, known as Recognizing Learning in the 21st Century, will culminate in a series of briefs and related materials that will be published in summer 2020. Under usual circumstances, WICHE would release all briefs related to this work simultaneously and not provide a “sneak peek.” These are clearly not “usual circumstances,” however, and WICHE believes it is important to present a summary of the findings as quickly as possible, with a focus on how scaling prior learning assessment can help speed



students' academic progress while ensuring academic quality and the rigor of credentials.

In the coming effort to restart the economy and speed its recovery, effective policies and practices on the recognition of prior learning have the potential to create more efficient pathways for economic mobility and increase student success and credential completion—especially for adults.

This brief summarizes some of the key findings from the landscape analysis and the joint research carried out by CAEL and WICHE, and synthesizes recommendations from this work that practitioners and policymakers focused on postsecondary education and/or workforce development might consider as discussion moves toward recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Fair and equitable recognition of prior learning is one tool among many that higher education can use during this unprecedented time to help more students and displaced workers earn valuable credentials that will ideally lead to living wage jobs, saving time and money in the process.

Background

Many students – as well as potential students – have acquired a great deal of learning through their day-to-day lives outside of academia: knowledge acquired from work experience, on-the-job training, formal corporate training, military training, volunteer work, self-study, and myriad other extra-institutional learning opportunities available through low-cost or no-cost online sources. Colleges and universities have the option to evaluate that knowledge for the purpose of awarding credit or otherwise recognizing the learning so that it can count toward a degree or credential. The methods that colleges use to evaluate this learning are typically referred to with terms like recognition of prior learning, credit for prior learning, and prior learning assessment (PLA). Throughout the remainder of this brief, we use the term prior learning assessment (PLA) because it is one of the terms most commonly used among institutions. There are several methods of PLA including:

- **Standardized examination:** In this method, students can earn credit by successfully completing exams such as Advanced Placement (AP), College Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams, International Baccalaureate (IB), Excelsior exams (UExcel), DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST), and others.
- **Faculty-developed challenge exam:** In this method, students can earn credit for a specific course by taking a comprehensive examination developed by campus faculty.
- **Portfolio-based and other individualized assessment:** In this method, students can earn credit by preparing a portfolio or demonstration of their learning from a variety of experiences and non-credit activities. Faculty then evaluate the student's portfolio and award credit as appropriate.
- **Evaluation of non-college programs:** In this method, students can earn credit based on recommendations provided by the National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS) and the American Council on Education (ACE) that conduct evaluations of training that is offered by employers or the military. Institutions also conduct their own review of programs, including coordinating with workforce development agencies and other training providers to develop crosswalks that map between external training/credentials and existing degree programs.

Findings

CAEL and WICHE have completed the bulk of the work on a research project that is likely the largest and most comprehensive study of the relationship between student outcomes and PLA. The two organizations partnered with 72 institutions to analyze de-identified student-level longitudinal data and institutional policy and practices. Additionally, the team interviewed staff and students from a select number of the participating institutions. While the full report will be released in summer 2020, the following are some of the findings that illustrate the value of PLA.²

- **Higher degree completion for PLA students.** The 24,512 adult students (ages 25 and older) who earned PLA credits had a credential completion rate of 49 percent over the seven-and-a-half-year observation period, compared to 27 percent of adult students with no PLA credits. This includes completion of bachelor's degrees, associate degrees, and certificates.
- **Analysis strengthens argument for the impact from PLA credit receipt.** Using propensity score matching to isolate the impact on credential completion from PLA alone, we found that PLA increased the likelihood of an adult student's completion by more than 17 percent. The impact of PLA on credential completion was also significant for

students who were Hispanic (24 percent improvement in completion from PLA), Black (14 percent improvement), enrolled in community college (25 percent improvement), and Pell recipients (19 percent improvement).

- **Reduced time to degree.** When controlling for an adult student's transfer credits and enrollment intensity (average number of courses they take at a time), adult completers with PLA credit have a shorter time to degree compared to similar students without PLA.
- **Increased residential credit earning.** With adult students with PLA being more likely to persist to a degree, they also earned more residential credit from the institution, compared to non-PLA adult students. Across all institutions, the average number of additional residential credits earned by adult PLA students was 17.6, roughly the equivalent of a semester.

