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From the Editors

Dear Readers,

This past year marked CAEL's 40th anniversary—a time of celebration, excitement about future opportunities for the adult learner, and reflection on our journey. CAEL as an organization has come a long way over the course of four decades, serving adults in a variety of ways—through our work with institutions, employers, and public agencies to advance advising, prior learning assessment, competency-based education, better services to special populations like mature learners and student veterans, and better alignment between learning and work.

The spheres of work and of education are dramatically different today compared to the 1970s. The challenges facing the adult learner are complex and subject to change at a moment's notice, and the opportunities to learn and earn educational credentials have perhaps never been as accessible to the working adult as they are with this new century's technology and innovation. But there are still many adults who need more than just easy access through technology. They need guidance and support. They need educational programs that are preparing them for long-term employability. They need ways to accelerate their learning and degree completion. They need the learning from their life and work experiences to be valued. They need organizations like CAEL.

CAEL's 40th anniversary year provided an opportunity for the *Forum and News* to examine the world of the adult learner from multiple perspectives and to invite our friends and supporters to reflect on the evolution of the field and of CAEL as an organization. Throughout the year, we have released individual articles on CAEL's past, different perspectives on prior learning assessment, policy and system approaches to serving the adult learner, and new ways to serve adult learners. This publication presents all of these articles together in one place as a marker for where we have been and where we still need to go.

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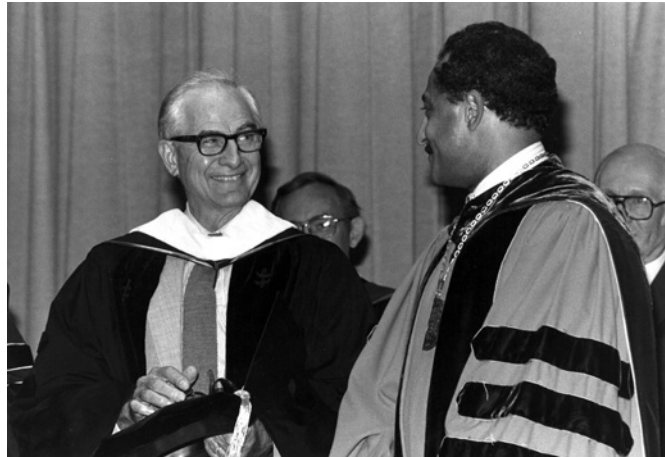
Morris T. Keeton

1917-2014

This issue of the *CAEL Forum and News* is dedicated to Morris T. Keeton, CAEL's founding president, with great appreciation for all he did to support learning and learners everywhere.

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CAEL PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Pioneering a Movement

A Conversation with George Pruitt, President of Thomas Edison State College

This article presents highlights from an April 2014 interview with George Pruitt, President of Thomas Edison State College and Chair for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE).Dr. Pruitt served as CAEL's first Executive Vice President in the early 1980s. After he left that position to assume the presidency at Thomas Edison, Pruitt continued his relationship with CAEL by serving on its Board of Trustees as both a trustee and as the board chair.

CAEL: What were the highlights for you of CAEL's early years?

You don't often get to be in the beginning of a movement, and CAEL really was a movement. Prior to CAEL coming to the scene, the expectation was that higher education was the exclusive purview of 18-year-olds. When adults came into the marketplace, they followed the GI Bill after WWII, and the expectation was that the veterans would go to college after the war and then leave. That didn't happen; adults continued to come in larger and larger numbers. Adult students were disrupters, and traditional colleges didn't know what to do with them. Adult learners were more consumerist, they had expectations about the quality of instruction and services they got. Many were paying their own way through veteran benefits or their own resources, and they were confronting a policy context that was designed for 18-year-olds and didn't fit the needs of adults.

CAEL was at the forefront of a national movement because the notion that adults brought learning to the enterprise that was college level and college quality was a revolutionary idea. However, it is now widely accepted throughout higher education, and that would not have happened without CAEL.

CAEL also either sponsored or catalyzed a national effort to do research on adults and adult learning. If you look at every important researcher that's ever written about adult learning—Bud Hodgkinson, Pat Cross, Art Chickering, Urban Whitaker, Win Manning, and others—pretty much all of them were somehow involved with Morris Keeton and with CAEL. A whole field of literature has been created around adult learning; a solid research basis for the changes that needed to take place to accommodate adults. The whole paradigm has shifted now. When CAEL started, the majority of students were 18 to 22 years old, and now the majority of students are over 25 and going part time. This is an important contribution to American higher education, and it was led by CAEL.

It is also important to recognize the importance of Pam Tate's assumption to the presidency and the transition that she led after Morris retired in 1990. While CAEL has never walked away from its adult learning and PLA focus, it was clear at that time that the foundations which had funded this innovation and saw it established were moving on to fund other things. It was Pam who led the shift to broaden CAEL's focus into workforce development, and that was a hugely important thing. CAEL would not have survived without her entrepreneurial leadership during that transition.

THOMAS EDISON

CAEL: You have been president of Thomas Edison State College since 1982—more than 30 years. How have the challenges facing adult

learners changed over the past 30 years? And what challenges are the same?

Thomas Edison State College (TESC) is an institution that was born out of the same movement that created CAEL. There was a series of Carnegie Commission reports in the 1960s that talked about traditional education and the need to create a policy context exclusively for adults. Out of that work, several institutions were founded with the mission of solely serving adults—Thomas Edison was one such institution. We built ourselves around the two primary characteristics of our clients. First, adult students bring considerable learning to the enterprise, and we should be able to recognize this learning by awarding credit with a valid, reliable assessment technique. Second, adults have barriers of time and place, and they can't put their lives on hold to sit in a classroom three mornings a week.

We had to figure out how to serve students where they were instead of where we were. All of the processes we started were asynchronous in that there was no time requirement; our students could be anywhere and study with us. One of the most powerful tools arrived in the 80s when the technology became available to do what we eventually called distance education. In the 80s, it was video. In the 90s, computer courses and online learning emerged. When one of your problems is how to serve learners where they are instead of where you are, this technology is enormously empowering. TESC jumped in with both feet. We were one of the pioneers of distance education and still one of the premiere exemplars of how to do it well.

Today, we are the second largest college in the state of New Jersey, with 21,000 students. We never wanted to be the biggest of our kind, just the best of our kind.

We also have felt an obligation to maintain our contribution to a field that we established. Back when CAEL expanded its focus to workforce development, TESC wanted to make sure there was a robust source of faculty training for PLA. TESC created the

National Institute on the Assessment of Adult Learning. We have it every summer in cooperation with CAEL. We assemble faculty from all over the country with some of the best faculty available to participate. Morris was one of the founding faculty members of this institute, along with some very important people in early CAEL.

TESC is often referred to as a "degree completion" institution where students can have their learning from a wide range of sources recognized and count towards a degree. To what extent has the support for the TESC approach changed over the course of your tenure?

When I came here, TESC was 10 years old. It was an experiment in higher education, and people were skeptical. They were unsure, and there was faculty resistance. Now, however, the things that we and the other institutions pioneered are widely and broadly accepted.

President Obama recently called for the U.S. to regain its lead in educational attainment because we used to be number one in the world, but now we are 17th and going in the wrong direction. In 2012, the National Commission for Higher Education Attainment was established and led by college presidents to turn that statistic around. I was one of the vice chairs. That commission issued its report and said that if the nation is to achieve its degree attainment goals, we need to embrace things like prior learning assessment—things that CAEL and TESC pioneered so many years ago (http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/An-Open-Letter-to-College-and-University-Leaders.aspx). This kind of attention to strategies for supporting adult learners is a huge change.

The world is coming to us now; there's some good in that and some complications in that. The good news is that the kinds of things that adults need to achieve a positive outcome are now broadly available. The bad news is that there are entities that have been drawn

> The growing attention to strategies for supporting adult learners is a huge change.

> No credible institutions give credit for experience alone. Anyone who says that they do does not understand what PLA is all about.

to higher education for economic reasons—to expand the market—and they haven't done it as well as we would have liked to see them do it.

TESC has been a leader in prior learning assessment—both as a pioneering practitioner and as a field builder through its National Institute on the Assessment of Adult Learning. From your vantage point, what have been some of the most positive developments for PLA in the last 10 years in terms of policy, research, or innovative new approaches?

One of the positive developments has been CAEL's early and continuing work on quality assurance. If you look at the work that the accreditors do, their quality assurance regarding PLA relies heavily on CAEL's Ten Standards for Assessing Learning. When prior learning assessment was first starting, the first people that raised questions about PLA were the accrediting bodies. We did a lot of work in the earlier years with the accrediting bodies so that they could understand "valid and reliable assessment," and we had to fight a battle with people who said that we give credit for life experience. No credible institutions give credit for experience alone. Anyone who says that they do does not understand what PLA is all about; you give credit for competency or learning that can be assessed through a valid and reliable assessment technique.

MIDDLE STATES—ACCREDITOR ROLE

CAEL: You were recently named the chair of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. What are some of the ways in which accrediting agencies like Middle States can do more to support the adult learner?

For too long, accreditation was very input driven and focused too much on institutions in ways that weren't relevant to the experience that students were having. Middle States is undergoing a revision of all of its standards around the premise of offering an effective learning experience for our students, and I think that's a very important shift.

One of the biggest frustrations I have is the current regulatory culture. The biggest impediment that the country faces in meeting the President's objectives of regaining our role in educational attainment is, ironically, proposals from the U.S. Department of Education. New regulations will limit the use of technology and make it more expensive. We have students in every state in the union; and under these new state authorization rules, we would have to get licensed in every state. That's ridiculous and very costly, and the cost to do it would be passed on to students.

Also, the notion of the credit hour rule, which ties credit hours to seat time, just doesn't make any sense at all, and neither does the notion that the government should start rating colleges and universities. The strength of our system is the diversity of the institutions and the diversity of the populations we serve. It's not possible to come up with a rating system that adequately reflects and accommodates that diverseness. Any sort of standardized appraisal will hurt and punish institutions for serving diverse populations, and it will reward institutions for serving smart, well-prepared 18-year-olds.

As you know, there has been growing interest in competency-based education (CBE) at the postsecondary level. HLC and SACSCOC have provided some guidance to their members on competency-based education. How is Middle States involved with ensuring the quality of CBE programs in its region? What do you see as the role of the accreditor with CBE?

Part of the problem is that we come up with these tag lines that no one can define. No one can define CBE. It's a variety of very good practices, but they are all different. Middle States is trying to say that accreditation is not that complicated. There are two components. One is objective third party review, and the other is simply asking one question: "How are we doing, and how do we know it?" That's really what accreditation is about. We get in trouble by trying to get in the

weeds and micromanage individual processes. Middle States is trying to back off. We've gone from 14 standards down to 7, and we are being less prescriptive. Institutions have an obligation to provide a high quality experience, to define what that quality is, to generate evidence, and to substantiate the claims. It's a process-centered and outcome-centered approach. We want to give institutions the freedom to decide how they get there.

The federal government has made accreditation no longer about quality assurance but about compliance, and there is a significant difference. The government wants to will replace peer review with the federal process, and it will do harm to what used to be the best educational system in the world. It's a fight, but it's a fight worth having.

CURRENT CHALLENGES OF THE ADULT LEARNER—AND THE VIEW FORWARD

CAEL: What do you see as the most exciting developments in higher education today? What innovations seem promising for the future of higher education?

It's always dangerous to try to predict the future. One of the pillars that both TESC and CAEL were founded on is that we value learning and the ability to demonstrate it without regard to the form in which the learning takes place. We don't care where or how the learner learns, as long as they can demonstrate the ability that's been acquired. In that regard, we have never had more opportunities for people to learn things than we have now, through technology and multimedia. I think that's exciting, liberating, and empowering.

Another thing is that it's been assumed that people learn in lockstep and in the same way, but we've always known that isn't true. The institutional culture requires that we operate that way, but now we are trying all kinds of ways to accommodate learning and in a variety of formats. The need to provide students a menu of options that are available at an affordable cost has never been higher. I love watching this take place.

The question of "Is College Worth It?" lately seems to be a topic for a lot of higher education stories making the news. In your opinion, why is a college degree worth the investment? Are there important reasons beyond those related to employment?

Someone did a survey of college graduates five years after graduation on the value of the experience. The overwhelming response was that it was a very high value; that it was worth the money; and that if they had to do it over again, they would. There is a disconnect between the people that go through education and the media and politicians that attack education. If you look at our customers, they are very satisfied with what they did and feel that it was a worthwhile investment. There is a problem with the public narrative, and it's troubling and destructive.

