Learning Recognition and the Future of Higher Education – A

Vision for a Post-Pandemic Learning Ecosystem. September 2020. This brief is part of a broad landscape analysis focused on policy and practice issues related to the recognition of prior learning. The brief 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. *https://www.wiche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/cael_suny-brief-0920.pdf*

"Originally developed as part of a social justice movement within higher education, the various methods of recognizing learning…began with an equity perspective. These methods were designed to recognize and validate knowledge gained outside of the academy in order to expand access for individuals traditionally left out of the higher education system. The early PLA equity agenda focused on both who could attend higher education and what knowledge could be recognized."

We can no longer think of education and training as separate types of learning that should never meet or be reserved for certain people and not others. Education should prepare us for the changing nature of work. Training on and off the job that engages us over our entire lives should equip us with the skills most relevant to finding and keeping meaningful work. Such a shift will mean greater use of high-quality online learning that meets the needs of today's students, many of whom are working full time, supporting families, or are the first in their families to receive an education after high school. The shift will mean more pathways to credentials of value, whether these are college degree and certificate programs, industry certification programs, or options we have yet to imagine.[18]

Key Highlights of this Brief

▸ The future of higher education will require greater alignment between learning and the workplace, a sharper focus on addressing issues of equity and inclusion, and effective strategies to customize learning for student needs. Each of these characteristics will be supported by tools and strategies that recognize and value learning regardless of how or where that learning is acquired.

▸ Recognition of learning will need to be more efficient, effective, and equitable – and will need to leverage technology in new ways.

▸ Key considerations will be how to change institutional culture to be more supportive of these changes; how postsecondary and workforce can align learning expectations; how postsecondary funding models can support flexible and less transactional forms of learning recognition; and how workforce and higher education data systems and funding streams can be more integrated.

Understanding & Serving Adult Learnings

60 minutes; free; self-paced; https://www.cael.org/resources/microcourse
This self-paced one-hour microcourse is designed to build awareness and understanding of the challenges adult learners face and demonstrate the power that postsecondary professionals have to address and remove those barriers. This training is designed for teaching faculty and adjunct professors, leadership, student-facing managers, and marketing staff.

Credit for Prior Learning
Reports of Interest
October 2020

The follow [briefs](#) are part of WICHE & CAEL's research initiative to inform policy and practice for improved prior learning assessment

- **[Recognizing Prior Learning in the COVID-19 Era: Helping Displaced Workers and Students One Credit at a Time](#)**; July 2020

"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, saving time and money in the process."

- **[Advising and Prior Learning Assessment for Degree Completion](#)**; August 2020

Key Highlights of this Brief

▶ Navigational help: Advisors play a critical frontline role in helping students navigate the PLA process.

▶ Informing all students: Institutions should prioritize PLA in messaging to all students.

▶ Methods that work for all students: Methods of PLA should be more inclusive of all learner experiences and preferences.

▶ Technology-enabled personalized advising: Effective advising about PLA should be technology-enabled, personalized, and easily understandable.

"Every student that comes to us is not a blank slate. Every student comes to us with learning, no matter the age. Our older adult students will have learning from professional experiences or professional non-credit training or some other elements, and when we talk about equity and we think about the value of perspectives that all students bring into our institution [prior learning] ought to be recognized."

"Without a shift in institutional philosophy about what counts as learning, advisors find that only certain types of students – namely traditional college-age students who earned IB or AP credit from courses in high school – tend to have their learning recognized."

- **[An Examination of Prior Learning Assessment Policy and Practice as Experienced by Academic Records Professionals and Students](#)**; July 2020

"Fewer than one-third of institutions track PLA data over time and it is rarely tracked at the student level (making it difficult to identify any potential equity issues)."