These and other findings in the forthcoming report provide strong evidence that PLA can be an important tool for helping students leverage what they already know and can do and apply that learning towards a postsecondary credential. And yet, even at the institutions participating in our study, the proportion of adult students who take advantage of PLA is small – only about 10 percent of the adult students in our sample had earned credit from PLA. To be sure, not every student is likely to have sufficient knowledge or skills that qualify them for PLA, or the knowledge they do have is not aligned with their chosen program of study. But we know that PLA is usually not well advertised and not integrated into institutional offerings or advising. Students who use PLA often do so only after hearing about it through word of mouth. There is a lot more that colleges and universities could and should be doing to make PLA more accessible to students. Doing so can help more of them finish what they start and finish more quickly.

Recommendations:

As the findings cited above show, PLA matters because it can help students persist and complete degrees and other credentials while also supporting institutional enrollment. Data show that those students who are granted credit for their existing knowledge take more credits at the institution. The value of PLA is not just limited to the higher education system. More could and should be done

to incorporate strategies to recognize prior learning in other learning and training environments, particularly in workforce development. And in the coming effort to restart the economy and speed its recovery, effective policies and practices around PLA have the potential to create more efficient pathways for economic mobility and increase student success and credential completion—especially for adults. With a potentially massive population of displaced workers, developing efficient pathways to help them develop new skills and earn new credentials will be a crucial piece of the recovery.

At a time of significant resource constraints, institutions, higher education systems, workforce agencies, and states will need to be creative about doing more with less. Yet, at the same time, they will also need to find ways to help students and job seekers accelerate to degrees and credentials in every way possible, which should include strategies for recognizing and valuing prior learning.

The following recommendations can improve policies and practices related to PLA:

1. Postsecondary institutions and workforce development agencies should make sure that PLA options are available and promoted as a key part of degree programs and workforce training initiatives
2. Postsecondary institutions and workforce development agencies should establish systematic processes that ensure students fully understand PLA opportunities that may be available to them.
3. Policymakers at the state and federal levels should adjust current financial aid models to cover expenses related to the assessment of prior learning.
4. Institutions and systems must build creative partnerships to scale PLA options and capacity to quickly respond to students' and workers' needs.

In each of these recommendations, we include considerations to ensure equitable access to PLA opportunities for students of color and/or low-income backgrounds.

Recommendation 1. Make sure that PLA options are available and promoted as a key part of degree programs and workforce training initiatives. Tens of millions of people have lost their jobs during this crisis, and many will need education and training to prepare them for new jobs and careers. Colleges and workforce programs should make sure that what these workers

already know and can do will be recognized and count toward degrees and certification programs.

COVID-19 has led to job losses on a scale not seen since the Great Depression. Strada Education Network has been surveying Americans during this crisis and findings from June 2020 surveys show that Black Americans and Latino Americans have been hit hardest.³ Twenty-four percent of Latinos and 23 percent of Blacks have reported being laid off since March 25, 2020 compared to 15 percent of white Americans.⁴ Fifty percent of Latinos and 42 percent of Black Americans reported changing or canceling their education plans compared to just 26 percent of white survey respondents.⁵

In our own interviews with students prior to the pandemic, we spoke to two adult college students who had lost long-time jobs in 2017 and 2018 after their respective companies shut down. They both shared that they believed they needed to earn a college degree if they wanted to get a job at the same level as their prior job. A displaced 50-year-old man said, "If I wanted to take a role anywhere close to what I was doing before [that I earned by] growing up in the company... what I found was that for similar roles, they want a degree."⁶

They also both reported benefiting from PLA. The other displaced worker we interviewed had worked at a company for 35 years. When her company was shutting down, she participated in a program sponsored by the local workforce development board in collaboration with her employer and local community college. She was able to complete a two-year degree in just one year and attributed PLA credits to her success: "For me going back and being able to do what I did with the portfolios and history was a godsend. Because you know I had 35 years of experience and business under my belt and I was afraid that I was not going to be able to utilize that information." In fact, she was able to earn 18 credits through completing portfolios in IT and business administration, demonstrating the learning she had gained on the job over the past several decades.

At this current time of significant employment displacement, we are likely to see many individuals who turn to education and training as pathways to new occupations. Postsecondary institutions need to examine how to strengthen or expand PLA offerings to help more of these individuals get there faster and at a lower cost. PLA should then be a key selling point in how individuals can reach their education and career goals sooner. Promoting PLA as an acceleration strategy is an important solution

for this moment, but it should not be the role of colleges and universities alone. Workforce development programs also need to be part of the solution. They need to provide ways to recognize an individual trainee's learning from their work and life experience and work closely with postsecondary institutions to ensure seamless transitions between workforce training programs and postsecondary degrees, such as developing crosswalks between non-credit training and credit-bearing courses and programs.