The vocationalizing of higher education is a mistake. It's true that high capacity people will out-perform and out--earn low capacity people, and higher education is the capacity building engine of the country. While federal data indicate that earnings are higher and the unemployment rate is lower for people who have high levels of education, it is important to acknowledge that earning a college degree does not automatically mean you will command a higher salary or get a promotion. To expect an 18-year-old to decide what they are going to do for the rest of their life is idiotic. Most students change majors two or three times, and most learning that takes place in college, as far as content, will be obsolete or forgotten five years after the students are out of school. The purpose of education is to build the capacity of learners and the capacity of citizens, and that's how it should be measured.

There needs to be a candid discussion about saving public K–12 education, and not just in the urban areas: the data that I'm citing is national. This isn't about the inner city, it's

> Democracy won't work if you don't have a well-educated, sophisticated population and I think that's really what's at stake here.

about everybody. Higher education has to try to figure out what to do with smart kids that are totally unprepared. It's not about jobs—the stakes go way beyond jobs.

One of the things that makes this country unique is that it's built around a series of concepts and ideas that we all buy into, and those values are described in the constitution. If you go back and read Thomas Jefferson, who is the father of universal education, he said that the reason we needed to have education is that there is a difference between a citizen and a subject. No other country had ever turned over the reins to its citizens. Democracy won't work if you don't have a well-educated, sophisticated population that's capable of acting out and

carrying out the responsibilities of citizenship, and I think that's really what's at stake here.

Are there any other messages that you have for CAEL members and people that have been working on adult learning issues?

The thing that I've enjoyed over my long association with CAEL is watching the influx of new practitioners and the excitement that happens when they discover things. The need for CAEL is as important now as ever. The principles that CAEL has advocated at last appear to be broadly accepted by the country and by the higher education community. CAEL needs to be the lighthouse for this area in terms of good practice, how to do it properly, and what quality assurance looks like. CAEL has evolved as the country has evolved, and I don't know of any organization in the country that's more important if we are going to have the kind of future that we want.

My 36 Years with CAEL:

Personal Observations on CAEL's Contributions to the Adult Learning Research Community

By David A. Kolb, Experience Based Learning Systems

David A. Kolb is Chairman of Experience Based Learning Systems. He is an educator and educational theorist best known for his research on experiential learning and learning styles and for his Learning Style Inventory.

It has been my privilege to celebrate many anniversaries with my friends at CAEL. This 40th anniversary seems a particularly important time to reflect on CAEL's leadership in bringing experiential learning solutions to the pressing educational problems of our nation. I describe a few of my most significant CAEL experiences below.

CAEL AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PUT THEORY INTO PRACTICE

My first introduction to CAEL came in the fall of 1978 when I received a call from Morris Keeton asking if I would come to CAEL's annual convention in Toronto and present the Learning Style Inventory (LSI) to the conference participants. I was absolutely delighted by the invitation—living as I was, comfortably encapsulated in the silo of my psychological research training. It was a time in my life when I was completely immersed in study of the foundational scholars of experiential learning and developing Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) in order to give a contemporary voice to their insights about education. At that time, the LSI was a research tool to explore ELT, and the thought that the Inventory might be of practical value for learners in higher education was eye-opening. At the conference, the debriefing of the LSI exercise in the plenary session was artfully facilitated by the late Jack Lindquist, President of Goddard College. The ensuing conversation was infused with the spirit of John Dewey in the voices of advocates for learners and change in education, some of whom knew Dewey and had worked with his colleagues.

With apologies to Henry Adams, I might title this essay "The Education of David Kolb" since my whole adulthood had been spent in formal educational institutions. Like Adams, I felt that this formal education had not prepared me well for real-world experiential learning. But unlike Adams, who experienced disillusionment and despair with the emerging modern world of his time, my membership in the CAEL community proved to be enlightening and inspiring. The colleagues and friends I have made in CAEL introduced me to the complexities of the policy making, program development, grant proposals,

Foundational Scholars of Experiential Learning

John Dewey
Experiential Education

William James
Radical Empiricism
Dual Knowledge Theory

Jean Piaget
Constructivism

Kurt Lewin
Action Research,
The T-Group

Lev Vygotsky
Proximal Zone of
Development

Carl Rogers
Self-actualization through
the Process of Experiencing

Paulo Freire
Naming Experience
in Dialogue

Carl Jung
Development from
Specialization to Integration

Mary Parker Follett
Learning Relationship
Creative Experience

fund-raising, alliances, and partnerships necessary to make change in higher education and the lives of adult learners. More importantly, they became role models who inspired optimism toward the possibility of making the world a better place. Art and Jo Chickering; Barry Sheckley; my wonderful friends at Alverno College, Austin Doherty, Joel Reed, Georgine Loacker, Marcia Menkowski, and Patricia Jensen; David Justice and Catherine Marineau at DePaul University; Jim Hall and Tim Lehman at Empire State College and its National Center on Adult Learning; and CAEL's Pam Tate have all been my great friends and teachers.

Morris Keeton stands at the head of this long list of mentors. His quiet demeanor, piercing blue eyes, and bull dog persistence, coupled with the complex myriad of programs and projects he articulated through incredibly long and detailed missives, was, for me, an awe inspiring model to live up to. Morris created a culture at CAEL of passionate advocacy for learners and disciplined hard work that "sweats the details" in an organizational culture where professional colleagues also became close friends. I learned here that change is best made in the company of friends. When Pam Tate assumed the CEO role in 1990, she continued to nourish and grow this culture to the present day.

HIGHLIGHTS IN CAEL'S HISTORY

Those who have come to know CAEL and its work in the more recent past may not be familiar with some of its earliest contributions to the field of adult learning. One of CAEL's greatest contributions to the field has been its annual conferences and other meetings, which have provided scholars and practitioners an ongoing forum for learning from each other and advancing our collective understanding of the adult learner. Two meetings stand out for me in particular:

The First CAEL Institute on Experiential Learning. A particular highpoint in my "CAEL education" came at the CAEL Institute on Experiential Learning held at Georgetown University in the summer of 1983. Morris Keeton assembled a group of leading scholars and researchers on adult learning and development for a five-day retreat and conversation together with CAEL members. We were privileged to be with William Perry whose foundational work, *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years,* remains a cornerstone of adult development theory. Art Chickering had recently completed his comprehensive work on learning and adult development in higher education—*The Modern American College.* Marcia Menkowski and Austin Doherty reported their National Institute of Education-funded longitudinal research on the experiential learning curriculum at Alverno College reported in their book *Learning That Lasts: Integrating Learning, Development, and Performance in College and Beyond.* Other notable attendees were Barry Sheckley, Lee Knefelkamp, and Blithe Clinchy, all leading scholars in the fields of experiential learning and adult development. The rich conversations in these sessions were particularly impactful for me, as I was just completing my comprehensive statement of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), *Experiential Learning: Experience as a Source of Learning and Development.*

The 20th Anniversary Conference – A Global Conversation about Learning. My greatest learning experience with CAEL came with my involvement in the preparation and execution of the 20th Anniversary CAEL conference. The best part was that I got to work closely with my friends Pam Tate and David Justice in creating the conference. We sought to convene a global conversation about learning in collaboration with two other major experiential learning organizations: The International Consortium for Experiential Learning (ICEL) and the National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE). The centerpiece of the conference was the presence of Paulo Freire, the greatest living experiential theorist and expert on the liberating force of dialogue in what may

have been his last U.S. appearance before his death a couple of years later.

Our aim was to organize a conference where genuine deep conversation about the many learning issues the world faces could happen. Rather than the traditional conference lecture, show and tell, the centerpiece for the convention was to be conversation groups called EAR—groups for "Exploration and Reflection." These groups were facilitated by CAEL members and faculty and students from our Case Western Reserve University doctoral program in Organizational Behavior. The 1500 conference participants were divided into groups of 10 to 12, resulting in over 100 groups that met three times for one hour over the course of the conference. Ann Baker, Patricia Jensen, and I have described this work in our book *Conversational Learning: An Experiential Approach to Knowledge Creation.*

CAEL AND THE FUTURE OF ADULT LEARNING

Since its beginning in 1974 as a spin-off from the Educational Testing Service, CAEL has maintained a laser focus on its core mission:

to empower learners by removing the policy and organizational barriers to their lifelong learning and education through joint partnerships with educational institutions, employers, labor organizations, government, and communities; and to develop reliable methods for assessing and crediting the learning that adults acquire from their life experience. The themes for CAEL's 40th Anniversary conference—Mobilizing Learners and Revolutionizing Assessment—bear witness to this continuing commitment. CAEL is bigger, more powerful, and more influential today than ever before. This is most fortunate since education in the United States is at a crucial crossroads where the work of CAEL must be a guiding light.

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A Long View of CAEL

A Conversation with Diana Bamford-Rees about Her History with CAEL, the Passing of Its Founder, and the Future of Adult Learning

This article presents highlights from a July 2014 interview with Diana Bamford-Rees, Associate Vice President of CAEL, and the organization's first employee. Bamford-Rees has been with CAEL for all of its forty-year history and was CAEL's first employee. When CAEL was funded in 1974, it was a research project of the Educational Testing Service. For the first three years of CAEL, Bamford-Rees worked on the CAEL project as an employee of ETS. When CAEL spun off from the project and became a freestanding organization in 1977, Morris Keeton took on the Executive Director position and asked her to come along. Since then, Bamford-Rees has held numerous positions at CAEL, from Executive Assistant to managing CAEL's South Africa initiative. Currently, Bamford-Rees is an Associate Vice President at CAEL, with responsibility for CAEL's annual conferences, as well as special events and workshops.

CAEL: When you first started working on the CAEL project in 1974, what were the issues and challenges facing the adult learner at that time?

The challenges weren't so very different from those that face adult learners today. There were obviously no online programs and very few weekend and evening options, so there really wasn't much flexibility for a working adult with a family. I myself was an adult learner at the time, and the only option was to take evening classes.

In the mid 1970s, the women's movement was very active, and there were a lot of housewives who had some college credit and wanted to complete their degree once their children left for college themselves. Having to sit through classes that covered information they already knew, these women became disenchanted with higher education, and they put a lot of pressure on schools by refusing to take classes for things that they had already learned experientially.

Schools were not eager to serve adults at the time, but they saw the adult learner as a solution to declining enrollments of traditional age students. There were at most two dozen schools with flexible options suitable for adult learners, and these were some of the first members of CAEL.

What were the highlights for you of CAEL's early years?

There were a lot more schools interested in assessing prior learning and serving adult learners than we anticipated. At the very beginning, our membership goal was to get 50 institutions involved in the first year, and instead we got 254 members. The first conference in 1974 was in Chicago, and we planned for 120 people. We had over 200.

Getting the conferences off the ground in those first years was also a highlight for me. At the early conferences, the research being done on PLA was disseminated and discussed. Innovative group conversations led to further research. In the first three years, there were 54 papers and books published out of this research project, and some of them were the forerunners of the publications we have today.

However, the greatest highlight for me was the people who were involved. This was a group of like-minded people who were very enthusiastic about what they were doing, and they were trailblazers. The work they were doing was on

the fringe of higher education, and they wanted to come together with people who were like themselves. Through those early years at CAEL, I became acquainted with some of the people who are my best friends today.

Morris Keeton was CAEL's founder and its first president. Morris died earlier this year at the age of 97. What do you remember about Morris Keeton's leadership in the early days of CAEL, and how did his work contribute to the field of adult learning?

Just last weekend I attended a memorial for Morris, which was one of the most moving experiences I've ever had. Morris was a hero; he was my mentor, my teacher, and my boss for 15 years. He was truly a visionary, and also teacher and mentor to many in the higher learning field.

He was well known for his work in experiential learning at Antioch College, which uses a cooperative education model based heavily in experiential learning. He contributed greatly to the experiential learning movement during that time. He was lead author of a book called *Experiential Learning: Rationale, Characteristics, and Assessment,* a definitive text on experiential learning.

CAEL expanded its focus in the mid-1980s to include employers and their education programs for the workforce. What was that change like for the organization? How important was that change in the history of the CAEL?

It was major—a significant expansion of CAEL's work and our reach to adult learners. There was a time when our members resisted this change, and many felt that we were turning away from our mission. Pam was very supportive of this change, and she made the very convincing argument that this was not a *departure* from CAEL's mission but rather an *expansion* of our mission. Working with employers greatly increased the number of learners that CAEL's work could affect. Once other leaders in the field started thinking that way, the resistance fell away, and people realized that our work with industry was just another avenue for delivery of services.

Our first joint venture with employers and

labor unions was in the auto industry. It was a very unique program of labor and management working together, not as adversaries but as partners. CAEL's *Returning to Learning* workshop was first developed for this project—that workshop has been revised and used in many industries like telecommunications, manufacturing, and financial services, as well as in our work in South Africa.

