3 Prior Learning Assessment Challenges and Solutions

The value of PLA for learners and institutions is clear – more graduates, higher engagement, and more participation. **So why aren't PLA programs more widely utilized?**

There are a number of adoption and utilization challenges that PLA is currently facing – here are 3 of the most impactful ones, and the steps you can take to solve them.

Challenges:

01. Awareness

Learners simply aren't aware of PLA programs – a recent CAEL study showed highlighted this.

58% of college students were aware that PLA was an option.

02. Participation

8% of community college students have earned PLA credit.

With PLA having measurable effects on graduation rate and credits completed – this number needs to grow.

03. Complexity

PLA programs have struggled because the assessment and evaluation process is often complicated and time consuming – causing many participants to fail to complete it despite the likelihood of qualifying.

7% of PLA participants earn credit through an assessment or portfolio.

12% use third-party evaluations.

Solutions:

Improve Advisory Infrastructure

Ensuring college staff are knowledgeable and available to help learners through the PLA process is crucial to their success and participation. Having dedicated advisors available for PLA program participants ensures they will have constant support to overcome barriers to completion.

Build PLA into Existing Programs

Making PLA a core part of earning degrees and credentials will directly improve awareness and participation. Data providing insights into the characteristics of learners most likely to benefit from PLA matched with data from the programs themselves can provide a clear picture where integrating PLA would make the largest impact.

Simplify the Process

The PLA process needs to be efficient and above all else – simple. Reduce barriers to program participation and completion by designing accurate assessments and evaluations with a focus on student success. The less time consuming this process is – the more learners will participate.

Programs that improve the efficacy and mobility of our workforce need to be at the forefront of all workforce development initiatives to close the ever-widening skills gap. Prior Learning Assessment allows workers to parlay their experience into in-demand degrees and credentials. **To maximize the value of PLA, we need to create accessible, effective programs that double down on what PLA does best** – allow learners to quickly and accurately translate their experience into meaningful career progress.