

National Headquarters
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Who is CAEL

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) is a national non-profit organization that has created and managed effective learning strategies for working adults since 1974. CAEL uses its knowledge of adult and employee learning practices to be an effective intermediary and partner, leveraging the strengths and capabilities of its constituencies: adult learners, higher education, business, labor and government. Our mission is to expand lifelong learning opportunities for adults.

A National Problem

Based on analysis conducted by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, a much larger proportion of jobs in the U.S. will require higher education. This analysis, *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018*, shows that 60 percent of jobs in the U.S. will require postsecondary education by 2018. Additionally, President Obama has set a goal of putting the U.S. first in the world by 2020 in the proportion of residents with college degrees and certificates. But the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) has recently calculated that, based on current levels of production, we would need to add 13,132,522 degrees and certificates by 2020. We cannot reach this number of degrees through educating a greater number of youth alone. Helping adults complete degrees is essential to reaching the goal.

CAEL's Solution: LearningCounts.org

As CAEL has demonstrated since the mid-1970s, the process of prior learning assessment (PLA) – the opportunity to earn academic credit for college-level learning acquired outside a traditional academic environment – is a boon for adult learners seeking to advance in their undergraduate studies, their careers, or their professional or occupational credentialing. This lifelong learning may be acquired through work, employer training programs, military service, independent study, non-credit courses, volunteer or community service, and open source courseware. Earning credits through PLA helps adult learners accelerate degree completion while saving them both time and money. Our study, *Fueling the Race Toward Postsecondary Success*, funded by Lumina Foundation, found that PLA students earn degrees faster and are more likely to graduate than non-PLA students. but there are not enough institutions granting credit for prior learning and there is a need for consistent standards. To make Prior Learning Assessment more accessible and able to reach scale, CAEL decided to launch a national on-line assessment service. We launched LearningCounts.org in early 2011.

LearningCounts.org serves as a comprehensive PLA resource to adult learners, postsecondary institutions, employers and workforce organizations. LearningCounts.org offers a prior learning

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portfolio development course (CAEL 100: Prior Learning Assessment Theory and Practice), a national roster of expert faculty evaluators, and a host of other ancillary services.

LearningCounts.org is also where students can build and submit their completed portfolios which demonstrate their prior learning. These portfolios are matched to a *LearningCounts.org* faculty roster so that the individual is assured that their learning is measured by a subject area expert.

Funders

LearningCounts.org has received funding from the following foundations:

- Lumina Foundation
- The Kresge Foundation
- The Joyce Foundation
- The Walmart Foundation
- State Street Foundation
- Google

Walmart Foundation's Learning Assessment Stipends ensures that services available through *LearningCounts.org* are available to 115 students with the greatest financial need. Providing such need-based direct funding to students will increase access and expand the impact of *LearningCounts.org* among under-served populations pursuing undergraduate degrees. The stipend will cover the cost of **CAEL 100** and the evaluation of one portfolio, up to six credits. LearningCounts.org is working closely with our partner institutions, Veterans Upward Bound and the Cara Program to help distribute these stipends.

National Partner Organizations

The [College Board](#), which offers the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), has agreed to partner with CAEL in promoting LearningCounts.org to its population of adults, and to work with CAEL on needed policy change at the state level. LearningCounts.org is already referring students to CLEP testing and CLEP is including LearningCounts.org information on its website.

The [American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation Service \(ACE CREDIT\)](#), has also agreed to partner with CAEL in promoting LearningCounts.org to the users of ACE Credit, both employers that have had their courses evaluated for college credit and the adults who use ACE Credit transcripts of military and corporate training. In addition, ACE will transcript the credit

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recommendations from LearningCounts.org faculty and send the transcript to the college of the student's choice.