The work in South Africa was a Ford Foundation project that you led from 2000–2004, as the country started its new history after the fall of Apartheid. What did you do there, and how has that experience shaped your views of adult learning?

The project was designed to take the CAEL workforce development model, develop it for South Africa, hire and train people there to deliver it, and then to come home. I was housed with a sister corporation called the Joint Education Trust (JET) in Johannesburg. I was charged with building a staff in that division and developing a comprehensive learning and support system modeled on CAEL's principles. By the summer of 2004 when I left South Africa, more than 1,000 workers had acquired new skills through the program. We redesigned CAEL's signature workshop, *Returning to Learning,* and renamed it *Dipaakanyo,* which is a Tswana word meaning "planning and preparation." Our team set out to find examples that were relevant to the workers and the school system there so that the workshop would make sense to the adult learners of Johannesburg.

In my work there, I learned to better appreciate the struggles of adult learners. I realized that adult learners everywhere face the same issues and the same barriers. It's a completely different culture, but the obstacles are still time and money, juggling work and family responsibilities,

> The work they were doing was on the fringe of higher education, and they wanted to come together with people who were like themselves.

and school. The difference is really just a matter of degree. In South Africa, we worked with learners that were very poor; working adults were responsible for feeding 10–12 people, and if students were expected to give up paying work to spend time unpaid in a classroom, their families would go unfed. Because of this, the grant had to pay these learners to go to trainings and workshops in addition to paying the schools.

Another big challenge was the AIDS pandemic which, in 2004, infected 24% of the population. We lost some of our own students, but another side of the challenge was that they would miss school because they had to take care of a sick or dying family member.

What do you see as the most exciting developments in higher education today? What innovations seem promising for the future of higher education and for serving adult learners?

In higher education, the most exciting development is, of course, more accessibility as a result of online learning. This is particularly relevant to adults with busy schedules due to balancing work and family.

In the arena of serving adult learners, the increased awareness and use of PLA is very promising. This has been greatly assisted by the fact that President Obama has said that we need more people to complete their degrees in order to be globally competitive. Because the President has presented this challenge, governors are now joining the cause, and there is interest in statewide PLA policies that help adults accelerate their degree completion. Several states have set up very visible systems for prior learning assessment.

Also exciting is the new and increased emphasis on competency based education (CBE) and moving away from seat time as the sole way to measure student progress in their learning pursuits. We are just starting to crack the nut of what CBE means and how assessment can be done well.

Many of these exciting innovations are based on those ideas that CAEL began with forty years ago. Now, there is renewed interest in PLA and CBE, and acknowledgement that what is important is what the person knows and not where or how that learning occurred.

Changing the Landscape for Adults: A 40-Year Journey for CAEL

A conversation with Pamela Tate about her history with CAEL, the passing of its founder, and the changing landscape of adult learning

This article presents highlights from an August 2014 interview with Pamela Tate, President and CEO of CAEL.

CAEL: You have had a long history with CAEL. Can you describe how and when you first became involved with thfon?

Years ago, while I was working at the State University of New York in New Paltz, on my way home every night I would see this house with a sign that read "Empire State College"— just a small white house with a porch. After six months of passing this building night after night, I wondered, "What is that? Why is a 'college' in that little house?" One day I stopped by, went in, and asked if they were really a college. They said, "Yes, we are a college for adults, and this house is a learning center." Coming from a traditional university background, I thought it was a strange idea, and I was curious about why people should get college credit for things they learned on their own. After that, however, I got interested in this idea of a college that was not on a campus—one that was student-centered and worked to remove barriers to access such as time, location, and even curriculum, with students developing individual degree plans and progressing towards a degree by demonstrating their college-level learning.

This was in the mid-1970s. At that time, adult learners were mostly middle class adults and women, returning to school to get into the workforce. Just a handful of institutions like Empire State were starting to serve these adults, primarily as part of a social justice movement rather than as a response to needs in the economy; it was about expanding access.

The challenges for adults at the time were the same as they are now, except worse. Generally speaking, there was no flexibility in scheduling, nothing online, almost nobody had weekend courses, and even evening programs were considered innovative. There was, however, a small movement of a few inspired institutions trying to do something about meeting the needs of these "new students" because they saw how adult learners were just regular people, like anyone else, trying to move up in the workforce and carve out a meaningful life for themselves and their families.

Around that time, CAEL had just been formed, and I went to see its founder, Morris Keeton, speak at an event at Empire State. He was a very compelling person, and we had a long talk about why he thought something like prior learning assessment (PLA) could work for the growing population of adult learners. Afterwards, he asked me to work on a little CAEL newsletter with him, and in no time I was getting knee deep in the research on evaluating experiential learning, a field which was brand new. Eventually, I was nominated to serve on CAEL's board of trustees.

Then in 1984, UAW-Ford was looking for ways to improve its tuition program and other career services for incumbent workers. When someone

> I got interested in this idea of a college that was not on a campus—one that was student-centered and worked to remove barriers to access.

I knew at UAW-Ford asked me to run the College and University Options Program, I went to Morris and proposed it as a perfect project for CAEL. Morris and I crafted this whole project together; and later, when the project ended, I got really excited about convincing other employers to similarly support the education of their employees. I thought that if Ford and the UAW would do this, surely other companies and unions would too. Morris and I began talking about how we could take this approach to other companies and unions; and he asked me to join CAEL to help build the concept to suit many industries, not just the auto industry. I joined CAEL formally in 1987 as Vice President of Joint Ventures.

Morris Keeton was CAEL's founder and its first president. Morris died earlier this year at the age of 97. What do you remember about Morris Keeton's leadership in the early days of CAEL?

Morris was one of the smartest people I've ever known. Once you entered his orbit, it was very hard to move away because he was a fascinating person. Along with Art Chickering and David Kolb, Morris set the intellectual framework for the field of experiential learning. They were the three thought leaders that related theories of experiential learning to adults. Morris wasn't an original researcher, but he was a thinker and an implementer, and he had a philosophical underpinning to everything that he did. He created a movement of young people like me and others who came to care about these issues. He was good at making people feel like they were needed, that they were important, and that he valued their ideas. He had a clear vision of how higher education should work; and because he was a respectable Ph.D. from Harvard, he was able to influence many higher education researchers and leaders at the time.

Over the past 40 years, things have changed a lot in higher education and there are a lot more options for adult learners. What is different about today's adult learner, in terms of who they are, how they engage with education, and why they are seeking education?

Today, because there is so much focus on needing higher education in order to be employable, there is more emphasis on the economic outcomes of higher education in the minds of adult learners. We didn't hear this as much in the beginning of the adult learning movement. With this economic imperative to acquire more education and credentials, adult learners now behave much more like consumers when it comes to their educational options. They've come to expect services online or at convenient times, and they expect ease of access.

The economic argument is typically the one that is made to employers and policy leaders because this is the argument that holds sway. However, there is a downside to the prominence of the economic argument over the argument about access. When people connect higher education to better wages, it makes education sound like it is primarily an individual benefit instead of also being a public good. Over time, such a narrow focus on earnings has the potential to diminish the overall value of higher education and to make people feel as if there is no need for communities to support education. Not enough arguments are being made for the greater societal impact of a highly educated workforce.

What do you see as the most exciting developments in higher education and workforce development today? What innovations seem promising for the future of higher education and for serving adult learners?

Overall, online courses and services have helped to launch some major breakthroughs, like fully online degrees, newer competency-based learning programs and other kinds of accelerated degree programs, open educational resources, and virtual student support services—and, of

course, PLA through services like CAEL's online LearningCounts service. All of these technologies, processes, and programs are working together and changing higher education.

There seem to be new proponents of adult learning these days. What stakeholders are new to this area, and why have they become interested in lifelong learning issues?

The ground is definitely shifting right now, and I don't know which of the new entrants will have staying power. A whole range of non-collegiate course providers are introducing free or low-cost course options, and perhaps their great contribution to this movement will be forcing a change in traditional institutions by getting their courses accepted within the regionally accredited institutions and, thereby, breaking open the pricing model. These other entities and their models are more like disruptors on the margins that make the larger institutions improve at the center.

Workforce developers approach the conversation from the employment side and think about industry-recognized credentials and other short-term training. I'd like to see them as more active participants in shaping new ways of achieving credentials for the labor market that are not company specific. I believe that portable credentials are what adults need, whether in the form of degrees or certificates, because anything narrowly focused on a company or industry may not help in the long term. Right now, portable credentials tend to come from institutions of higher education, but it may be that industry certifications will gain greater importance and hold more prestige in the next several years.

What has shaped your own views on the adult learner?

No one in my family had gone on to higher education, and it was clear to me that a college degree made a huge difference in one's life chances. That conviction was, and continues to be, a central driving force for me—a

crystal clear social justice mindset. I strongly believe that education is the key to getting people out of poverty and into better life circumstances; and I believe that, as a result, society will benefit too. That's just a core value I have.

Applying those kinds of values specifically to adult learners rather than to education in general, for me, is all due to the inspiration and support I received from Morris Keeton. He was a major influence on my life. His vision of what should and needed to be done was so clear to me that I just thought, "Someone needs to work on this."

You have been CAEL's leader for the past 24 years. What have been the highlights of the organization's work during this time? What are your proudest moments as its leader?

Throughout our history, one consistent thread has been our focus on advancing the assessment of learning regardless of where that learning takes place—the acronym CAEL once stood for the Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning, and I am very proud of the fact that we have never wavered from that mission. So much of CAEL's work today is in supporting institutional efforts with Prior Learning Assessment and Competency-Based Education, and CAEL's PLA quality standards are followed by leading PLA institutions and cited in accreditors' guidelines for PLA policy and practice. As we continue to work one on one with institutions, we have also broadened our reach to work with states and systems on PLA and even launched our own national online PLA service LearningCounts.

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Outside of the PLA area, I would say that another area of CAEL's work that I truly felt excited about was realizing that we could replicate the UAW-Ford project in multiple industries—and then making it happen. It was amazing to discover that companies really would invest in their workforce in this way, and that I could convince labor unions to negotiate tuition and career development into their bargaining agreements. This kind of workforce development reciprocity could actually work. A lot of people said it couldn't be done, and I wanted to prove that CAEL had the capability to make it happen for the many hardworking adults seeking advancement and personal achievement.

I am also extremely proud about the launching of CAEL's tuition assistance program in the early '90s. This initiative not only enhanced our workforce programming but it also brought CAEL some needed financial stability. CAEL eventually moved away from managing the tuition assistance programs for companies through a joint venture with ACT, which was yet another important moment for CAEL. I am very proud of our work with ACT in creating EdLink instead of trying to keep tuition assistance inside of CAEL. This move was hard to do after offering this service to employers for so many years, but it was a great decision that I feel good about. CAEL's tuition assistance unit needed to become EdLink so it could have its own life and its own momentum to operate as a for-profit in the marketplace. Happily, a little over a year ago, we were able to sell EdLink to Bright Horizons so it could continue to expand its services to adults—I am very satisfied with the outcome both financially and in terms of the long-term sustainability of tuition assistance benefits for working adults.

When I look at the long stretch of having been CAEL's CEO, what I find most rewarding are both how much more influential we are now in discussions at federal and state levels and how much more impact we have in the corporate world and the higher education system. Starting out as a very small and narrowly-focused organization, we have gradually worked our way up to having greater influence. We were a movement of practitioners, and now we are a thought and policy leader, advocating for adult learners and the institutions that serve them. It's a progression I am grateful for every day. When your ideas are heard, you can change the landscape for adults.

PLA - 40 YEARS LATER

Why the Adult Brain Likes PLA

By Catherine Marienau, DePaul University School for New Learning

Cathering Marienau is a professor and faculty mentor at DePaul University School for New Learning, coordinator of the Master of Arts in Educating Adults program at the School for New Learning, and leadership team member of the Center to Advance Education for Adults (CAEA). Dr. Marienau has been an active member of CAEL since the early 1970s and is the co-author of Assessing Learning, *2nd ed. She frequently works with CAEL as the co-designer of PLA online certification and as a presenter for CAEL webinars and national conferences on PLA and competency-based learning.*

We hear a lot these days about the benefits of prior learning assessment (PLA). Reinforced by CAEL's research , we know that adult learners who take advantage of PLA are more likely to persist to graduation and get there faster, and the college credits earned through PLA can also save adults more than spare change—for some, thousands of dollars (Klein-Collins, 2010). An educational innovation that saves time and money attracts positive press and the kind of headlines our institutions like to see. We delight that PLA can have such beneficial outcomes for adult learners; no argument here. Even so, let's not let these extrinsic benefits overshadow the potential of what can happen within each person, in terms of learning, growth, and change.

