

## PLAIO Advisory Board

### Philipp Assinger (Austria)



Philipp Assinger is Assistant Professor at the University of Graz, in Austria, where he is affiliated with the Adult and Continuing Education Unit at the Institute of Educational Science. With a disciplinary background in educational science, he earned his doctorate with a thesis on the history and politics of adult and continuing education in the European Union. Since 2015, Philipp has been researching Prior Learning Assessment in second chance vocational education, industrial workplaces, adult basic education and in international comparative research. He is a member of the scientific board of the FUTURE EDUCATION research network based at the University of Graz

and has been a national accreditation expert for adult basic and second chance education in Austria for several years.

### Deb Carr (Australia)



Bringing extensive international experience in TVET policy, quality assurance, and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Deb specialises in driving impactful changes in skills recognition for vulnerable groups. With a track record spanning UNESCO, government and private sector engagements, international skills recognition projects, and ISO certifications, Deb has shaped policies and frameworks globally. Her expertise in RPL systems and TVET technical design, mentoring and

coaching, and research underscores a commitment to lifelong learning and inclusion. Adept at bridging academia and practice, Deb has contributed significantly to skills recognition and migration initiatives. Deb's passionate about leveraging RPL for social justice and labour market efficiency on any scale.

**Lisa D'Adamo-Weinstein** (United States)



Lisa is a storyteller, university educator, and artist who believes in the transformative power of narrative to shape learning. With over 30 years of leadership in higher education, she currently serves as a Coordinator of the Interdisciplinary/Multidisciplinary Program and Visiting Associate Professor at SUNY Empire State University. Her work focuses on student success/retention; women's ways of knowing; narratives/storytelling; the power of creativity; academic support; and the recognition of learning in all its forms.

As a member of the PLAIO Advisory Board, Lisa brings a deep commitment to Credit for Prior Learning (CPL). She has recently dedicated her scholarship and service to developing prior learning resources that help faculty and students translate learning gained through life experiences into academic credit. This work connects directly to her background as a photographer and digital storyteller—she specializes in finding focus in the details and helping others see their own stories in a new light.

Previously, Lisa served as a Dean and Director of Academic Support, where she championed data-driven decision-making to normalize support services for adult learners. She is also a Past President of the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA). Whether capturing light and shadow in her photography or designing new curricula, Lisa is a lifelong learner who embraces the "joy of serendipity" and the potential of emerging technologies like AI to enhance education.

**Rusty Dolleman** (United States)



Rusty is the Director of Credit for Prior Learning at the University of Southern Maine, in Portland, Maine. He has worked with postsecondary learners of all ages in various capacities for over twenty years. His dissertation focused on the epistemologies of adult students, and how their beliefs about the nature of knowledge may be changed by engaging in the academic portfolio process.

**Meredith Hatch** (United States)



In her role as director of network relations, Meredith Archer Hatch provides leadership in identifying and scaling promising practices across the ATD Network. She is a founding staff member of ATD.

Meredith collaborates throughout ATD and the broader community to deepen connections with ATD Network Colleges. She serves as a member of and ATD's staff lead for the Community College Women

Succeed Advisory Group; a board member for the International Journal on Theory, Research, and Practice of Prior Learning Assessment; and has represented Achieving the Dream on the selection committee for the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. She has co-authored publications related to launching and improving community college workforce partnerships, designing equitable student success efforts, developing standards for prior learning assessment, and increasing students' job readiness and resilience.

Prior to joining ATD, Meredith directed efforts to capture and disseminate promising service-learning strategies and models at state K-12 systems, regional and national nonprofits, and higher education institutions at AmeriCorps, where she also managed a portfolio of multi-year federal grants. She was an invited speaker to the United State Embassy in Slovenia where she presented on service-learning and civic engagement.

