

Cooperative Pilot Initiative: CAEL Membership for Selected Members of the Distance Education Accrediting Commission

“If ever there was a time for more attention on enrolling adults in college, this is it. The demographic changes squeezing college finances could be reason enough. The demands of the economy, let alone the needs of our democracy, present an even stronger argument . . .”

~~ from “The Adult Student,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2018

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) is pleased to announce a pilot initiative, collaborating with the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC), to introduce a select group of DEAC member institutions to a two-year enhanced CAEL Membership package that includes a selection of product offerings. This proposal will outline:

- CAEL membership benefits
- Enhanced DEAC Pilot Membership Options
- Cost
- Institutional Selection
- Anticipated Outcomes
- Next Steps

The national focus on the adult student has increased exponentially during the past several years, with a number of trends contributing to this intensified focus. Highlights include:

1. The predicted talent crisis has arrived. Employers are facing growing challenges to fill critical employment gaps and to retain their top talent. Education, both for the potential and for the incumbent workforce, is an important strategy in filling the talent gap.
2. Economic development organizations recognize that high-performing educational institutions are a critical component in the economic well-being of a region.
3. In nearly every industry sector, the technical aspects of work are changing and evolving so quickly that lifelong education and training is an imperative.
4. For employers, colleges, and economic development organizations, it is clear that the talent requirements for any region cannot be solved exclusively by the K-12 educational system.

In order to meet these challenges all of the partners, including postsecondary institutions, employers and communities, need to provide more effective support for adult students as they move through their higher education process, receive their credentials and engage in meaningful careers.

About CAEL Membership

CAEL has been a membership organization since 1974. Today more than 509 colleges, academic systems and individuals are members of CAEL, falling into these categories:

- **Institutional:** For regionally accredited colleges and universities with fees based on the size of institution's enrollment according to Higher Education Directory.
- **Organizational:** For Corporations, Healthcare Providers, Associations, Labor Unions and Organizations not regionally accredited.
- **System:** System membership does not cover individual institutions within the system, only the system's office.
- **International:** For educational institutions located outside the United States.
- **Individual:** Membership includes graduate students, faculty and staff working in higher education institutions and corporate environments, as well as other individuals interested in adult learning.

For more information about traditional CAEL membership, visit the membership page on the CAEL website, [Introduction to CAEL Membership](#)

Enhanced DEAC Pilot Membership

Following our recent conversation with the DEAC Executive Director, and for the purposes of this pilot initiative, CAEL has created a hybrid membership proposal for a select group of DEAC members. These enhanced memberships include traditional components, but also offers additional CAEL products to the pilot institutions at a discounted rate. The DEAC Membership proposal includes:

A two-year CAEL membership for the pilot group of DEAC members.

In addition to each of the two-year membership, each institution may choose two additional products, with one of the two delivered during each membership year. The products and services include:

Adult Learner 360*	This CAEL-owned tool Adult Learner 360 helps your college or university map the route to adult student success. Made up of two surveys, one for institutions and one for adult students, Adult Learner 360 compares institutional perceptions against adult students' through the lens of CAEL's Ten Principles for Effectively Serving Adult Learners.
Learning Counts*	This CAEL-owned online portfolio assessment service offers an opportunity to scale up your PLA offerings. LearningCounts provides PLA support that includes student guidance, a network of trained faculty assessors and access to promotional tools to institutions market the program to current and potential students.
PLA Accelerator*	The CAEL-owned web-enabled PLA Accelerator tool helps institutions to promote Prior Learning Assessment at their institution, engaging and empowering students while leading to more effective advisor sessions.

Workshops	Workshops are delivered onsite, online or via a hybrid method. Topics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLA Master Class • Faculty Assessor Training (online or on-site) • Focusing on the Outcomes: Designing and Assessing Course Outcomes through Prior Learning Assessment • Leveraging PLA to Enroll More Adult Students • PLA Process Mapping • PLA Advising • Applying Prior Learning Assessment to Military Student Degree Plans • Engaging Adult Learners • Career and Education Advising for Adults • Making Competency Work for Your Institution • Marketing PLA to Current Students
Consulting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLA Implementation; divided 3 single day phases • “Cross-walking” Employer Training to College Credit • Innovating Career Services

* A more robust description is included in Appendix - CAEL Product Details.