I would like to see *learning* get more headlines and show up more substantively in our rhetoric and practice—not just the learning that comes before PLA, but the learning that also derives from the PLA experience itself. We are all familiar with this tag line: "Credit is granted not for experience but for the learning derived and demonstrated from experience." Based on my experience in the PLA world for more than 40 years—as a teacher, mentor, and assessor in programs that have benefitted from CAEL's pioneering advocacy of PLA—I think we need to do more to showcase the fact that students often gain new learning from the process of PLA. I, therefore, propose an additional tag line—something

like: "The experience, not the learning, is what's *prior* in PLA. PLA leads to *new learning*."

Which brings me to the title of this piece: *Why the Adult Brain Likes PLA*. Or, more explicitly: How PLA works with an adult learner's brain, especially when it involves constructive, intentional guidance from an experienced educator or facilitator.

Imagine our stored experiences as an archeological site. Through painstaking excavations, archeologists find that radically different civilizations have lived here at different times. Before we can hope to understand those different civilizations, we must examine clues, such as bone fragments, pottery shards, and cave drawings—all of which can then be pieced together using subsequent knowledge gained from various other digs, as well as the research of other archeologists, to create a meaningful interpretation of past events.

Consider what we educators ask adult learners to do when excavating learning from their deeply layered experience sites. Typically, we would instruct adult learners to, at minimum:

- dig around in their various sites of experience;
- identify and select clues that stand out for them (what they notice, what gets their attention);
- discern some themes or patterns among the clues;

- describe what they have learned about the earlier experiences now that they have constructed and examined these themes or patterns; and
- show evidence of this learning (usually some form of written work that clearly articulates the process of discovery, connection, and interpretation).

Many PLA programs also ask the learner to integrate relevant theories, concepts, or models; connect the learning to a specific statement of competence (competence-based) or outcomes of a given course (course-match); and/or anticipate how to apply this learning to future situations. Clearly, the notion that adults are "getting credit for life and work experience" is a gross oversimplification—and couldn't be further from the truth of good practice. In any good PLA program, students are required to identify what they have learned through an intense process of analysis, reflection, and meaning-making (Wilbur, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2008).

To examine learning from experience from a more concrete (rather than analogical) brain perspective, let's consider how learning is ultimately grounded in experience. To make sense of any experience (current or prior), the brain must associate any new stimuli with what it has already stored. But this storage (memory) is not a well-ordered filing cabinet of our experiences. Rather, memory is "a process that involves association and reconstruction of bits of electrochemical impulses encoded in myriad neural networks" (Taylor, Marienau, & Lamoreaux, 2015, np). The PLA process asks adult learners to sort through a web of such "memory traces," find connections between them, and then figure out what to make of what has surfaced. Here's the most telling point: brain scientists believe that every memory is *reconstructed* every time it is reactivated; the process of revisiting earlier experiences establishes *new* connections and interpretations.

To make the most of this process of new learning requires *intention* and *reflection*. Educators can help with intention by providing frameworks that guide the process of potential meaning an adult learner might actualize while "reconstructing" experience. Given that adults' experiences prior to school typically aren't designed with specific learning outcomes in mind, or according to the rules of disciplines or fields—rather, experiences occur from encounters with messy life situations—such frameworks can offer helpful direction to the learner in terms of what to reflect on when searching for college-level outcomes. To reiterate, one does not learn from experience per se; one learns from reflecting on experience. What was tacit becomes explicit:

> *Reflection is therefore essential to meaning-making. It takes the elements of an event, the ways in which the brain has categorized and associated those experiences with what it already feels and knows, and constructs a new understanding, perhaps leading to a new way of seeing or knowing. Thus, reflection is key to the brain's capacity to learn—building or revising what was known while creating or elaborating new knowledge (Taylor, et al, 2015, np).*

Engaging in reflection is one aspect of how the brain works with regard to adults' learning in the context of PLA. I share CAEL's stance that optimal learning can occur through the PLA process. Knowing more explicitly how the brain actually learns helps us appreciate and optimize the *new* learning that gets affirmed, extended, and/or expanded in the PLA process through reflection on experience.

> In any good PLA program, students are required to identify what they have learned through an intense process of analysis, reflection, and meaning-making.

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PLA at the Graduate Level? Yes, We Can.

By Deb Bushway, Capella University

Deb Bushway is the Vice President of Academic Innovation at Capella University.

Interest in new tools to help students achieve degree success is soaring as institutions of higher education strive to deliver the additional 11 million postsecondary credentials required to meet President Obama's 2020 degree completion goal (The White House, 2014). One important and long-standing degree completion tool that appears to be gaining in popularity is the granting of academic credit for learning which has occurred outside of the traditional, formal course and classroom environment. This tool is commonly referred to as Prior Learning Assessment, or PLA.

PLA supports a learner-centric—rather than an institutional-centric—approach to both learning and degree/credential certification. The emphasis on learning regardless of the source of that learning also emphasizes outcomes like competencies over inputs like the number of hours spent in class. Another related emerging trend is Competency Based Learning (CBL). In CBL, outcomes such as competencies become the "coin of the realm" rather than the traditional credit hour. Both CBL and PLA also enable us to increase transparency about a learner's competencies and perhaps recognize these competencies in the form of micro-credentials, such as badges. Thus, PLA can support our learners' dual goals of lifelong learning and degree completion while supporting our nation's goals of an increasingly educated citizenry and workforce.

The extent to which U.S. institutions offer PLA is difficult to estimate: 2012 data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) show that 34% of all regionally accredited institutions offer "credit for life experience," while a recent survey by the American Council on Education (ACE) found that 92 percent of responding institutions award credit for prior learning (Ryu, 2013). The true proportion is likely somewhere in between those figures, and likely reflects PLA offerings primarily at the undergraduate level. The application of PLA processes to graduate programs has, however, been more controversial.

The controversy over PLA programming at the graduate level appears to be rooted in three concerns: 1) Can graduate-level learning occur outside of the academy?; 2) Can graduate-level learning be articulated as competencies?; and 3) Can graduate-level learning be assessed through current PLA methods? Indeed, these questions are some of the most persistent even for undergraduate PLA practitioners. Further, because we understand graduate-level learning to be distinct from undergraduate-level learning, it is no wonder that PLA must go through a strict application and review process while attempting to matriculate into the ranks of graduate studies.

> Some institutions are taking the still radical position that graduate-level learning can be acquired beyond the institution.

CAN STUDENTS ACQUIRE GRADUATE-LEVEL LEARNING OUTSIDE OF THE ACADEMY?

The assertion that high-quality graduate-level learning can occur outside of the academy is not universally accepted and is unsettling to some. However, some institutions are taking the still radical position that graduate-level learning can be acquired beyond the institution. Since

> In the PLA model, faculty judgment remains at the center of evaluating whether or not a learner is to be granted credit for learning.

we understand graduate-level learning to be distinct from undergraduate-level learning, we ought to be able to capture these distinctions by defining the expected competencies and learning outcomes in relation to and as appropriate for the different degree levels. If we are clear about the qualification requirements, we can begin to answer the concerns raised regarding graduate-level PLA.

Clearly, a baccalaureate degree forms an important base for lifelong learning, but learning does not stop there. Credit for Prior Learning processes take many forms, including portfolio, credit by examination, and articulation of external certificates. In fact, some of these externally granted certificates offered by professional organizations require a completed bachelor's degree for admission. That requirement alone might not qualify the competencies gained through these certificates as graduate-level learning, but it certainly would suggest that post-baccalaureate learning is occurring. If we accept that when a bachelor's degree is required for further learning it is possible—maybe even probable—that graduate-level learning is taking place, then we are one step closer to bridging the gap between PLA and graduate degrees.

CAN GRADUATE-LEVEL LEARNING BE ARTICULATED AS COMPETENCIES?

Once an institution's graduate-level learning outcomes or competencies are clearly defined, faculty evaluators can determine whether the outcomes achieved through a certificate program or other learning actually qualify as learning at a graduate level at their institution. This assumption, however, relies heavily on our ability to define competencies well. The National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (2001) has defined *competency*

as "a combination of skills, abilities, and knowledge needed to perform a specific task" (p. vii). Too often, people regard competencies as simply one of the three essential factors noted in this definition—for example, as a *skill*. Clearly, limiting the definition of *competency* to only one of its components then restricts the applicability of PLA to lower-level learning only. Conversely, the *full* definition supports the ability to describe competencies for specific degree levels, since the levels and types of knowledge required for lower division undergraduate learning are distinct from those required for masters' level learning. Thus, graduate-level learning can be articulated as a competency—particularly when that competency carefully indicates the requirement of advanced theoretical knowledge as well as the ability for analysis and synthesis of that knowledge.

CAN GRADUATE-LEVEL LEARNING BE ASSESSED THROUGH CURRENT PLA METHODS?

The third consideration we are examining here centers on our ability to assess graduate-level PLA. In this conversation, it is helpful to recall how prior learning is typically assessed when best practices are applied. PLA processes engage both the learner and faculty members in consideration of the learning outcomes and competencies required for a credential—commonly for a degree. Faculty members must consider what competencies are to be demonstrated upon successful completion of a given course in the curriculum, and the learner must present evidence that s/he can demonstrate those competencies. In the PLA model, faculty judgment remains at the center of evaluating whether or not a learner is to be granted credit for learning. This method of evaluation is consistent with traditional, credit-bearing courses in which faculty assess a student's competency through a series of assignments in the course and ultimately determine whether or not the learning is adequate to earn credit toward a degree. In

both cases, credit is earned through faculty appraisal of learning.

The conclusion that faculty judgment is sufficient in the evaluation of learning for the purposes of awarding credit does make two fundamental educational philosophy assumptions: 1) that what people know is more important than how they came to acquire that knowledge; and 2) that we can distinguish between graduate- and undergraduate-level learning adequately in order to value that learning appropriately.

EXISTING MODELS FOR GRADUATE-LEVEL PLA

There are several institutions currently allowing PLA at the graduate level, including DePaul University's School for New Learning, University of St. Francis, Valdosta State University, and Capella University, with new institutions emerging regularly. These institutions map clearly defined types of prior learning into specific degree programs, and state clearly and transparently how learners can earn PLA for which programs. Both the benefits and limitations of PLA must be clearly stated for students to support good decision making. At the School for New Learning, PLA is accepted into the MA in Applied Professional Studies. At Capella University, graduate-level PLA is primarily granted through an extensive alignment and validation process applied to certificates granted externally. For example, the Certified Financial Planner certificate is a credential requiring a bachelor's degree as well as passing the financial planner exam. Capella University's MBA faculty aligned the

competencies demonstrated through the certification process for Financial Planning with required MBA courses. Where they were able to match coverage of competencies in the certificate with courses, PLA credit was granted. For any student entering the MBA and holding the CFP certificate, these same PLA credits will be granted. In these examples, the PLA processes clearly support the learning outcomes for the degree, reduce the cost of the degree—both in terms of time and money—and support the adult student in achieving life and career goals.

> PLA processes clearly support the learning outcomes for the degree, and support the adult student in achieving life and career goals.

CONCLUSION

PLA can be an effective tool in supporting adult learners to complete degrees, allowing them access to increased career and life success. As many people are aware, CAEL research on more than 62,000 adult students from 48 postsecondary institutions provides support for this supposition by showing that adult students with credit earned through PLA were two-and-a-half times more likely to complete a degree compared to adult students without such credit (Klein-Collins, 2010). Students earning a graduate degree deserve the same opportunity to have their graduate-level learning which has occurred outside of the classroom considered toward relevant degrees.

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Keeping a Critical Spirit Alive: A Reflection on the History of PLA as an Upstart in Higher Education

By Alan Mandell, SUNY Empire State College

Alan Mandell has been mentor and administrator at Empire State College, one of the original CAEL institutions, for more than 35 years. One of his many connections with CAEL resulted in the first edition of the book co-authored and edited with his colleague, Elana Michelson, Portfolio Development & Adult Learning: Purposes and Strategies *(CAEL, 1990) that included a foreword by Morris Keeton.*

"Know whence you came. If you know whence you came, there is really no limit to where you can go."

> *James Baldwin (1962)*

It's really impossible not to be thrilled by our successes. No longer the sole province of a small, rather isolated group of alternative programs and colleges, prior learning assessment (PLA) is now big news worldwide. (The list of PLA acronyms is, itself, a testament to a kind of globalization of practices.) But as James Baldwin reminds us in "A Letter to My Nephew," it is important to know and remember your history.

> In the midst of what seems to be worldwide recognition, PLA and its champions cannot forget why we are doing what we set out to do in the first place.

