SHARING FORUM

Prior Learning Assessment

Develop a mechanism for awarding academic credit for prior learning.

Southwestern Illinois College

Triton College

Discussion Panel: Waubonsee Community College

Kishwaukee College

Oakton Community College

What BENEFITS have you seen for your students due to PLA?

Eliminates redundancy. Do they really have the experience. Cost effective. Sets a baseline for credentials. Trying to create a system. Facilitate student vs only being in the catalog. How to note on transcript?

Counselors finding skill basis to achieved requirements. Work experience. Instructors able to gauge student reactions/actions to send to counselor to see if they can achieve credits once they are in the course. Getting students through certificate/degree faster.

Being able to complete a program in a shorter amount of time. Eliminate redundancy. SWIC number of ways to award: formal process in catalog to challenge class. CLEP. Manufacturing program coordinators work with students to assess prior learning as they come in to the first class and initial meeting to decide best fit. Award outside of challenge exam, faculty provides student with assessment, goes to dean/vice president for additional signature, if they receive no charge to the student, faculty initiated process. Department or faculty member willingness to accept prior credit. Experience = working toward retention. Former credit award more likely to be successful.

Two process: proficiency exam and portfolio for life experience evaluation. Exam, used more across college for particular classes. Student/faculty working together, student will want to do proficiency, but prefer class. Benefit for students to acknowledge skills from employment and life experiences, empowering for students.

Do not complete portfolios as much as proficiency exam. Exam will be charged to compensate faculty worker involved.

Portfolios, exams. Articulation agreements – program, went to area organizations who provide corporate training to match course competency. Any student who goes through their program receive the corresponding credit. Collaboration with business partners. Adult learners acknowledges they can do college level work, validation they are college material.

Ways to garner additional revenue. Customized training working with for credits.

Providing with ESL training, teaching instructors – TMA, pool of students can recruit at organizations.

What BARRIERS to the process did you encounter implementing PLA?

Red tape of college, forms to fill out, registrar’s office, when a student comes in vs when faculty can assess prior learning.

When do you look at them for PLA?

Divide between for credit and non credit.

Students are not counseled at the time they enroll. Do not know they have prior experience until they are in the class, how to move the student into the class they belong in once they are already enrolled/semester begins. Need counselor trained to focus on what specific student needs/wants. Inside institutions don’t talk to the students about PLA. Awarding prior learning experience – understanding what PLA is.

Difficult for counselor/enrollment services to determine if student is eligible. Aligning potential students with particular classes. Get skills to work – intended to provide PLA credit to veterans. Difficult to align training. SWIC prepare students for testing/certifications, all can be used in part to decide whether a student qualifies for PLA.

Timing and time. When does the student come in a receive advisement. If happens in summer, may not have any full time faculty to determine before the fall. No time to look at portfolio. Needs a time intensive interview. How to translate on the job to academic terms.

Amount of internal personnel that are required to be on the same page. Takes work off of the students and onto the institution to figure out what the institution wants in order to award. Takes weight off of student if institution decides skill matrix with industry/business partnerships. What is happening on the floor vs the classroom. Bridge divide between skills and learning objectives. Acknowledging teaching and learning. Student heavy currently.

What if the faculty do not want to do PLA? Culture at institution to assess students for PLA.

Looking at PLA: means to strengthen learning of students and lessening weight on students. Work experience vs life experience understood at institution. More likely to look into if receive credit for prior experience, PR.

What FACILITATORS at your college assist with PLA?

All staff facilitates. What course align? NIMS credentials. Who is coming in the door and which classes does it line up with? Utilize banner to carry and stay with the student.

Instructors utilizing and program working. Understand process for getting student through as quick as possible. Faculty picking up on students, working hard and has done it before, pull students aside to assess to place into correct programs.

Facilitators throughout institution. Instructional leadership establishing culture, to create assessments. Top to the bottom of institution, everyone involved.

Faculty advisors: able to speak to students. General counselors, make known that it is an option, assess background for proficiency. General advisors to educate on what is PLA.

Oakton – aligning skills with learning objectives, done with faculty. Once established how do you use it? Recruiter who specifically targets adult learners, talk them through transition.

No credit awarded until a course is completed. New culture.

How do you address loss to institution of credit course?

Depends on what credit to prior learning the student has. $15 a credit hr, $50-100 assessment of portfolio. Different pathways other than the portfolio.

Needs to be student friendly to facilitate their success. How to measure success in the long run.

All competing for the same students. For one department to make assessment vs another who is unwilling, over time has an effect. Majority of students do not know what the programs are/entail. PLA is a way for faculty to accomplish.