Institutions and workforce boards can work together to make sure that PLA options are part and parcel of up-skilling, re-skilling and credentialing opportunities for displaced workers.

Recommendation 2. Postsecondary institutions and workforce training providers should establish systematic processes that ensure students fully understand PLA opportunities that may be available to them. This must occur at multiple points, including recruitment/intake, matriculation, and as students near graduation.

COVID-19 has not only affected the workforce, but also current students as their institutions have moved their offerings to remote instruction for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester. As institutions continue remote learning through summer 2020 and likely some combination of online, hybrid, and in-person courses in the 2020-21 academic year, information about PLA policies and opportunities should be conveyed early and often to their students.

While many regional accreditors have required institutions to make available to students information regarding any PLA policies that they may have, institutions vary in their practices.⁷ Data from the forthcoming study by CAEL and WICHE suggest that few of the 72 participating institutions have really embedded PLA into their overall strategies for working with adult learners, and not a lot of marketing and outreach is done. Only 36 percent of the 72 institutions tell students about PLA at recruitment events, 39 percent mention PLA during enrollment, and 43 percent mention PLA during individual advising sessions.⁸

In the brief for the *Recognizing Learning in the 21st Century* series written by NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, one of the key findings from a survey of member institutions was that institutions may have only a few advising professionals who are responsible for providing PLA-related guidance to the entire undergraduate population.⁹ One of their survey

respondents likened their institution's limited access to PLA to being like "a secret club." This finding supports data from the CAEL-WICHE study and suggests that simply knowing about PLA is a significant obstacle for students to overcome before their pre-existing knowledge can be fully valued: institutions where advisors talk regularly with students about PLA have a 14 percent PLA take-up rate, compared to a 4 percent take-up rate at institutions without such practices incorporated into regular advising.¹⁰ This raises significant equity concerns as first-generation students and others whose families and social circles have less experience in higher education would be less likely than their more privileged peers to learn about PLA from a non-institutional source. Without institutions proactively making PLA opportunities known to all students, students from less privileged backgrounds will continue to be left out.

In WICHE's interviews with students prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, several recommended that advisors reach out to students with information about PLA early in their college career so that students wouldn't take a similar class for which they could have earned PLA credit. Another forthcoming brief focusing on PLA at finds that many students rely on PLA credits in their final semester in order to graduate.¹¹ Indeed, one of the students interviewed for that brief reported the importance of CLEP exams in meeting his completion goal:

Before I chose Voorhees College, I went to several other institutions. I had a lot of credits and courses from these institutions. I wanted to major in Business Administration and was able to come in as a sophomore. Two years later, I was informed that one of my general education courses did not transfer. My advisor told me about CLEP. I took the test and passed and as a result I received course credit. I am on track to graduate in May 2020 and I will be the first person in my family to graduate.¹²

This anecdote shows the impact that an advisor can have, and underscores the sometimes-haphazard path through which students find out about these opportunities. Leaving aside the question of transfer of courses, having the option to use CLEP saved the student an additional semester of coursework before graduation.

Data from the participating institutions also show that using PLA at the end of students' academic journey is, in fact, a common practice, particularly for methods like portfolio assessment and standardized exams like CLEP.

Among students with PLA credit who went on to graduate, up to 20 percent of the PLA credits they obtained were in the final semesters prior to earning a degree.¹³ In fact, among these would-be graduates, as much of 49 percent of portfolio credit, and 43 percent of PLA credit from a standardized exam, was acquired/posted during the student's last enrollment year.

Many students' entire lives have been disrupted by the stay-at-home orders during the pandemic. If they were lucky enough to stay employed, they may be scrambling to do their jobs and care for their children, while worrying about their health and their economic futures. Regular college coursework may have had to take a back seat to these concerns. They may have had to drop out or may be struggling to fulfill course-based assignments. This can be particularly distressing for students who are close to graduation. Colleges should consider how to use PLA to help these student capture what they already know or as an alternative credit-earning strategy for the last block of credits they may need.

For those potential students who are looking to reskill or upskill, ensuring that they are able to receive appropriate credit for knowledge they already possess can be an important factor in helping them complete a credential. Having to find their way into a "secret club" is certainly less than ideal. Institutions can systematically provide clear and uniform information at multiple touch points.