If we think back to the early years of doing PLA in the 1970s and '80s, many colleagues spent a huge amount of energy trying to convince stuck institutions and skeptical (if not at times belligerent) faculty that there was something substantive, academically credible, and personally and professionally relevant in the learning gained by ordinary people in their homes, at work, and in their communities. Today, thousands of academic institutions across the world take the significance of experiential learning for granted; and state, national, and international policies acknowledge that educated citizens—whether or not their learning is acquired in a classroom—should be at the heart of any sound social and economic plan. I would bet that what we see bubbling around us today (a kind of excitement that was probably last felt decades ago) is well more than what CAEL founder Morris Keeton imagined, when in 1976, he wrote of the possible "modest achievements" of the Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning for which he sought to provide a rationale. (CAEL changed the name behind the acronym to Council for Adult and Experiential Learning in 1985.)

But as we continue to gain strength from such success; as we notice institutions of all kinds recognizing adults, not only as a potential market in a time of drought, but as a rich source of knowledge, skills, and insights; as we see the fruits of pulling for a different vision of what learning can be, we also need to remember "whence [we] came." This is important right now because, like many other examples of alternative practices and of experimenting institutions, we are vulnerable to succumbing to and being gobbled up by the weight of powerful interests that are more concerned with control and with perpetuating the status quo than with meaningful change. Put in another way, in the midst of what seems to be worldwide recognition, PLA

and its champions—all of us—cannot forget why we are doing what we set out to do in the first place. If we do forget, if our animating values are not informing our everyday practices and our goals, we can too easily lose the heart of it all: our critical spirit.

As the first leader of CAEL, Morris Keeton epitomized that critical spirit. He died earlier this year, but his words linger as a reminder to us about our past experience seeking change in higher education. "Underlying the decision to initiate CAEL," Keeton wrote in 1976, "was agreement that our present educational policies do not fulfill our needs: they inadequately represent our current understanding of knowledge, the nature of our society, the concept of experiential learning, and the ways in which knowledge and competence can be achieved, recognized, and certified." All of this is crucial and reminds us that PLA was part of a broader social movement that urged us to:

- stop and question the taken-for-granted definitions of knowledge;
- regularly ask ourselves about the nature of the society in which we live and in which we desire to live;
- rethink what we mean by learning and how it is expressed and how it can be appreciated; and
- wonder about and reimagine the structures of authority and expertise upon which we so heavily rely.

That is, PLA is about taking a critical stance. It's about inventing new forms. It's about listening, giving voice to and having confidence in ideas and experiences that previously had little, if any, legitimacy. These are our PLA core values.

In many important ways, our social context is significantly different from the one we faced in those amazing early PLA and CAEL days. Yet, the continuity is obvious. The urge toward standardization, the commodification of teachin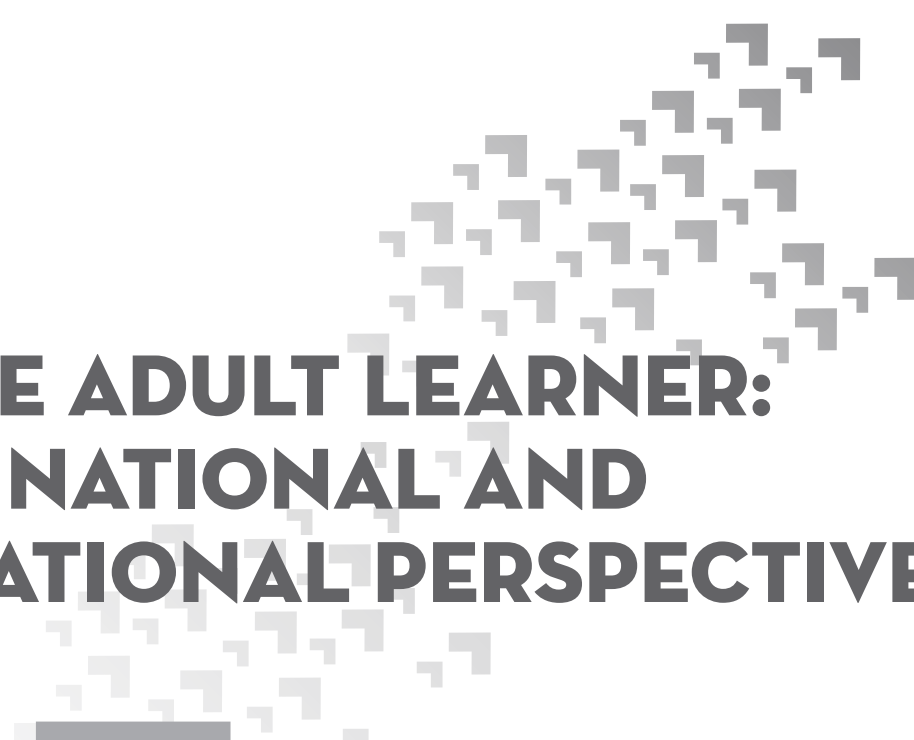g, the conflation of learning and training, and the calls for efficiency are stronger than ever. Vast numbers of people across the globe live in unjust societies and continue to lack access to a meaningful education and to fulfilling work (if they have employment at all). And while academic institutions have changed, many of the newer models have reproduced the worst versions of anonymity and alienation that the educational movements of 40 years ago knew had to be replaced. We should not forget that our PLA work is not separate from but is embedded in exactly this environment.

Our challenge, our responsibility today, is to keep the critical spirit of PLA alive in the particular contexts in which we live and work. This means that we must continue to:

- question the motivations of governments and institutions of all kinds—even those who have embraced PLA;
- remain attentive to PLA procedures and policies, even when represented in the fanciest of rubrics, that might, however inadvertently, mirror the ways of the status quo and thus further disenfranchise in the name of inclusion; and
- struggle to find creative ways to use the tools of PLA to further social justice. (And, of course, our critical spirit knows full well that even such a lofty goal as social justice is one that has all too often produced its opposite.)

Yes, I think Baldwin was right: "there is really no limit to where [we] can go," as long as we remember those quite revolutionary ideas that got us rolling at the very start.

> PLA was part of a broader social movement that urged us to reimagine the structures of authority and expertise upon which we so heavily rely.

THE ADULT LEARNER:
NATIONAL AND
INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES
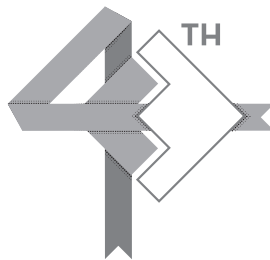
National Policy and the Adult Learner

A Conversation with Martha Kanter, Distinguished Visiting Professor at New York University and Former U.S. Under Secretary of Education University and Former U.S. Under Secretary of Education (2009-2013)

This article presents highlights from an October 2014 interview with Martha Kanter, Distinguished Visiting Professor of Higher Education at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development and Former U.S. Under Secretary of Education (2009-2013). Dr. Kanter is the 2014 recipient of CAEL's Morris T. Keeton Award. The award was established in 1989 to honor the late Morris T. Keeton, the founding president of CAEL, upon the occasion of his retirement from the presidency of the organization. Throughout his life, Keeton was an independent voice for innovation and improvement in education. He was committed to making experiential learning an integral part of education; to increasing access for adult learners and minorities to postsecondary education; and to improving the theory and practice of assessment, teaching, and learning. The award honors a person whose work, commitment, and ideals reflect and extend the values that Morris Keeton exemplified.

CAEL: You are this year's recipient of CAEL's Morris T. Keeton award, which recognizes your dedication to adult learning and workforce development. What do you think have been some of the most important developments for adult learners over the past 5-10 years?

Martha Kanter: I think that one of the biggest developments is the expansion of higher education's focus on "post-traditional students," the new banner for adults seeking educational opportunity from all walks of life, not just directly from high school. Today, adult learners are the nation's majority population in higher education degree, certificate and extended education programs. Most people have generally considered college students to be only young adults—and that is just not true. I think the work of CAEL is especially important because we have to educate those who have long thought of higher education only as an opportunity for high school graduates, drop-outs or stop-outs.

I use the example from when I was president of De Anza College. One of my greatest joys was to graduate a grandfather, a father, and a son in the same graduating class—one traditional learner and two post-traditional learners. It was a story of a family where the son had come to the U.S. following the Vietnam War and had set up a business in San Jose, California. He was an entrepreneur and his business grew. He then brought his father over and had a son of his own. When the son/grandson was 18 years old and came to the college, the father and the grandfather were attending too, and they all graduated at the same time. I think it's a great example of the changing face of the country and shows the diversity of students seeking a college degree.

It's really about opportunity for all. When I think about the research showing that more than 90 million adults have not had the opportunity to attain a college degree, it's clear we have an undereducated adult population in this country. We must make higher education and educational opportunity available to all people. As my De Anza experience demonstrates, immigrants need to be part of that effort. We are a

country built on the strength of immigrants. We want to build a more highly educated nation overall so that we can continue to have the leadership, the intercultural and intergenerational communication, voters, and all of the engagement opportunities that make citizenship in America so desirable. The expansion of educational opportunity to our diverse and growing population of students is heralding the foreseeable future of America.

An important recent development is a renewed focus on expanding opportunity for low-income adults in our efforts—going beyond serving those who already have the means to attend postsecondary education. The second most important development in the past five years has been the widening of access through federal, state and institutional aid. At the federal level, expanding and safeguarding the grant and loan programs has been a phenomenal achievement—keeping the interest rate low, tying the interest rate to the Treasury rate going forward, and increasing Pell grants to educate more low-income students, 50% more from 2009 to 2013. The growth and new protections to strengthen and improve financial aid have effectively increased opportunity for all college students—two-thirds of whom are post-traditional students.

CAEL: Your career as an educator and education official has touched on nearly every service level to learners—high school, community college, four-year institution, public policy, and back to academia with your post at NYU. What are the most significant lessons you have learned related to how adult learners interface with education in the U.S.? How have these various roles shaped your perceptions of what we do well, and what still needs improvement? What challenges does the U.S. face in changing course? What needs to be done at the policy level and on the ground at the institutions?

The biggest challenge we have to address as a nation is that educational access is siloed and disconnected. One of my goals has been to better connect high schools with colleges, community colleges with four-year institutions, and four-year institutions with graduate and career opportunities. The sectors, in and of themselves, do great work, but they operate in isolation from one another. I did a lot of work to cross boundaries between education, labor, commerce, and health and human services when I was at the U.S. Department of Education. I can point to the work of SingleStop, which is a non-profit that is identifying and connecting low-income and targeted populations like veterans with all of the siloed assets that they can access for higher education. For example, veterans may not be taking advantage of all the benefits available to them—not just the ones that are labeled "veterans' benefits" but also options like Pell grants or health care or housing options. It's a good example of how we need to encourage state and federal governments, and our regional communities, to eliminate the existing silos so people can have access to the resources they need and have a clear pathway to and through college and career. This will move the nation forward to increase the educated population we're going to need for America's social and economic prosperity.

We have inherited ways of doing things—laws, regulations, processes, and strategies—that are overly complicated. My colleague John Sexton, President of NYU, often says, "Unless you understand the nuance and complexity of what you plan to accomplish, you can't even begin to understand the challenges of navigating those complexities." At the Department of Education, I was fortunate to play a role in the elimination of nearly half of the questions on the Federal Student Aid form—the FAFSA. But frankly, we shouldn't have a form at all. What will it take for the federal government to work with states and tell students and families what they qualify for? In my lifetime, I'd like to see, every spring, families getting a list of their federal and state benefits, including Medicare, Pell grants,

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tax credits, and the like—a clear communication regarding what they qualify for based on their income and other factors.

It's so complicated now that often benefits are not even understood or known by the students and families that need access to education more than ever. We need to give adult learners simple ways of accessing resources provided by these large governmental bureaucracies. Some resources might even be in their local community, but they are not aware of them. There may be multiple community colleges and universities in a region. But which ones can they go to? Will they qualify? Do they have the funding? In my outreach to families, I've learned that far too many adults are intimidated by the thought of even setting foot on our campuses or visiting the website, assuming they even have access to the Internet.

To change course, there has to be more crossing of boundaries at the policy and institutional levels. There should be regional task forces that have community asset leaders on the ground helping adult learners get access to resources they need. Education should be leading the way on this. On the legal side, and on the regulatory side, we've inherited a lot that should be just taken out of the education code at the state and federal level. Every word in every law has a constituency that put it there, sometimes 20 or 30 years ago, making it difficult to get rid of anything. The challenge is to demonstrate the redundancy and what just doesn't make sense, as we did with the federal financial aid form.

CAEL: As the U.S. Under Secretary of Education, you oversaw reforms in the Direct Student Loan program that increased both the number of Pell Grant recipients and the number of college enrollees. What other changes to federal financial aid do you think should be incorporated in a reauthorized

Higher Education Act? In particular, what changes should be made that could better support adult learners?