More briefs available at: https://www.wiche.edu/key-initiatives/recognition-of-learning/

The PLA Boost: Results from a 72-Institution Targeted Study of Prior Learning Assessment and Adult Student Outcomes
October 2020

Executive Summary | Full Report | Fact Sheet | Overview and Online Resources

- 30 of the 72 participating institutions were Community Colleges

PLA boosted credential completion

Adult students credential completion rates:

49% with PLA   **27%** without PLA

Using propensity score matching to control for other factors, PLA boosted adult student completion rates by:

17% All PLA methods   **30%** PLA methods excluding credit rec's for military

Yet PLA used by only about 1 in 10 adult students

11% Adult students earned college credit for their prior learning through PLA

PLA has potential to close equity gaps in postsecondary completion

Using propensity score matching to control for other factors, PLA boosted completion rates for key adult student groups by:

24% Hispanic adults   **19%** Pell Grant recipients   **14%** Black adults   **25%** Adults at community colleges

The boost to completion was even higher for these groups for certain PLA methods.

Yet PLA use was lowest for adult students who were:
- Black or American Indian/Alaska Native
- Female
- Pell Grant recipients

PLA students earned credits for about a semester of full-time study

On average, adult students earned:

24 PLA credits   **17** PLA credits through methods other than credit rec's for military

Resulting in time savings for degree earners

7 to 12 Months Time saved by adult degree earners with 12 or more PLA credits

Adult students with PLA saved money

$2,200 to $11,600 Estimated adult student savings through PLA, across sectors

Institutions won, too

17.6 More Credits Average additional course credits taken by adult PLA students

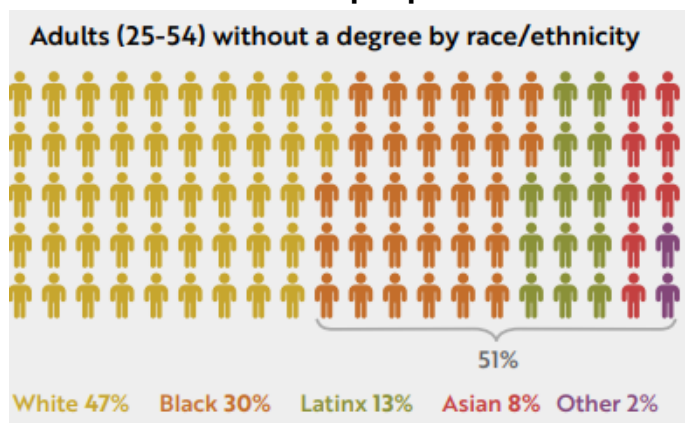**Credit for Prior Learning: Leveraging Past Learning to Close Present-Day Equity Gaps**
August, 2020 | Full Report
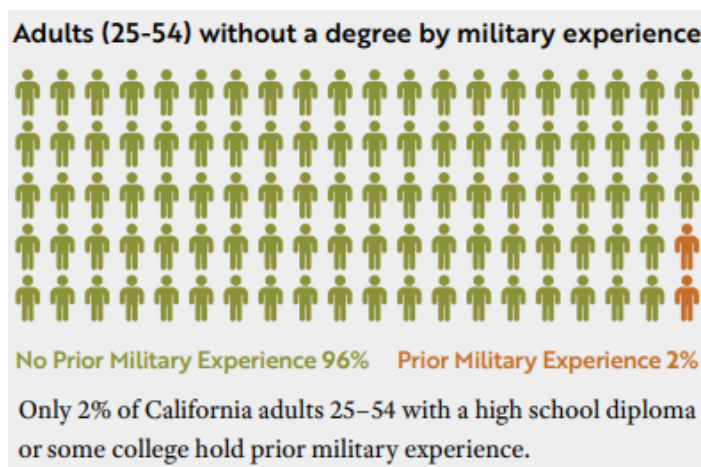
CALIFORNIA COMPETES
HIGHER EDUCATION FOR A STRONG ECONOMY

Key Takeaways

» Inconsistent credit for prior learning (CPL) policies stunt students' access to postsecondary education and potential success.

» Hundreds of thousands of students who could benefit from CPL are not veterans.

» Expanding CPL polices could increase Black adult enrollment by nearly 50 percent.

Most Californians who could benefit from CPL are people of color.

