In the News

"They’re Just Not Making Retirement Like They Used To,” TIME Magazine, October 3, 2011


Tips and Tools

Featuring Prior Learning Assessment: Resources to Help Community Colleges

“The Transformation of Higher Education Through Prior Learning Assessment”
This article in the September-October issue of Change Magazine discusses why higher education needs to take a closer look at prior learning assessment. The author notes that to understand the importance of portable credits, educators must understand two key realities. First, most students don’t start and finish at the same college. Secondly, lots of important learning takes place outside of classrooms. At the same time, 65% of postsecondary learning, by spending, does not happen through colleges and universities but through workplace and other training. The author presents several examples of prior learning assessment at colleges and builds the case for why colleges should utilize prior learning assessment more frequently.

Underserved Students Who Earn Credit Through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Have Higher Degree Completion Rates and Shorter Time-to-Degree
Earning college credit for prior learning can help adult students in many ways, says this research brief. In 2010, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) released a report on a multi-institutional study on prior learning assessment (PLA) and adult student outcomes. The study examined data from 62,475 adult students at 48 colleges and universities, following the students’ academic progress over the course of 7 years. The data from the 48 postsecondary institutions in the study show that students with PLA credit had better academic outcomes, particularly in terms of graduation rates and persistence, than other adult students. Many PLA students also shortened the time required to earn a degree, depending on the number of PLA credits earned. In the research brief, CAEL showcases the findings by race/ethnicity and income – two demographic categories often used to define underserved student groups. The data show that Black non-Hispanic, Hispanic, and low-income students with PLA credits have better academic outcomes than similar students without PLA credits. The positive findings for low-income, black non-Hispanic and Hispanic students suggest that awarding college credit for significant life learning could be an
effective way to accelerate degree completion, while lowering the cost, for underserved student populations.

**Articulation Agreements and Prior Learning Assessment: Tools to Help 21st Century Students Achieve Their Postsecondary Education Goals and Keep America Competitive**

This June 2011 Center for American Progress policy brief discusses how policies prohibiting the acceptance of prior learning credits hurt students and, ultimately, the U.S. economy. As more jobs require postsecondary education and training, too many colleges put up barriers to earning postsecondary credits by refusing to recognize any knowledge or learning acquired outside of their institutional system. The result is wasted time, effort, and money, along with lost productivity over the long-term. This issue brief discusses the need for policy reform and highlights two of the policies currently being used to help students complete their degrees: articulation agreements and prior learning assessments.

“**Making Learning Outside the Classroom Count: CAP Explores Prior Learning Assessments**”

This September 2011 webinar recording from the Center for American Progress features several education leaders discussing the value of prior learning assessment (PLA). Chari Leader Kelley, senior consultant for higher education services at the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, gave a presentation on the effect of prior learning assessment. She explained that after researching more than 62,000 students at 48 postsecondary institutions, the “PLA effect” is obvious: 56% of PLA students earn a postsecondary degree within 7 years, while only 21% of non-PLA students did so. “One thing that we found with the PLA effect is that it’s equal,” Leader Kelley said. “There are no differences in terms of the PLA value despite racial, ethnic, institutional types, or whether you’re a financial aid student or not.” The event continued with a panel discussion. Among the participants was Joyce M. Judy, president of the Community College of Vermont. She described her institution, how PLA functions within the college, and the benefits derived by both student and institution.

**Plus 50 Story**

**Unemployed: Getting Re-Trained for a New Job, And a New Life**

In this YouTube video, 61-year-old community college student Catherine Antonoff talks about retraining as a health unit coordinator. After suffering an injury at work, Antonoff’s vocational counselor recommended she take courses at Clover Park Technical College that would enable her to stay in the healthcare field. She is very optimistic about the future and finds the environment at the college to be supportive.

[Resources to Support Your Plus 50 Program](#)
LEARNING

Affordability and Transfer: Critical to Increasing Baccalaureate Degree Completion
This policy brief from the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education addresses baccalaureate degree completion and the vital role of community colleges as the entry point for many students seeking bachelor’s degrees. It focuses particularly on states with rapidly growing young populations, where ethnic groups and low-income students with low rates of college participation and completion are most concentrated. The report notes that community colleges are more crucial than ever, but that state financial aid and transfer policies that enable students to move from 2-year colleges to baccalaureate-granting institutions are not keeping pace with current needs.

TRAINING & RE-TRAINING

“Ageism & the Mature Job Seeker”
This Aging Today article by staff from the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning examines the harsh realities found in today’s job market by plus 50 workers. At a time when many thought they would be coasting toward retirement, older workers are instead retraining for new jobs and making themselves more marketable for employers. Prior to the recession, many retirement age Americans delayed leaving the workplace because they wanted to continue working. But now, staying on the job is a necessity for increasing numbers of mature workers. Aging Today is the bimonthly newspaper of the American Society on Aging.

VOLUNTEERING & SERVICE

“Senior Volunteers: Serving Their Communities and Their Country”
In this engaging blog post on the AARP website, the director of Senior Corps at the Corporation for National and Community Service discusses how 450,000 older adult volunteers help their communities and serve a greater purpose. Volunteering is as valuable for the volunteer as it is for person or community they are helping. Through service, volunteers learn new skills, make contacts, and stay engaged in their communities. Equally important, more than two decades of health research demonstrates that volunteers ages 55 and older have lower mortality rates, greater function ability, and lower rates of depression and disease.

The American Association of Community Colleges is a national association representing close to 1,200 community, junior and technical colleges nationwide. Community colleges are the largest and fastest-growing sector of higher education, serving 12.4 million students each year. AACC is headquartered in Washington, D.C. See www.aacc.nche.edu.

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