Services of LearningCounts.org

- Educational advising to students
- Online course to prepare the portfolio of prior learning
- Access to a broad faculty roster, trained according to the recognized CAEL standards
- Review of learning experiences by faculty experts for college-level equivalency
- Direct links to the College Board's CLEP testing options and American Council on Education (ACE CREDIT) evaluations of workplace and military training
- Archived electronic record of students' history of prior learning
- Credit recommendations recorded on an American Council on Education (ACE CREDIT) transcript

PLA Options for Students

Prepare a Portfolio

Students can prepare a portfolio by writing about their learning, making a video of themselves performing a task, providing a product of their work, or having a third party verify their knowledge. **The documentation—or portfolio—they present is then evaluated by a college faculty member.** If what the student has submitted is at the same level as what a successful student in a college-level traditional course could produce, a college faculty member recommends that the student be awarded college credit. Credit recommendations are then registered on an ACE CREDIT transcript. ACE CREDIT recommendations are routinely accepted by almost two thousand degree granting colleges and universities. LearningCounts.org offers a six week online class to teach students how to document and present their learning.

College Board tests

CLEP exams help students save money, save time, and achieve their college goals. Developed by the College Board, CLEP is the most widely accepted credit-by-examination program, available at more than 2,900 colleges and universities. By earning passing scores on CLEP exams, students can earn college credit, accelerating their education and placing into the right classes. CLEP exams are offered in 33 introductory-level college subjects.



ACE CREDIT evaluations

If students have had training at work or in the military, they could already have college credit. [The American Council on Education \(ACE CREDIT\)](http://www.acecredit.org) evaluates training offered by the military, employers, government agencies, and professional associations to see if the training is at the college level. ACE CREDIT also evaluates registered apprenticeships, professional certifications, and exams.

The Process for Students

1) Talk to a LearningCounts.org Advisor - Free

Students will have the opportunity to speak one-on-one with an advisor to find out which LearningCounts.org PLA option is right for them. Advising sessions are typically conducted over the phone and can last up to 30 minutes.

2) Enroll in CAEL 100: Prior Learning Assessment Theory a Practice - \$500

Course Description

The course guides students through the preparation and compilation of all components required for the evaluation of a portfolio or prior learning through LearningCounts.org. Students learn critical reflection skills to rethink the value of their learning and its implications for future learning. Adult learning theory, models, and concepts are discussed and applied to case studies. CAEL 100 is facilitated by an instructor who provides guidance for the student in preparing his or her portfolio-based request for credit. Successful completion of CAEL 100 results in a credit recommendation of three lower-level credits.

Course Objectives

As a result of this course, learners will be able to:

- Identify and reflect on areas of their own learning from both formal and informal settings;
- Use critical reflection skills to rethink the nature and value of learning from experience;
- Approach learning with an appropriate balance of practical and theoretical understanding;
- Discuss and apply experiential learning theory, models, and concepts to case studies;
- Generate college-level writing that demonstrates learning; and,
- Identify, organize, and gather documentation in order to build portfolios of prior learning.

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Course Materials

The textbook for the course is *Earn College Credit for What You Know* by Janet Colvin (2006). Additional web-based academic readings on learning theory and practice are assigned in each unit.

Course Structure

This is an instructor-led online course. It is not self-paced. The units span six weeks. Students should expect to dedicate 6-10 hours per unit. Depending on the student's portfolio petition, an additional 10 hours or more may be required for the learning narratives.

3) Create and Submit Portfolio - \$250 for 1-6 credits requested in the same discipline

Once a student has passed the CAEL 100 course, they will have acquired the necessary skills to build and submit a portfolio. For requests across multiple disciplines, students may submit additional portfolios. Each portfolio will be reviewed and evaluated by a trained faculty expert in the subject area. Credit recommendations will then be recorded on an American Council on Education (ACE CREDIT) transcript.

Partner Institutions

Hundreds of colleges and universities seek assistance from CAEL each year in training faculty and administrators to implement or improve programs of Prior Learning Assessment. Unfortunately, many do not have the resources to launch or maintain their programs, and do not have faculty with the expertise to evaluate portfolios. Colleges and universities can choose to use LearningCounts.org as either a supplement to their on-campus PLA program, or as the primary vehicle for evaluating portfolios for their students.

Eighty institutions, including Ivy Tech, have become partner institutions, agreeing to send a small number of students for assessment, to accept the credit recommendations made by LearningCounts.org, and to give us feedback and data about their students' response to LearningCounts.org. We hope to expand the number of partner institutions in Indiana, and to find ways for all students to afford the services of Prior Learning Assessment.