There's a host of Pell grant and work study reforms that I'd like to see changed. For example, the government is experimenting with ways that Pell can be leveraged to be more performance-based so that students get bonuses and are supported when they make progress, but, at the same time, growing the Pell grant program to adequately serve the growing number of students seeking higher education. Pell grants should be thought of as an investment, as seeding responsible citizens who will contribute to their communities, who will vote and who will pay their fair share in the decades ahead. The ROI for America will be substantial as research has already shown time and time again. I was thrilled when the government introduced another reform, tying Pell to cost of living increases. Sustainable formulas over time are the way to go—to outlive politicians and political maneuvering from one decade to the next to the next. Other ideas for reform might include:

- simplifying the entire process;
- consolidating all of the federal student loans down to one, two, or three;
- simplifying the varied interest rate and tying the interest rate (as Congress did and the President signed this time around) to a formula that is stable and predictable for students and families;
- guaranteeing college costs, including tuition, fees, room the board, for the full four years of an undergraduate education, so when you start as a freshman you know what to the payments will be through graduation (this could also be an incentive);
- providing a sliding scale for benefits, so that people without means should have access to comparable resources and support as those who can afford college;
- paying students for internships, fellowships and work-study programs that enable them to move into their professions seamlessly;

- supporting new models for high quality educational delivery, like competency-based programs that are faculty led;
- seamless credit transfer programs and widespread, high quality prior learning assessments that are incorporated into undergraduate and graduate programs; and
- intelligent and fair use of the ever-changing technologies that will enable more face-to-face time with professors!

Recent books like *Reinventing Financial Aid* by Kelly and Rab and *Higher Education in the Digital Age* by Bowen offer more insight on some of these ideas that can take decades to accomplish because our political system is to often stuck in the status quo. These are the kinds of policy changes I'd like to see going forward.

Also, as I said earlier, I'd like every American to get a letter from the federal government as to what they qualify for, how much funding they can access, and whether the funds can be used at the colleges they are interested in attending. This information should be universally available. We also need to be very clear about which schools, colleges, and universities are doing a bad job. The government can set a bar and let people know about the institutions where students are most likely to succeed and what it will cost. Adults need access to that information—really clear information.

CAEL: You have spoken at many events focused on innovations in higher education, such as competency-based models and open educational resources. There is a great deal of interest in these kinds of innovations, particularly among institutions that serve "post-traditional" learners. Elite institutions have been involved to some extent as well: for example, as content creators for MOOCs. As a Distinguished Visiting Professor of Higher Education and Senior Fellow at NYU, how do you see these and other innovations changing the landscape of more traditional or elite institutions, if at all?

I think that it takes time for innovations to prove themselves. We have a lot of experimentation in the works. Institutions like Southern New Hampshire University, the University of Wisconsin, Purdue University, and University of Michigan are experimenting with competency-based learning. Institutions at all levels are exploring the promise of MOOCs, but early-stage innovation has been rocky. And some are testing other innovations. The Internet only began to take hold in the early 1990s. We are in a very young environment. There is a lot of interest in adopting what is new, but we need to understand that these traditions have been set for decades and a lot of what is new is untested. We don't want students wasting their time in untested environments unless they are clearly in an experimental environment. In fact, I worry a lot about the impact of big data and analytics, where the assumptions, rules and algorithms are privately owned. Why? Because thousands of students may be ported into institutions, levels, courses and programs that could easily become dead-ends. This is why I believe we need to be leading in the open systems, open source and open education movements, to avoid the results of tracks leading to nowhere that were an unintended consequence of the 20th century.

What's important is: Are students learning to think critically? To compare and contrast? To deepen their search for knowledge and skills? Are students getting through college? Are students succeeding in their careers? Are students being exposed to the innovations that truly make a difference in how they pursue their education? I'm teaching my students to look for what is evidence-based—the evidence to document that these innovations produce a better, more thoughtful and successful college graduate, a better employee, and a more civically minded contributor to the community. These are the kinds of evidence platforms that we need to pursue while we investigate the pros

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and cons of the next big new thing.

CAEL: The question of "Is College Worth It?" lately seems to be a topic for a lot of higher education stories making the news. In your opinion, why is a college degree worth the investment? Are there important reasons beyond those related to employment and income?

Don't we want an American society full of people who are critical thinkers? Especially in the knowledge economy, people will need to select what is important to meet their needs and goals, to work with others, and to make tough decisions when the time comes. When I look at the Internet and I see 20 or 30 choices, I worry about a country whose citizens are overwhelmed with information and can't filter out what is important for their education, their jobs, or their families.

I believe critical thinking is essential to help people evaluate, compare, and select what is important—and not just go for the first thing that comes their way. I want people with true heart and soul. People who take a look at who is living next door to them and reach out to them. Who care about whether their neighbor is sick and might need a helping hand. I want people who might consider running for a school board or city government, or people who would volunteer for some worthwhile cause that is larger than "earning my money" and "taking care of my own." Our country is bigger than that, and our purpose is bigger. I'd like to see more of anything that will help Americans be our critical thinkers, make better decisions, and be the kind of citizens who value their community, their state and our nation that our country will need going forward.

CAEL: Prior learning assessment has been shown to improve graduation and persistence rates for adult learners. PLA has been around for many years but is still not near scale. What do you think is getting in the way and what needs to be done about it?

We have more than 7,000 postsecondary institutions, and I would venture that a lot of them might not know what PLA is. Many institutions have a very traditional view of higher education—that college will give adult students everything they need. We haven't done enough to account for the characteristics and experiences that students bring with them when they enter.

Additionally, we use complex systems to evaluate PLA. Information is unclear: the cost of getting the assessment, the media even understanding what it is, and whether students will actually get credit for their assessment. I worked with the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Department of Defense for the last year helping all of the federal agencies understand PLA. Veterans are one of the post-traditional student populations, and we expect to see a million more veterans coming into higher education over the next decade. Veterans bring with them experiences that have great value in higher education, and they should get credit for what they learned while on active duty that ties directly to their higher education programs, so that they're not taking courses in fields where they have already acquired and can demonstrate what they know and can do.

In fact, all students should get credit for what they already know and can do—and it should be easy. We build complicated systems for students to get credit for what they know, and equally complex systems for how to demonstrate their competencies. In part, there is a need for simplification. Despite our longstanding traditional view of higher education, I believe that if students have the knowledge and skills at entry, they ought to be able to accelerate. It's not at scale yet because we have a lot more education and professional development that needs to happen within our colleges, universities and training programs. I think what is also getting in the way are concerns like: Are you "giving away"

too much credit? Is the documentation there? Will it affect the business models of higher education? A lot of this has to be unpacked and better understood. That is one of the things that CAEL is doing to advance PLA, and I think it's really important.

CAEL: What do you see as the most exciting developments in higher education today?

The focus on what students are learning and whether they are successfully getting through college—these two things together are very exciting. With analytics, we have more opportunities to look at how students absorb information and what they do with that knowledge. There is a lot more information available about adult learning, brain and behavior. You don't teach adults the same way you teach children—adults learn differently than children. This understanding of adult development is a tremendous opportunity for higher education research to be applied. I want to underscore *applied* because we have a lot of research that has sat on the shelf for far too long.

You probably thought I was going to say the Internet. I think the information-age brought on by the Internet is just the next phase. We were agrarian, then industrial, and now we are information-based—and that will probably be true for another 50 to 100 years. For example, we'll probably transform to holography and robotics as the next new age that extends virtual communities. But I think the focus on the how of learning, the actual acquisition of knowledge and skills gained by our nation's students, is the most important and exciting issue ahead of us. PLA is so important because we're looking at what people know when they start a new phase or level of education, not just when they finish. This allows them to complete different parts of their education over their lifetime and gain the ever-evolving knowledge and skills that they'll need to be successful. They're going to have to change jobs 5, 10, or 15 times during their lifetime, and they will need ways to continue their education through all of those changes. Exciting times ahead!

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Adult Learning and Education: UNESCO's Perspective

By Arne Carlsen, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

Arne Carlsen is Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, which provides a global perspective on the need for adult learning and the initiatives that are addressing that need.

INTRODUCTION

Current demographic changes, such as ageing, migration, environmental and climatic changes, changes in health patterns, the fast development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), and the recent changes in the labor market throughout the world, call for a strong response from lifelong learning and especially, from adult and continuing learning and education. How are these two concepts clarified?

According to UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UNESCO, 2013c) lifelong learning is rooted in the integration of learning and living, covering learning activities for people of all ages (children, young people, adults and the elderly, girls and boys, women and men) in all life-wide contexts (family, school, community, workplace and so on) and through a variety of modalities (formal, non-formal and informal) which together meet a wide range of learning needs and demands. Education systems which promote lifelong learning adopt a holistic and sector-wide approach involving all sub-sectors and levels to ensure the provision of learning opportunities for all individuals. Further, according to the Hamburg Declaration (UNESCO, 1997), "Adult education denotes the entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society."

Since adulthood is the longest period of our lives, adult learning and education form the largest part of lifelong learning. As a key component of an integrative lifelong learning and education system, adult education blends formal, non-formal, and informal learning. Education is an indispensable foundation for creating and sustaining personal, social, and economic well-being. It provides individuals with the appropriate opportunities, learning contexts, and pedagogical processes that help develop competencies necessary to be active participants in families and in society as a whole, and it equips them with technical and vocational skills that promote employment and entrepreneurship. However, up to now little attention has been given to this field—not just in the United States, but also globally. Hindrances include a lack of specific legislation, an inadequate organizational infrastructure, and an unstable funding mechanism to ensure quality provision and wide participation. In addition, understandings and interpretations of adult learning and education are often narrowly limited to literacy or vocational training.

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The need for solid adult education programs and policies becomes evident if we look at the following data:

Data on illiteracy:	The UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2013) reports that while the number of literates has increased over the past decade worldwide, 773.5 million adults—63.8% of whom are women—still lack basic reading and writing skills. The lowest literacy rates are observed in sub-Saharan Africa and in South and West Asia.
Data on ageing:	Globally, the number of persons aged 60 or over is expected to more than triple by 2100, increasing from 841 million in 2013 to 2 billion in 2050 and close to 3 billion in 2100. Already 66% of the world's elderly people are living in the less developed regions, and by 2050 79% will be doing so. By 2100, this figure will reach 85% (United Nations Population Fund, 2014).
Data on unemployment:	According to the International Labour Organization (2014), 202 million people worldwide were unemployed in 2013. The steepest increase of unemployment in 2013 is seen in Southeast Asia, where there are more than 45% of additional job-seekers, followed by sub-Saharan Africa and Europe. If current trends continue, the number of unemployed people worldwide is expected to reach 215 million by 2018. With many job losses being due to technological change and subsequent skills obsolescence, re-skilling is called for at all levels.

WHAT IS UNESCO DOING?

UNESCO uses multiple pathways to provide its Member States with technical support and guidance for developing and sustaining the delivery quality of responsive integrative education and training services within lifelong learning frameworks. In this endeavor to strengthen education systems worldwide, and recognizing the economic benefit of adult and continuing learning and education, UNESCO underlines the need for humanistic values in education and for the exemplification of education as a human right.

What Has UNESCO Done So Far in the Field of Adult Education?

Adult Literacy

In today's knowledge societies, lifelong learning should be the norm, with the need to make learning opportunities accessible to all at all ages, enabling them to develop competences, to improve qualifications, or to move into new work. None of this is possible, however, without sustainable literacy skills. Literacy is the foundation for lifelong learning.

UNESCO has been leading an initiative called the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD 2003–2012) which aims to devise "a renewed vision of...Literacy for All" (United Nations General Assembly, 2002). As a way to propel the Decade's efforts, UNESCO launched the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) in 2006 in order to help countries with the lowest literacy rates achieve a 50% improvement by 2015 (UNESCO, 2013). UNESCO has also been the driving force behind such advocacy programs as the September 8 International Literacy Day and the annual UNESCO Literacy Prize. Additionally, in order to bridge persisting challenges that hinder the achievement of EFA goals, UNESCO has actively worked with Member States, moving theory into

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practice, through the Capacity Development for Education for All (CapEFA), which "strives to ensure effective country leadership in the design, implementation and monitoring of [education] strategies" (UNESCO, 2011). The initiative will do this by strengthening national capacities of 28 selected countries to improve education quality and increase learning opportunities over 10 years. The key areas of actions are literacy, teachers and technical vocational education and training (TVET). Most of these projects are located in Sub-Saharan Africa, but also include Afghanistan, Nepal, Haiti as well as one project in the Arab region.

Further, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) has established a website—LitBase—providing selected effective adult literacy and numeracy programs from all regions of the world. The website encourages all key actors to share their experiences and gain inspiration from innovative approaches in the field of literacy.