**Dae Joong Kang** (South Korea)



Dae Joong Kang, a professor at Seoul National University (SNU), specializes in adult learning and education. Formerly a journalist, he earned his Ph.D. in Adult Education from the University of Georgia in 2006. Kang served as a policy advisor to South Korea's Minister of Education (2006-2008) before joining SNU. His research focuses on adult and lifelong learning theories, alternative learning pathways, and life history methodology. His English-language

publications have appeared in the International Journal of Lifelong Education, Adult Education Quarterly, and with publishers such as Springer and Routledge. From 2021 to 2023, he served as president of the National Institute for Lifelong Education, which plays a key role in shaping South Korea's lifelong learning policies.

**Becky Klein-Collins** (United States)



Becky Klein-Collins is a nationally recognized expert in postsecondary education and workforce development, with a distinguished career at the intersection of research, public policy, and systems change. Exhibiting a deep commitment to expanding economic opportunity through postsecondary learning, she has shaped national conversations on credit for prior learning (CPL), competency-based education, credentialing models, Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLAs), career pathways for

adult learners, and employer talent strategies. Her work consistently translates data into actionable strategy—spanning policy advocacy, cross-sector partnerships, and institutional transformation.

Over more than two decades at the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), Klein-Collins led major research initiatives, advised institutions on adult learner success, influenced state and federal policy, and managed large-scale workforce and education programs. She is best known for her CPL expertise, having led landmark studies showing that CPL improves student persistence and completion, saves time and money, strengthens students' views of themselves as learners, and serves as an important adult learner recruitment tool. Her research has uncovered equity gaps in CPL access—particularly for Black, low-income, and community college students—and has informed institutional and policy changes to close those gaps. In 2024, she launched the first-ever CPL Equity Awards to recognize institutional progress in this area.

Klein-Collins has played a key role in developing CPL tools, guides, and business cases for postsecondary leaders, and has advised on federal policy reform and state system CPL strategies. She served as co-PI on a 2025 national scan of CPL policies with the American Council on Education, producing a policy brief and interactive repository. A frequent speaker and published author, her work has been featured in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and NPR. Currently a Senior Associate at the Center for Academic Innovation, she supports systems and institutions with data-informed strategies to better serve working adults. She holds degrees from Grinnell College, Indiana University, and the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy.

**Fjola Maria Larusdottir** (Iceland)



Fjóla María Lárusdóttir is a team leader at the Education and Training Service Center in Iceland. She has worked in the field of lifelong learning since 2002 with a focus on the development and coordination of a national system for validation of prior learning for people with little formal education, career guidance and counselling and quality assurance in the field.

**Charlotte Nitardy** (United States)



Charlotte Nitardy, Ph.D., is a dedicated educator and leader in Credit for Prior Learning (CPL), providing technical assistance, curriculum development, and advising through Minnesota State's Credit for Prior Learning Assessment Network (CPLAN). CPLAN supports the 26 colleges and seven universities within Minnesota State, helping institutions implement, sustain, and continuously innovate CPL policies and practices.

With over 20 years of experience in CPL as both an administrator and faculty evaluator, Charlotte has a deep understanding of adult learning and CPL assessments. She also serves as Community Faculty in the Psychology Department at Metropolitan State University and has taught within the University of Wisconsin system as well. Charlotte holds a Ph.D. in Education from the University of Minnesota, as well as graduate certificates in Human Resource Development and Adult Education from the same institution. Beyond her professional commitments, Charlotte actively engages in her community. She serves as a School Board member for her local K-12 public school district and participates in various community initiatives advocating for social justice.