Recommendation 3. Policymakers at the state and federal levels should adjust current financial aid models to cover expenses related to the assessment of prior learning.

Current and prospective students are already worried about the cost of postsecondary education due to the COVID-19 outbreak. FAFSA applications for returning students are down five percent compared to the same time last year and the decline is even greater for students from low-income backgrounds.¹⁴ Researchers at the Community College Research Center recently used IPEDS data to look at community college enrollment trends among adults immediately following the Great Recession. While there was a surge of enrollments of displaced workers in community colleges after 2008, a similar surge post-COVID might not be as likely if college is less affordable for those who need it most. Research suggests that in recent years, "adults without college degrees or training have also been increasingly relegated to contingent, low-wage jobs, and it has been increasingly

difficult for such individuals to find the time and resources needed to attend college—and that was before COVID.”¹⁵ In April 2020, the American Council on Education (ACE) wrote a letter to the U.S. Senate that highlights many of the financial needs of students, families, and institutions due to COVID-19. In the letter, ACE writes, “we estimate that a 20 percent increase in the current level of unmet need of nearly \$60 billion will require an additional \$12 billion in need-based financial aid” due to students and families earning less and needing more to enroll in college.¹⁶

Cost has been identified as a barrier to students taking advantage of PLA prior to COVID-19.¹⁷ Institutions expend resources to assess prior learning, whether by developing and administering exams, evaluating portfolios, or consulting third-party credit recommendation guides, and often pass these costs on to students through fees.¹⁸ Currently, fees associated with PLA are not eligible for federal financial aid through Title IV, which means that most students must shoulder the cost of credit for PLA. (Note: GI Bill education benefits do cover the costs of standardized exams such as CLEP and DSST.) Because students are not able to apply their financial aid awards to PLA credits, some students, particularly those who are from low-income backgrounds, are not able to take advantage of this opportunity. In the research study conducted by CAEL and WICHE, 16 percent of adults who were not Pell recipients earned PLA credit, compared to only 7 percent of adult students who were Pell recipients. Yet, Pell recipients benefit from PLA, with completion rates that are 6 percent higher than non-Pell students due to PLA, when controlling for other factors, including age.¹⁹

However, the state of Indiana and the Experimental Sites initiative at the U.S. Department of Education offer examples in which students have used state or federal financial aid for PLA-related fees. In 2017, Indiana passed legislation that allows students to use state financial aid award dollars to “pay for costs associated with a PLA that the student attempts to earn during the academic year in which the student receives the grant, scholarship, or remission of fees.”²⁰ The Department’s Experimental Sites Initiative has allowed a small number of institutions to allow students to use federal financial aid for the costs associated with PLA. Although the program has been running since 2015, the Department has not yet released evaluation data. Interim analyses suggest students can benefit when they are able to access financial aid for PLA opportunities: in separate analyses of participating institutions, researchers found that students are more

likely to use PLA, save tuition dollars, and complete at higher rates.²¹

Given the COVID-19 outbreak, the demonstrated effectiveness of PLA, and the potential benefits PLA confers upon students, states ought to consider passing legislation that would allow students to use state financial aid awards to cover the costs related to PLA. In order to keep costs low while simultaneously supporting students, states could consider placing a cap on the covered costs (Indiana covers less than 50 percent of the full tuition and fees for an equivalent number of credits at one of their community colleges).²² Furthermore, the Department and Congress should move expeditiously to allow students to use federal financial aid to cover PLA expenses, while also providing necessary guardrails against waste, fraud, and abuse. In addition, the eventual reauthorization of the Higher Education Act should reconsider how federal financial aid can support alternative forms of credit-earning that recognize learning in all its forms.

Recommendation 4: To scale PLA options and capacity in this moment, institutions and systems can build creative partnerships to quickly respond to students’ and workers’ needs.

As noted above, there is a lot more that institutions can be doing to promote and expand PLA options that already exist. Not only has research shown that PLA can be good for students, but that it can also be a net-positive for institutional bottom-lines as students who receive prior learning credit are likely to take more credits than those who do not.²³ The keys to scaling PLA within an institution are typically to develop appropriate policies, design student-centered processes, and to engage and train staff, as many of CAEL’s members have done. In this moment, however, postsecondary institutions may want to find ways to scale PLA more quickly. This imperative for speed is made more difficult by the immediate and long-term fiscal challenges that institutions are now facing.