It is a challenge to sustain this momentum and address the unfinished literacy agenda. Innovative delivery of literacy services and building a strong network of partners to collaboratively work towards a more literate world seem to be promising pathways in the next biennium.

International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA)

The International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEAs), organized by UNESCO every 12 to 13 years since the late 1940s, serve as an important platform for international youth and adult learning and education. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in Hamburg is the responsible Secretariat for these conferences.

The Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) was held in Brazil in December 2009 and closed with the adoption of the *Belém Framework for Action* (BFA), which constitutes the most recent global policy document guiding the development of adult learning and education. The BFA testifies to the consensus and determination of the international community to create a new course of action for adult education and called on UNESCO to coordinate and support relevant data collection and monitoring at an international level.

In the run-up to CONFINTEA VI, UNESCO had already collected the data for the first *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (GRALE), providing an overview of trends in this field as well as identifying key challenges. The second report, *Rethinking Literacy,* was published in 2013. The 2013 report serves as a reminder to governments of the commitments they made in Belém and offers them an opportunity to review whether they are moving in the right direction.

As the 2009 *Belém Framework for Action* called for global commitment to adult education, it necessarily addressed the issue of recognizing all forms of learning, formal and informal, and the use of prior learning assessment (PLA). In the face of a growing demand for recognition of the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings, the *BFA* recommended that UIL develop a set of guidelines. The *UNESCO Guidelines for the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal Learning* were published and disseminated by UIL in 2012. It proposes principles and tools supported by research-based evidence and analysis in order to assist Member States in developing or improving structures and mechanisms for recognizing all forms of learning, in particular outcomes from non-formal and informal learning, and thus foster the development of national policies and international cooperation in this area.

Moreover, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning is facilitating further development of

recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) mechanisms and national quality frameworks (NQFs) in Member States as well as regional or sub-regional qualification frameworks. This is realized by establishing the International Observatory on RVA. The Observatory will be an online portal designed to promote an international dialogue among key national stakeholders about RVA experiences, policies, and best practices. The portal will do this by:

- Providing a resource for actors in charge of RVA
- Identifying common issues, problems, and obstacles
- Making a wide range of best practices more visible and accessible (UNESCO, 2013b)

UIL is currently collecting data from practicing experts and officials working on RVA in different countries and regions; analyzing the evidence; identifying common issues, problems, and obstacles; as well as distinguishing a wide range of best practices. Still under construction, the International Observatory on RVA will ultimately become an invaluable resource for the successful implementation of the UNESCO RVA guidelines by making the most effective strategies for RVA programming more visible and accessible to all Member States (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2013 b).

Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education

Another recommendation of the BFA was the revision of the *Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education* adopted in 1976 by UNESCO's General Conference. For nearly four decades, Ever since then, it the 1976 recommendation has represented the key normative framework for adult education on an international level, providing instructive standards for adult education policy and practice in UNESCO Member States. In its 10 sections, the document includes a definition of adult education; a range of principles, explanations, and clarifications

regarding objectives of adult education; the general content, specific areas, and strategies of adult education; and organizational structures, methods, and essential features of a supportive environment, such as infrastructure, financing, and international cooperation, in regard to adult education. After 36 years, UNESCO is now working towards an update of the 1976 recommendation so as to adapt it to the changes taking place in our world today.

> The Global Network of Learning Cities is creating a global platform to mobilize cities into developing a lifelong learning strategy for their city development.

Global Network of Learning Cities GNLC)

Other future oriented UNESCO projects where adult learning and education also play an important role include the Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC). The overall aim of the GNLC is to create a global platform to mobilize cities into developing a lifelong learning strategy for their city development. Best-practice examples demonstrate how cities can use their resources effectively in every sector to develop inclusive and sustainable cities that enrich their potential for fostering lifelong personal growth, for developing equality and social justice, for maintaining harmonious social cohesion, and for creating sustainable prosperity.

Sustainable Development Agenda Post-2015

Further, UNESCO has prioritized youth and adult education as one of the key areas to be focused on by the world community in the post-2015 development agenda. UNESCO has formulated targets related to the education goal, and the organization's position is to "ensure equitable opportunities for quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2013." (UNESCO, 2014).

CONCLUSION AND SOME SUGGESTIONS

The current state of adult education worldwide still represents many challenges, and efforts have to be made in relation to advocacy for the wider benefits of lifelong learning and for the return on investment in adult and continuing learning and education.

As part of the Education for All (EFA) goals, the international community has pledged to improve adult literacy levels by 50% between 2000 and 2015. Despite the efforts already made, this agenda remains unfinished, and post-2015 agendas have already been created as a follow-up. It is imperative that our ground plans for the future give much more attention to life-long learning and that formal as well as non-formal and informal learning is taken into account.

I am confident that with the follow-up of CONFINTEA, the regular publication of the *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (GRALE), the Global Network of Learning Cities, and the advocacy work in relation to the post-2015 development agenda, UNESCO is on track to reinforce the potential of adult learning and education. The organization hopes to be able to mobilize political and financial support for action, to foster stronger partnerships between stakeholders, and to play a central role in the post-2015 development agenda.

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NEW WAYS OF SERVING ADULT LEARNERS
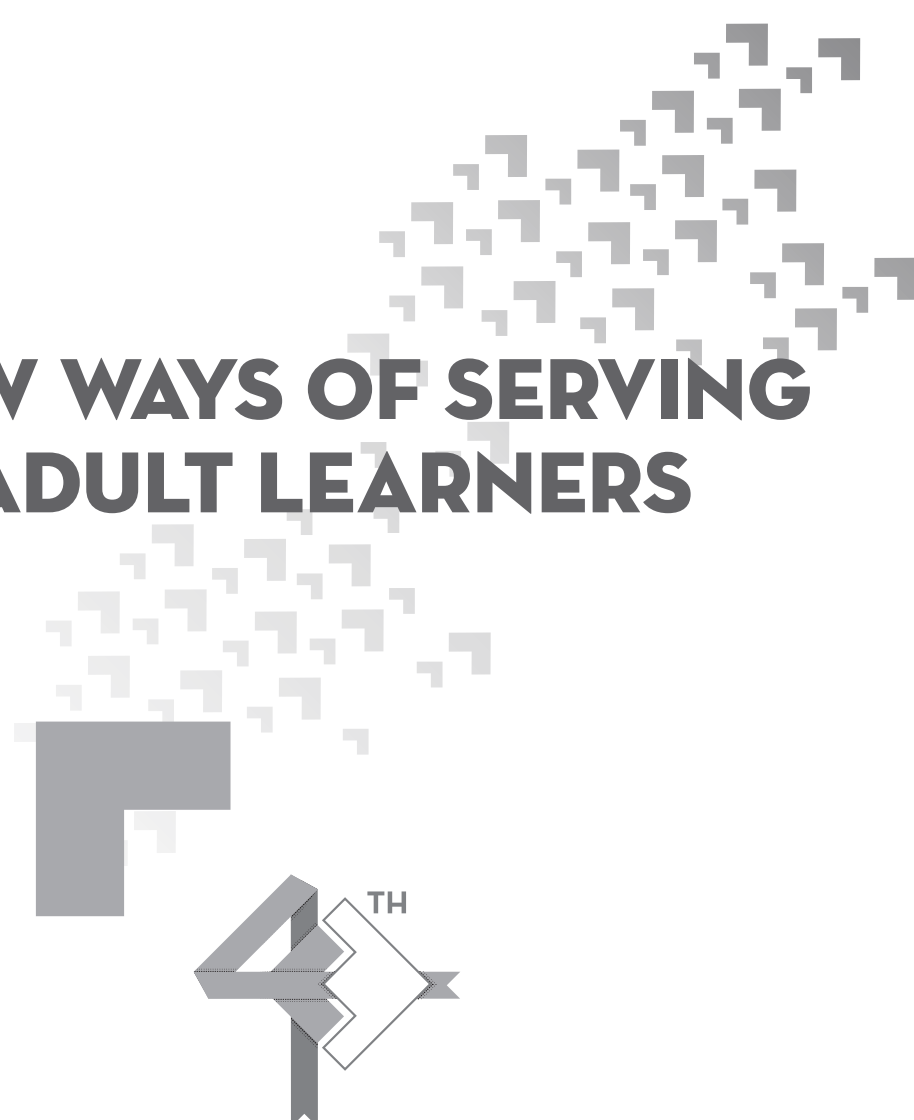
Changing Lives One College Degree at a Time

By Clifton Williams, Complete the Degree

Clifton Williams is the Center Director of Complete the Degree, a Chicago area initiative designed to advise and support low-income adults in their pursuit of a postsecondary credential. CAEL is a partner in this initiative, along with the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, Women Employed, and One Million Degrees.

Complete the Degree (CtD) is a collaborative effort to increase the number of low-income adult who have college credentials—including two-year degrees and certificates—that are valued in the labor market. Four non-profits with deep experience with higher education and adult learners founded CtD. CAEL is a national organization that creates effective learning strategies for working adults; Women Employed is a leader on postsecondary success for women; One Million Degrees broadens opportunities to community college students through its scholarship program; and the Chicago-Cook Workforce Partnership lends workforce expertise.

Similar initiatives exist in other parts of the country. Key CtD staff met with the staff of one such program, Graduate Philadelphia!, prior to launching CtD in order to gather information about some of their best practices. Other cities with adult college completion programs include, but are not limited to, Hartford, Houston, Memphis, and Denver.

> Adults want to return to school but lack the information, support, and means to do so.

The College Completion Challenge in Chicago

Despite the importance of a college degree for economic advancement, only 37 percent of Chicago residents have attained one. By the year 2020, 67 percent of jobs in Illinois will require some post-secondary education or training. Among those who have no degree are over 300,000 Chicagoans with "some college"

who have not completed a credential. They are located in every neighborhood in the city, but are particularly represented in some of Chicago's lowest-income neighborhoods.

Many of the aforementioned adults want to return to school but lack the information, support, and means to do so. To be able to return to school and successfully complete a credential, students that did not attain a degree require guidance on dealing with the issues that caused them to drop out in the first place and that prevent them from returning, information on and help getting financial aid and resolving student debt, and unbiased assistance with making good choices about post-secondary education. It is not enough to simply get returning students through the door; they need support that continues as they re-enter and attend school so that barriers that exist and issues that arise are resolved before they become reasons for dropping out.

How Complete the Degree Meets the Need through Advising

The core of CtD's service is individualized advising tailored to the specific needs of each returning student. Advisors help participants choose the right college and program, transfer their existing credits, re-enroll, access financial aid, fit courses into their schedules, and stay on track to graduate. They work with students to map out career paths, and help them address specific barriers such as defaulted loans, childcare needs, and transportation issues.

Returning students are taught to shop for colleges the same way people shop for houses

or cars. Advisors teach them cost comparison methods and provide a variety of information regarding financial aid and scholarships. There are many program participants that need assistance in finding existing scholarships for adults, so CtD researches scholarship resources for students that need additional funds to help defray college costs. Still, there are instances where students will need to obtain college loans. In addition to teaching students about the types of loans and those that are the most cost effective, our advisors help students rehabilitate defaulted loans so that they can re-enroll in college.

To ensure that there are economic benefits from college completion, our advisors, nearly all of whom have backgrounds in career advising, discuss with participants the economic implications of program choices, emphasizing those programs that are more likely to lead to family-supporting employment at lower costs. Advisors also use Prior Learning Assessments (PLA) to help lower college costs and time to completion.

PLA is a process that allows adults to obtain college credits for various work and life experiences. Credits obtained via the PLA process ultimately save students time and money in comparison with obtaining traditional college credits. Since research suggests that students who go through the PLA process are more likely to graduate, one of the ways CtD works with colleges is to ensure that higher education institutions are both knowledgeable and receptive to the PLA process.

The program asks colleges to waive certain fees such as application fees for CtD students and our partner colleges provide us with key contacts in departments related to registration in order to remove barriers and to expedite the enrollment process. Regardless of the type of assistance provided by CtD, advisors work with the students and colleges as they follow students through the college registration and enrollment processes, maintaining communication and support until graduation.

Although CtD has only been operating for approximately a year and a half, over 1,000 students have registered with the organization. Two hundred students have enrolled in college and many more are receiving services in order to remove barriers to enrollment. Finally, although CtD did not project graduates in such a short period of time, the program has confirmed at least 15 graduates and expects this number to grow in the immediate future.

> Our advisors discuss with participants the economic implications of program choices.

The Special Barriers for Women

Although CtD provides services to both men and women, the majority of our returning students, 60%, are female. In terms of college completion barriers, many of our female students reportedly drop out because they become overwhelmed by family and life responsibilities. Our advisors often speak to women who state that they have sacrificed their educational goals for the sake of their families. Many are now stuck in low-wage jobs and lack a connection to higher education and the opportunities it offers them. A significant number are first-generation students who had neither the family resources nor the institutional support from the colleges themselves to successfully complete a postsecondary degree or other credential. These women view the program as a chance to improve their lives economically while fulfilling life-long held educational dreams.

