

Reviewing Workplace College-Level Learning: Creating a Consortium

Marc Singer and Regina Riccioni, Thomas Edison State College, New Jersey, USA;
Nan L. Travers, SUNY Empire State College, New York, USA

On February 26, 2013, a group of administrators from Charter Oak State College of Connecticut, Empire State College (The State University of New York), Excelsior College of New York, Granite State College of New Hampshire, Thomas Edison State College of New Jersey and Vermont State Colleges met to discuss the potential and value of creating a consortium focused, at least initially, on academic reviews of training and credentials offered by government, non-profits, businesses, the military and other organizations. Each of these institutions already assesses various training and certifications, and recommends college credits for equivalent college-level learning.

What initiated this meeting?

Prior Learning Assessment is suddenly a hot topic in higher education. Although new to many institutions, the colleges represented by the consortium have been conducting Prior Learning Assessment for over 40 years. Our institutions believe the time has come to work together to create shared process standards, share resources and increase the awareness of the academic value awarding college credit for workplace learning equivalent to that gained in higher education. This comes at a time when the very idea of college-level learning and the meaning of the credit hour are being disputed.

As seasoned institutions with considerable experience serving adult learners (over 240 years combined!), we have seen the benefits of Prior Learning Assessment and the pitfalls when standards are not adhered to in any part of the evaluation process. With current expansions in new PLA opportunities, the consortium sees this as an opportune time to consolidate our experiences and provide guidance on good practice and standards. We do not intend to replace the CAEL standards for programs focused on the assessment of a student's prior learning portfolio, but rather augment these standards, with special attention given to evaluating training and certifications.

Collectively, we hope to:

- help the PLA field set standards for engaging in the review of training or credentialing for credit;
- make recommendations for policies and practices to support processes for conducting reviews and for awarding credit; and
- pool our resources so that the reviews make academic and financial sense, not only for our academic institutions, but also for our students and for the organizations that sponsor training programs.

Over the next few months we intend to:

- create a common database that will enable students and institutions to capitalize on the reviews completed and made available to students by consortium members;
- agree upon common standards required to conduct reviews and recommend credit;
- create common policy language for workplace college-level learning in order to develop high academic

standards for our institutions and accrediting bodies;

- develop recommendations for other institutions to establish processes to assess workplace college-level learning; and
- invite interested, non-academic institutional partners to work with us as affiliate members to meet our mutual goals.

For more information regarding the consortium please contact:

Marc Singer

Regina Riccioni

Nan Travers

msinger@tesc.edu

rriccioni@tesc.edu

nan.travers@esc.edu