The question then becomes how institutions can quickly scale up capacity to provide these opportunities to students. One option is by leveraging strategic partnerships with other institutions. Charter Oak State College, Connecticut’s online public institution, has a long-standing history of offering a variety of PLA opportunities to its students and provides expertise and resources to other institutions with less robust PLA programs.²⁴ For example, Central Connecticut State University faculty and advisors send students with eligible experiences and

prior learning to Charter Oak, where they enroll as visiting students in the Prior Learning Portfolio Development course.²⁵ Upon successful completion of this course and any subsequent portfolio submissions, students can then transfer the credits they earn at Charter Oak back to their home institution. If institutions would prefer to administer the portfolio assessments on their home campus, Charter Oak has a process in place to provide as much or as little support as the institution would like.

Institutions in the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) system have also leveraged Charter Oak's experience in conducting Connecticut Credit Assessment Program (CCAP) reviews of non-collegiate learning to make credit recommendations as a way for eligible students to earn PLA on their campus. For example, several community colleges who were partnering with a local employer, TRUMPF Manufacturing, asked Charter Oak to review the manufacturing apprenticeship program at TRUMPF so that students could use that PLA credit to complete their associates degrees.²⁶ The community college faculty who taught in that program served on the review team led by Charter Oak to make the credit recommendations.

Another promising example is the partnership between Southern New Hampshire University, Delaware State University, and Thurgood Marshall College Fund as a way to bring PLA to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which to this date, have had a small PLA focus.²⁷ This partnership aims to recruit non-completers and provide a range of services (including PLA opportunities) and support programs to help them complete. Because Delaware State does not have an existing PLA program, it has chosen to partner with Southern New Hampshire University – which has strong PLA options – to provide that service.

These non-traditional models of cooperation and partnership in postsecondary education point to ways that institutions can quickly develop capacity to provide PLA options in ways that benefit students without sacrificing academic quality.

Conclusion

The current economy and the higher education landscape look drastically different than they did in February 2020 when institutions of higher education began considering moving the remainder of the semester online. As we move through this crisis, some students will find that they need to focus on work for the time being and/or cannot think about their postsecondary studies for a while. Many employees will find themselves out of a job that they have had anywhere from a few to several dozen years and will turn to postsecondary education to better position themselves in the job market. Even in the best of circumstances, students deserve to have knowledge and skills that meet postsecondary standards formally recognized. As institutions prepare to be a key component of economic recovery and face both a potential influx of students and significant fiscal challenges, broad and equitable PLA policies can and must be part of their overall approach.

Forthcoming briefs will detail additional policy and practice approaches for scaling PLA and ensuring equity for students and institutions.

Endnotes

¹ Council for Adult and Experiential Learning and Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, *The Boost from PLA: Results from a Targeted Study of Adult Student Outcomes*, (Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education), forthcoming.

² As researchers ourselves, CAEL and WICHE recognize that it is highly irregular to provide these types of findings without a discussion of the methodology and more details about the sample. Such information is included in the forthcoming report and any with further interest in these results or supporting information should contact Sarah Leibrandt at sleibrandt@wiche.edu.

³ Strada Education Network, Public Viewpoint, "COVID-19 Work and Education Survey", accessed June 15, 2020, <https://www.stradaeducation.org/publicviewpoint/>

⁴ Strada Education Network, "Public Viewpoint."

⁵ Strada Education Network, "Public Viewpoint."

⁶ Sarah Leibrandt, *PLA from the Student's Perspective: Lessons Learned from Survey and Interview Data*, (Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education), forthcoming.

⁷ Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, *Holding Tight or at Arm's Length: How Higher Education Regional Accrediting Bodies Address PLA*, (Indianapolis, IN: Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 2014), 7. Alexei Matveev, "Survey of Non-Credit to Credit Conversion Activities: Key Highlights." PowerPoint Presentation, Connecting Credentials Presentation, 2018, Atlanta, GA.

⁸ CAEL and WICHE, *The Boost from PLA*.

⁹ Amelia Parnell and Alexa Wesley, *Advising and Prior Learning Assessment for Degree Completion*, (Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education), forthcoming.

¹⁰ CAEL and WICHE, *The Boost from PLA*.

¹¹ Amy Goldstein, *HBCUs and Prior Learning Assessments*, (Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education), forthcoming.

¹² Goldstein, *HBCUs*.

