

It's Back To School Time: Did You Know You Can Earn College Credit For What You Already Know?

New Innovations Like Prior Learning Assessment and Competency Based Education Make it Easier Than Ever to Earn a Degree

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Today's adults interested in going back to school to pursue a degree may be unaware of a host of new innovations in higher education that can make it easier than ever for them to earn their degree, Council for

Adult and Experiential Learning ([CAEL](#)) CEO and President Pamela Tate announced today.

According to Tate, new approaches like Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and Competency Based Education (CBE) can help students get credit for what they already know, dramatically reducing the time and expense involved in completing a degree.

In making the announcement Tate said, "The landscape of higher education has changed dramatically over the past few years which means that going back to school today can be easier than ever. Today's adult learners can access a variety of programs that help them use their life and work experience to obtain college credit so they can earn their degrees quickly and much more inexpensively."

Earn College Credit for Life and Work Experience

According to Tate, one option is CAEL's [LearningCounts.org](#) program where adults can use their life, work and military experience to gain college credit at a fraction of the cost and time required to earn more conventional classroom credits. Students develop a Learning Portfolio that relates their life and work experience to college courses. To learn how to build a valid portfolio that will earn credit, they can choose from an instructor-led or do-it-yourself online course where they learn to identify and demonstrate college-level learning gained outside of the classroom. .

LearningCounts.org works best for those who:

- Are strong writers or have taken a basic college-level writing course
- Have completed at least one other online course



- Have good computer skills and feel comfortable with online learning
- Have several years of work, volunteer and/or other life experience in one or more areas that align with college coursework – for example: communications, management, information technology, marketing, healthcare, or merchandising.

Adults in PLA programs like CAEL's LearningCounts.org can save between \$1,600-\$6,000 acquiring college credits. They can also save time that otherwise would be spent in a classroom learning what they already know. The LearningCounts credit recommendations are accepted by hundreds of [colleges and universities](#) that respect the history and learning of adult students and find them the most reasonable path to earning a college degree.

Rose Rad has always wanted to earn her degree, but given family and work demands she found it impossible until she learned about earning credit for life and work experiences. At 55, Rose enrolled in an online degree program with Southern New Hampshire University which paired her with an academic adviser who told her she needed to enroll in the LearningCounts class. Rose was able to submit three portfolios for credit and today she is proud to say she earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Healthcare Management. LearningCounts saved her \$3,300 and four months while recognizing her knowledge gained through life and work.

Competency Based Education is Gaining in Popularity

Tate also discussed another new approach designed to help adults earn their degree called Competency Based Education (CBE). Competency-based approaches take the important step of placing the focus on what a student knows and can do, while minimizing the importance of where the student learned it or how long it took to learn. The move toward embracing CBE is growing as numbers of higher education officials and legislators across the country continue to support it as an option for students pursuing a degree. President Obama praised CBE in his August 2013 speech on affordability in higher education, and the Governors in Indiana, Texas and Wisconsin have also supported competency-based approaches in postsecondary education. In addition, CAEL recently received a grant from the Lumina Foundation to help 21 colleges and universities launch CBE initiatives.

"PLA and CBE are valuable tools that can help adults bridge the gap between what they already know and a college degree. They are two options that can help many finally see their dream of a college degree come true for far less time and money than they may have imagined," concluded Tate.

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization based in Chicago, Illinois that assists adults with their educational endeavors, finding practical ways to help them earn college credit for learning acquired through life and work experiences toward the completion of a postsecondary degree. CAEL works with the public sector, private sector industries, and higher education institutions to ensure that adult students receive the most efficient training and education to occupy a meaningful professional place in a 21st century economy. Since 1974, CAEL has assisted colleges and universities to develop programs that

evaluate adults' non-collegiate learning for college credit. CAEL is the recognized national expert on a method known as portfolio assessment, and its Ten Standards for Assessing Learning are used by colleges and universities, as well as accrediting organizations, across the country. More information is available at www.cael.org. Follow CAEL on Twitter at www.twitter.com/CAELnews or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CAELnews .

LearningCounts.org is managed by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), and operates with support from Lumina Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the State Street Foundation, the Houston Endowment, USA Funds, and Brown Foundation. The Walmart Foundation is also providing support and scholarships for eligible users of LearningCounts.org. For more information, visit www.learningcounts.org.

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Jackie Clark
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
240-252-1340
[email us here](#)

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