Adults (25-54) without a degree by race/ethnicity

51%

White 47%   Black 30%   Latinx 13%   Asian 8%   Other 2%

While originally established to reintegrate military veterans; CPL must go beyond military

Adults (25-54) without a degree by military experience

No Prior Military Experience 96%   Prior Military Experience 2%

Only 2% of California adults 25–54 with a high school diploma or some college hold prior military experience.

CPL could significantly increase educational attainment for older Black students
"While more Black high school students are enrolling in college, few are completing, and fewer Black students over the age of 25 enroll in college compared to other groups. However, 30 percent of those who could benefit from CPL are Black. If CPL policies were expanded, nearly 50 percent more Black adult students could enroll in college."

Total number of students who could be served by CPL

Latinx	674k	31k
	705k	
White	703k	112k
	815k	
Asian	337k	19k
	356k	
Black	149k	71k
	220k	

■ Currently enrolled in a UC, CSU, or CCC   ■ CPL Eligible
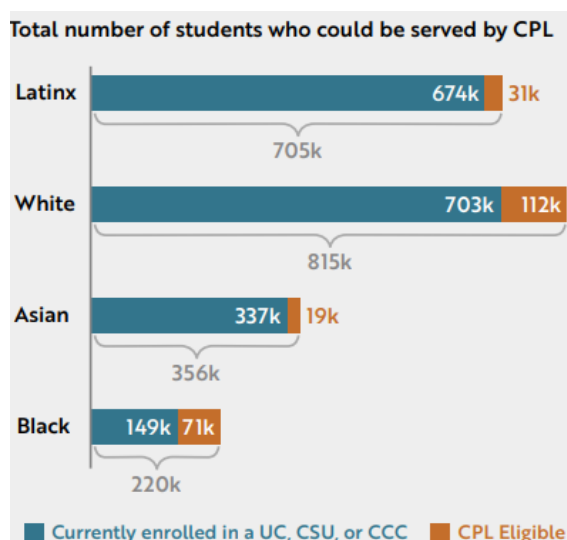
Policy Recommendations for expanding CPL:
1. **Increase the use of relevant work experience to award CPL credits across segments, including work experience beyond the military.**
2. **Consider using CPL as a strategy to support low-income students' financial plans.**
3. **Increase employer partnership to promote degree completion**

Learn more https://californiacompetes.org/assets/general-files/CACompetes_CPL-Brief_Final_8_11.pdf

Credit for Prior Learning
Reports of Interest
October 2020

CCCCO Findings & Recommendations to Expand Credit for Prior Learning
Full report

Findings and Recommendations
to Expand Credit for Prior Learning
as a Vision for Success Strategy

Topics Include:
- Arguments for and Against noting CPL on transcript
- Transfer
- Information Infrastructure
- Process development and documentation
- Counseling and Guided Pathways
- Professional Development

Return on Investment
- If students reduce their time-to-degree by one term (an assumption based on research) the state would save approximately $6,750 per full time equivalent student
- If 4% of enrolled adults in the target population completed one term early as a result of CPL (an assumption based on research), the system avoids paying approximately $569,000 per cohort in state aid
- As more students complete faster, the system would realize a 0.02% increase in throughput, freeing up space for approximately 463 more students per term
- The increase in throughput translates to budget increases for colleges on the Student Centered Funding Formula

Sample Recommendations from the Report
- Integrate CPL into Counseling and Guided Pathways
- All stakeholders (admissions, registrar, institutional research, faculty, etc.) should be aware of their roles and responsibilities related to CPL and should be able to advise students on process
- Students have a right to receive information on CPL.
- CPL will be more transparent and accessible if faculty have a primary role
- Faculty, staff, and administrators need 1) a central repository for resources (templates, assessments, etc.), 2) on-going professional development (such as webinars), and 3) release time or compensation to conduct assessments/cross-walks
- Track student outcomes related to CPL; collect data related to number of CPL units awarded each term, trends in awarding CPL credit, outcomes of students who earn CPL.