¹³ There was notable enough "noise" in the data about the date of PLA credit acquisition/transcripting, that we present the results here in terms of what was acquired during these students' last 12 months of enrollment, rather than more specifically in last semester or quarter terms.

¹⁴ Bill DeBaun, News - Financial Aid, "New Data: Nearly 250,000 Fewer Low-Income FAFSA Renewals This Cycle Nationally," Accessed on May 7, 2020 <https://www.ncan.org/news/505741/New-Data-Nearly-250000-Fewer-Low-Income-FAFSA-Renewals-This-Cycle-Nationally.htm>.

¹⁵ Davis Jenkins and John Fink, The Mixed Methods Blog, "How Will COVID-19 Affect Community College Enrollment? Looking to the Great Recession for Clues," accessed on May 7, 2020, <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/easyblog/covid-community-college-enrollment.html>.

¹⁶ Ted Mitchell, "Higher Education Fourth Supplemental Letter," accessed on May 7, 2020, <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Letter-Senate-Higher-Ed-Supplemental-Request-040920.pdf>.

¹⁷ Wendy Kilgore, *An Examination of Prior Learning Assessment Policy and Practice as Experienced by Academic Records Professionals and Students*, (Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education), forthcoming.

¹⁸ Tucker Plumlee and Rebecca Klein-Collins, *Financial Aid for Prior Learning Assessment: Early Successes and Lessons from the U.S. Department of Education's Experimental Sites Initiative*, (Indianapolis, IN: Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 2017), 2.

¹⁹ CAEL and WICHE, *The Boost from PLA*.

²⁰ Ind. Code § IC 21-12-17-1 (2019), accessed May 13, 2020, <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/laws/2019/ic/titles/021/#21-12-17-1>.

²¹ Plumlee and Klein-Collins, *Financial Aid*.

²² Ind. Code § IC 21-12-17-1.

²³ CAEL and WICHE, *The Boost from PLA*.

²⁴ Charter Oak State College, "Prior Learning Assessment", accessed on June 10, 2020 at <https://www.charteroak.edu/prior-learning-assessment/>.

²⁵ Linda Wilder (director of Prior Learning Assessment, Charter Oak State University) phone conversation on June 13, 2020.

²⁶ Charter Oak State College, "TRUMPF Manufacturing Apprenticeship Programs", accessed on June 18, 2020 at <https://www.charteroak.edu/prior-learning-assessment/ccap/trumpf-manufacturing.php>.

²⁷ Goldstein, *HBCUs*.

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Patrick Lane is the vice president of WICHE's Policy Analysis and Research unit. Previously, he was the director of data initiatives. Lane has coordinated several initiatives at WICHE focused on identifying policy and practice solutions to help adults with prior college credit return to postsecondary education to complete their degrees. He also coordinated WICHE's College Access Regional Network, which focused on increasing the number of low-income students prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. Lane came to WICHE having spent several years working in education policy in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Lane received a master's degree from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University and completed a Ph.D. in public administration at the University of Colorado Denver.

About CAEL

The **Council for Adult and Experiential Learning**

(CAEL), a Strada Education Network affiliate, is a nonprofit organization that champions adult learners and brings together educators, employers and regions to create solutions that integrate work and learning. We help create pathways for adults through learning that has recognizable and relevant value to employers.



About WICHE

For more than 65 years, the

Western Interstate

Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) has been strengthening higher education, workforce development, and behavioral health throughout the region. As an interstate compact, WICHE partners with states, territories, and postsecondary institutions to share knowledge, create resources, and develop innovative solutions that address some of our society's most pressing needs. From promoting high-quality, affordable postsecondary education to helping states get the most from their technology investments and addressing behavioral health challenges, WICHE improves lives across the West through innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy.





About Lumina Foundation: Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation in Indianapolis that is committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all. Lumina envisions a system that is easy to navigate, delivers fair results, and meets the nation's need for talent through a broad range of credentials. Lumina's goal is to prepare people for informed citizenship and for success in a global economy. Learn more at luminafoundation.org.



About Strada Education Network: Strada Education Network is a national nonprofit dedicated to improving lives by catalyzing more direct and promising pathways between education and employment. Strada engages partners across education, nonprofits, business, and government to focus relentlessly on students' success throughout all phases of their working lives. With these partners they address critical college-to-career challenges through strategic philanthropy, research and insights, and mission-aligned affiliates, all focused on advancing the universal right to realized potential. Learn more at stradaeducation.org.



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