Addressing the Needs of Veterans

The program also has specialized services and advisors specifically focused on military veterans. This is necessary because veterans both have different issues and access to different resources than the general population. At CtD, veterans receive career and education advising to help them make good choices about where to go to school and what to study. This helps to avoid some of the challenges many veterans face when returning to school—particularly confusion about how to navigate the world of higher education. CtD advisors help veterans avoid some of the institutions that have exhibited predatory behavior towards veteran

> Partnerships with area community-based organizations has been a crucial strategy for providing additional supportive resources for returnees.

students. The program also helps veterans understand their federal and state benefits and how best to access them. Typically, veterans have to wait until they are enrolled somewhere to get this kind of help, but with CtD, the 28,000 veterans in Chicago get an unbiased organization dedicated to helping them obtain a college degree that leads to quality employment.

Building on and Creating New Lessons that Support Degree Completion

CtD was able to utilize lessons learned by our founding organizations from past years. One important lesson was that college success is not only about access. For years, efforts to serve underrepresented, low-income, and first-generation students have focused on getting them into institutions of higher education. But it is not sufficient to get people in the door just to have them fall off a cliff. Supports, including career counseling, academic advising, tutoring, and other continuing services are necessary to ensure not just college access, but college success. CtD advisors support returning students until they have graduated from college. In addition, students who receive two-year college degrees are guided through the process of getting their bachelor's degrees if they wish to continue their education.

We have also learned lessons regarding building partnerships and outreach strategies. Creating partnerships with area community-based organizations has been a crucial strategy for providing additional supportive resources for returnees. Students face a range of needs in order to enroll and remain in college. Some students seek new or additional employment in order to help defray college costs. Other supportive services include things such as childcare, financial counseling, or housing issues. The outreach required to build community partnerships and to recruit new students has proved to be very labor intensive. Learning to balance the needs for outreach with the goal of providing high quality advising services is an evolving process.

The staff and founders of CtD truly believe that they can change the lives of individuals and their communities one college degree at a time.

Creating a Responsive Education Ecosystem

By Chris Engle, Avalanche Consulting, and Sarah Miller, Council for Adult & Experiential Learning

Higher education institutions in the U.S. have very diverse missions, but more and more, institutions are recognizing that they play an important role in building the skills of our nation's workforce. Education assets, in all forms, help regions make the business case for industry to either expand or locate operations to a given region. A term that is sometimes used for these education assets is "education ecosystem," suggesting that the various education and training providers for a given region—including postsecondary institutions, workforce training providers, and the K-12 system—are themselves organisms that grow, change, and interact with each other in response to the world around them. One important part of that world is the local or regional labor market.

Higher education has long been moving in important ways towards providing more programs that develop technical and industry-driven skills that are required in the new economy. In this article, we discuss ways in which institutions responding to employer needs in deliberate ways in order to help drive economic growth and recovery.

Skills and Credentials as Economic Drivers

Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce has projected that the jobs of the future will require more postsecondary education than ever before, and that our economy will depend upon developing the skills and credentials of the workforce (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010). We are already seeing this projected trend as a present reality in local communities.

Communities that have a lot of college graduates in high-demand fields—or communities that can attract these new graduates—can expect to draw new corporate investment in coming years.

For example, in the sidebar table showing 2011 totals for technology graduates by location, we see that highly sought-after computer graduates (at the bachelor's level or above) can be found in large metropolitan areas like Los Angeles, New York, and Phoenix, but the highest per capita output in the list is found in Lafayette, Indiana and Gainesville, Florida. In response, in Gainesville, local start-up companies are cropping up and taking advantage of the research and development patents created through the University of Florida. In addition, there are strong partnerships between the university, the local community college, and regional economic developers to leverage new technologies being

Top 20 Metros Producing College Graduates in Computers *(Bachelor's or Higher in Computer Engineering, Programming, or Database Admin)*

Metro	2011 Graduates	Per Capita Intensity
Los Angeles, CA	2,636	204
New York, NY	2,573	135
Phoenix, AZ	1,626	381
Dallas-Fort Worth, TX	1,611	247
Boston, MA	1,489	323
Washington, DC	1,487	261
Atlanta, GA	1,429	267
San Jose, CA	1,148	615
Philadelphia, PA	1,148	192
Chicago, IL	1,122	118
Austin, TX	834	468
Pittsburgh, PA	805	341
Orlando, FL	802	369
Seattle, WA	774	221
Houston, TX	712	117
Gainesville, FL	638	2,395
Lafayette, IN	633	3,109
Baltimore, MD	630	231
Virginia Beach-Norfolk, VA-NC	616	367
San Francisco, CA	616	140

developed within the Gainesville area. In this example, higher education institutions are responding to employer needs, and in doing so, showing themselves to be important players in the region's economic development strategies.

Education: How to Respond to the Need for a Hybrid Skilled Workforce

Consistently in our work we come across industries with need for hybrid skills. In manufacturing, this is reflected in a move away from individual technicians, like pipefitters, to the multi-craftsman—someone who can do a number of jobs that used to be filled by separate employees. This new role requires hard technical skills as well as important soft skills like critical thinking, time management, and good interpersonal communication.

> The key to effectively aligning the workforce to industry needs through education and training is to consider the entire education ecosystem.

We have seen the education ecosystem respond to this need in a number of ways. In the Greater Charlotte region, many companies have adopted the European apprenticeship model, which develops the skills of the multi-craft worker while simultaneously giving that worker an opportunity to earn an associate degree. We have also seen new programs in process technology, mechatronics, and industrial technology begin to evolve in terms of learning outcomes to directly meet industry needs. For example, in Gainesville both the education system and the local employers take advantage of connecting their technical programs with a soft skill development program offered by the local Workforce Investment Board called "Red Carpet Customer Service."

Companies looking at different sites for locating their business appreciate this kind of responsiveness from the education ecosystem. "Flexibility is the key ingredient for high-impact workforce training programs. [Employers] want something customized that will give them the ability to incorporate into the program what works best for them," says site selector Lindsay Myers of McCallum Sweeney Consulting.

Communities: How to Create a 21st Century Talent Strategy

The key to effectively aligning the workforce to industry needs through education and training is to consider the entire education ecosystem and how each part contributes to the whole. Increasingly, communities are conducting a "supply-demand gap analysis" to contrast occupational forecasts with the output of college in terms of its graduates. This analysis takes a critical look at the number of jobs being created in a community versus the number of students coming out of higher education with complementary credentials.

While not a perfect science, this analysis can highlight where output exceeds demand (which results in graduates having to leave the local community for work), or where trends are diverging and future gaps may exist. For example, one region we studied had a growing demand for engineers but did not have a local institution with an engineering program. In another region, local healthcare employers were looking for registered nurses at the bachelor's degree level, while most of the local colleges were providing primarily programs for licensed practical nurses.

The supply-demand analysis will reveal certain strategies and recommendations to better align the education ecosystem with local economic need. In our experience, the resulting data from this work helps the ecosystem adapt to the world around them—and their students as well.

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The Growing Movement to Recognize Military Learning

By Rodrigo Garcia, Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs

Rodrigo Garcia is a senior state executive with the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, a member of the Illinois Cabinet, board chairman for Student Veterans of America, and a Marine Corps veteran.

"What did you learn serving in the military?" Ask a former servicemember this question and you'll get a wide array of answers. How to march. How to administer CPR. How to install a water main. How to say "thank you" in four different languages. How to help a friend in need. Life experiences.

> Government and educational institutions have historically neglected to place a concrete, redeemable value on prior learning obtained through military service.

As a former U.S. Marine, I've been asked this question—in one form or another—on numerous occasions. Honestly, it's very challenging to answer it concisely. I usually break it down into three components. First, I learned the value of self-discipline. Second, I learned the power of teamwork, acquiring a renewed appreciation of the credo "one team, one fight." And third, I learned a durable set of competencies and technical skills through military education, hands-on training, and practical application.

While most people recognize that military veterans are accomplished in self-discipline and teamwork, many often overlook the fact that they have obtained formal training, hands-on instruction, and performance evaluations by some of the world's foremost technical experts—and these experiences have a straight-line application to academic curricula and civilian careers. The same goes for institutions. Though there are certain exceptions, government and educational institutions have historically neglected to place a concrete, redeemable value on prior learning obtained through military service.

As noted in a recent report from The White House, "many servicemembers are required to repeat education or training in order to receive industry certifications and state occupational licenses, even though much, and in some cases, all, of their military training and experience overlaps with credential training requirements" (Executive Office of the President, 2013). Not only is this burdensome and costly for individual veterans, but it runs counter to the evolving workforce needs of the national economy. Experts note that the U.S. needs to educate nearly 800,000 more college graduates each year to meet the demand for skilled labor from now until 2025 (Sherman & Klein-Collins, 2012).

Recognizing these pressing realities, and driven by a steadfast commitment to military veterans, a growing number of stakeholders have thrown in their hat to make military experience count toward academic credit and professional licensing standards. Across the nation, veteran advocates are working with educators, non-profits, and government agencies to establish formal processes that award due credit for relevant military training.

Growing Movement to Allocate Academic Credit for Military Experience

Trailblazers are making great strides to build awareness for this issue, demonstrate the rigor

> Some states have developed online portals to better equip veterans to choose a college program suited to their prior learning experiences, career interests, and financial means.

and accuracy of prior learning assessment (PLA) tools, and generate greater buy-in from the academic community. Particular focus has been placed on the American Council on Education's *Guide to Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services*, which is the standard reference work used by institutions to document recognized learning gained in the military (Snead & Anderson, 2010). The *ACE Guide* is a very useful tool for recognizing the learning of former servicemembers and helping them complete a degree—and at a lower cost. At the same time, higher education institutions are actively looking at ways to expand the use of other assessment tools, such as portfolio-based assessments and credit by exam programs (Berling, 2010). These assessment tools, as well as others, must be fully utilized to support a more thorough evaluation of a servicemember's relevant military training and experience.

For those educational institutions that have relevant PLA and credit transfer processes in place, student veterans are often unaware of these credit-earning opportunities. As such, they move forward with important academic and financial decisions without full knowledge as to how they can leverage their military experience effectively.

In states like Minnesota, Texas, and here in Illinois, state officials and higher education leaders are making a concerted effort to create tools by which student veterans can see how their prior military learning counts toward degree requirements at different educational institutions. These state initiatives include dynamic online portals that contain clear and concise information as to relevant military-to-academic credit transfers. Not only will this better equip veterans to choose a college program

suited to their prior learning experiences, career interests, and financial means, but it will also provide a central coordination point for educational institutions.

Making Military Experience Count toward Professional Licensing Standards

There's also a strong movement underway to assist returning veterans in obtaining state licenses relevant to their military training. Many states, including my home state of Illinois, have passed legislation and implemented executive orders in recent years to allow for military training to count toward the requirements of state licenses when determined to be "substantially equivalent." A notable example relates to military medics, many of which have the training and experience to meet licensing standards for basic Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) or Certified Nursing Aides (CNAs). Other well-known articulations of military experience include military medics to licensed practical nurses; military truck drivers to commercial drivers' licenses; physical therapy specialists to physical therapy assistants; military police officers to law enforcement officers; and dental assistants to dental hygienists, to name a few.

On this issue, the key has been establishing processes by which licensing entities can determine how training acquired by servicemembers applies toward specific licensing requirements. Linkages are not always a clear and vary based on the veteran's specific training and experience. At times, there are gaps that need to be addressed.

Accordingly, states need to work with their licensing agencies to identify gaps and then assist systems of higher education to design programs through which former servicemembers may obtain any additional education necessary to bridge the gap toward licensure.

The Road Ahead

It is important to understand that there are systemic, bureaucratic difficulties behind this issue. We need to acknowledge the structural

barriers to employment that stem from a lack of a degree, a license or certification, or other credential. While military experience provides the necessary tools and core competencies necessary in today's competitive landscape, the lack of a formal credential will inhibit military veterans from becoming gainfully employed. And though the cost to train a member of the United States Armed Forces often averages in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, an insufficient number of states have yet to capitalize on this investment and apply it toward our credentialing processes here on the home front. As several pioneering states have shown, when we do recognize military learning, the returns are substantial. It's more than just worthy tribute to our men and women who've worn the uniform. It represents an investment to address the evolving workforce needs of our nation.

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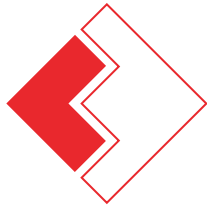
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