

# **Turbocharging an Equitable COVID-19 Recovery through Prior Learning Assessment**

**November 9, 2021  
SHEEO Higher Education Policy Conference**

**Rebecca Klein-Collins, CAEL**

**Amelia Parnell, NASPA**

**Alexa Welsey, NASPA**

**Patrick Lane, WICHE**

# Benefits of PLA/CPL (Credit for Prior Learning) for Adult Students/Institutions

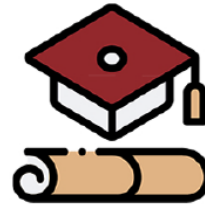
They save  
time and  
money



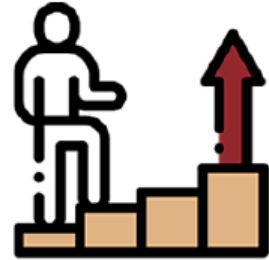
They feel  
validated  
as learners



More adult  
students  
graduate

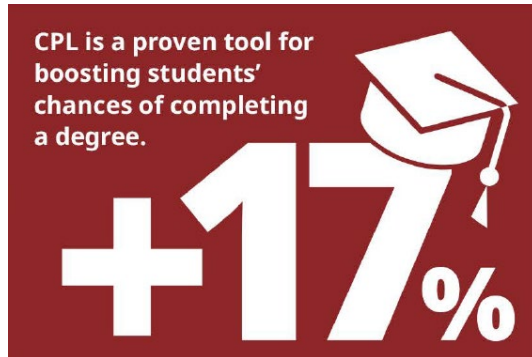


They persist  
and take  
more classes



# New Research on Completion Benefit of PLA/Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) – CAEL and WICHE

More adult students graduate



Key groups of adult students benefit



	PLA Boost to Completion
Black Adults	▲ 14%
Hispanic Adults	▲ 24%
Pell Grant (Low Income)	▲ 33%
Adult at Community College	▲ 25%

# 2021 Research Report: Equity Paradoxes in *The PLA Boost*

**Possible contributing factors for why Black and lower income students are less likely to have earned PLA/CPL credit:**

- Cost to students
- The amount and nature of outreach, marketing, and support
- Adaptivity of institutional policies and processes
- Individual adult learner self-confidence

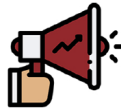
# Proposed Mitigation Strategies for Institutions (1 of 2)



Prioritize equity in the design of PLA/CPL programs.



Develop financial supports for low-income students or provide PLA/CPL free of charge.



Improve PLA/CPL communications to students.



Embed PLA/CPL systemically in advising and curriculum.

# Proposed Mitigation Strategies for Institutions (2 of 2)



Improve data infrastructure and analysis to understand where equity gaps exist.



Provide PLA/CPL offerings for learning that occurs in a wide range of occupations.



Scale processes for simpler PLA/CPL crosswalks between industry-developed skills and academic programs.

# ROLE OF ADVISORS & PLA

- Advisors play a critical front-line role in helping students navigate the PLA process
- Access to PLA is often like getting into “**a secret club.**” There is a need to proactively identify candidates for PLA and initiate advisor conversations.
  - Create centralized location/hub of information that is easy to find and navigate
  - Proactively conduct pre-assessment efforts to gauge eligibility of students for PLA
  - Incorporate PLA-related trainings and PD into existing routines and information-sharing opportunities
  - Connect with students to gather information and refine PLA practice

# DEVELOP FORMAL PLA PROCESSES AND POLICIES

- 56% of respondents said that their institution does not require coaches and advisors to talk about PLA with students
- Need for wide-spread awareness and understandings of policies and practices helps ensure equitable student experiences around PLA
- Policymakers should support efforts to provide additional PLA-related training and other professional development for faculty, staff, and administrators.