**Rekha Rambharose** (South Africa)



**Dr. Rekha Rambharose** is a Teaching and Learning Specialist at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and a nationally and internationally recognised expert in Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), multi-modal pedagogy, policy development and technology-enhanced teaching. She currently serves as the Head of the RPL Unit at UWC, Project Leader of the DHET-funded *Unfurling Post-School Education and Training* initiative, and Chair of the International Association for the Advancement of RPL (IAARPL) Global Forum. Her work is deeply rooted in advancing access to education, promoting social justice, and shaping inclusive policies in the post-school education and training (PSET) sector. Dr. Rambharose leads several strategic projects with a focus on both qualitative and quantitative research in RPL. She is the Principal Investigator of the *Technology-Enhanced RPL Implementation (TERI)* research project, which supports the assessment, upskilling, and academic development of mature adults entering university through alternative pathways. In addition, she serves on the international editorial advisory board of the *Prior Learning Assessment: Inner Outer Workings* journal. Dr. Rambharose plays a pivotal role in policy development and implementation within higher education and is closely affiliated with South African Qualifications Authority and the Council of Higher Education. Beyond her work in education, Dr. Rambharose has a strong scientific background in nanobiotechnology and biochemistry, specialising in drug delivery systems for chemotherapeutic applications. She holds a UK patent for her contributions to nano drug delivery technologies, has published extensively, and has co-authored several book chapters

in the field. Currently submitted an MPhil in Higher Education at Stellenbosch University, focused on the live experiences of RPL learners in digital environments. Rekha remains committed to educational transformation, equity, and policy innovation. As a passionate advocate for education, social justice, lifelong learning, access, and student success, she continues to bridge science and education to develop impactful, interdisciplinary solutions.

**Catherine Wanjiru (Kenya)**



Catherine Wanjiru serves as Secretariat for the Kenya Skills Development Community of Practice (Recognition of Prior Learning [RPL] Theme), coordinating stakeholders to build evidence, document best practices, and strengthen national skills recognition systems. She also serves as RPL Lead Consultant for Udhabeti Africa and Mama Plus Kenya on their childcare programs, designing and implementing RPL frameworks to certify informal caregivers and early childhood development practitioners. She is a dynamic and passionate

RPL and Gender Specialist with over 10 years of experience in Kenya's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector, an expert in mainstreaming gender equality and inclusion into RPL processes, TVET curricula, and skills development programs. Catherine Wanjiru has a proven history of empowering marginalized communities, particularly women and youth in informal settlements by bridging informal skills with formal certification pathways. She is committed to advancing equitable access to TVET opportunities in alignment with Kenya's RPL Policy Framework (2024), TVET Act (2013), and national gender mainstreaming guidelines.

**Laura Widger (Ireland)**



Dr Widger holds the position of Head of Department (Education) in the Faculty of Education and Lifelong Learning at South East Technological University. As Head of Department of Education, she leads a team in the development and delivery of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes for education professionals working across the spectrum of education. The Department offers innovative continuing professional development (CPD) and postgraduate research opportunities for Irish and international educators to enhance their learning, research and career opportunities.

Previously, Dr Widger worked as Assistant Head of Department linking with Principal Investigators, for the Faculty's National and EU funded research projects and collaborating with the advisory groups on the implementation plans, monitoring and operational management of funded research projects. She has acted as academic project manager on several large scale research and education projects, including those funded by the Higher

Education Authority, Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union and the National Forum for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.

Laura has worked in Higher Education since 2004 as assistant lecturer, eLearning Coordinator and was previously Head of Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) at Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) before moving into the role of AHOD (Education). As Head of TEL, Laura was actively involved in providing leadership and instrumental in creating, initiating, implementing and evaluating a range of strategic projects including the successful introduction of the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and the development of the WIT Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning (CTEL). She is also co-founder of the WIT TEL Community of Practice (CoP).

Laura holds a Bachelor of Science in Commercial Software Development and a Masters in Science from WIT and Doctorate in Education from University College London Institute of Education. Her doctoral research focused on lecturers' perceptions on the inclusion of Digital Learning Design in professional undergraduate curricula. Laura was deputy president of Irish Learning Technology Association (ILTA) for seven years which involved co-chairing an annual national conference and establishing the Irish Journal of Technology Enhanced Learning.