CAEL recognizes that the choices included here reflect a wide range of institutional interests, capacity and developmental stages related to serving the adult learner. As a result, we recommend that CAEL staff members, the DEAC Executive Director, and the representatives from each pilot institution engage in a thoughtful conversation before products and services are selected.

Institutional Selection

DEAC will lead the selection process in identifying the pilot institutions. Institutions must be in good standing with DEAC and throughout the regulatory community (e.g., state authorities, U.S. Department of Education, the Department of Defense, NC-SARA) as demonstrated by:

- 1) Evidence of financial stability (e.g., composite score for the two most recent fiscal years are 1.5 or higher)
- 2) Compliance with DEAC graduation rate benchmarks
- 3) Successful completion of at least one DEAC accreditation renewal cycle
- 4) Participating pilot institutions having been reviewed and approved to do so by DEAC’s Academic Review Committee.

DEAC institutions accepted into the DEAC/CAEL pilot agree to:

- Recognize that personal/professional experiences can equate to college credit
 - Change institutional bias of traditional classroom learning as singular method for credit
 - Accept a multi-faceted approach to learning and awarding college credit
- Adjust institutional culture to create an environment of student-centric learning/education
 - Focus on student achievement and success

- Establish a culture of student first
- Provide students with access to Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) opportunities
- Adhere to the CAEL principles of best practice
- Dedicate adequate resources to build, implement, market, and maintain PLA process
 - Ensure ongoing financial resources to support the PLA process
 - Provide an adequate faculty assessor pool
 - Secure Institution wide support of PLA (administration, leadership, and faculty)
- Provide student guidance and support through the PLA process by training
 - Advisors
 - PLA administrator
 - Registrar staff member
 - Students through a PLA process training course
- Provide staff and faculty with professional development and assessment updates on the PLA program by encouraging
 - Attendance at CAEL annual meeting
 - Enrollment in and completion of CAEL training session for leaders and assessors
 - Rigorous rubric based assessment
- Provide functionality to transcript earned PLA credit
 - Defining a method to document PLA credit vs. classroom credit on transcript
 - Including PLA credit on degree action plans
- Deliver the means to assess student satisfaction of the PLA process
 - Survey students completing PLA process for satisfaction level
 - Providing continuous improvement model to regularly assess the PLA process
- Acknowledge all PLA options including Portfolio, CLEP Exams, ACE Credit, Standardized Tests, Challenge Exams, ACE Approve Advanced Placement Exams with
 - Availability to all areas of possible course credit
 - Means of promoting the multiple paths to course credit
- Maintain audit procedures for the PLA program
 - Perform scheduled audits of the PLA program
 - Analyze data for gaps, needed/new information
 - Make recommended changes to PLA program
 - Ensure that the institution's policies on academic integrity include explicit references to PLA

Anticipated Outcomes

- Closer collaboration between DEAC and CAEL, especially around driving innovation in distance education while maintaining rigorous standards around effectively serving adult students as they complete their higher education goals and move into successful and meaningful careers.
- Increased visibility and focus around attracting, enrolling, supporting and graduating adult students attending DEAC institutions
- Providing DEAC member institutions with opportunities to participate in professional development workshops and trainings, gain insights from others in the higher education, workforce development and non-profit sectors, and create strategies that more effectively serve adult students.

It is CAEL's practice to remain connected with its clients throughout the life of a project, with a focus on client feedback and satisfaction, interim results, possible changes or corrections, etc. In addition to this ongoing connection, CAEL will conduct a formal

evaluation at the end of the two-year pilot period that reviews the results and lessons learned while outlining potential next steps for the continued partnership between our organizations.

About CAEL

Since 1974, CAEL has provided colleges and universities, companies, labor organizations, and state and local government with the tools and strategies they need to create practical, effective lifelong learning solutions. We have played a leadership role in helping hundreds of postsecondary institutions develop programs to attract and retain learners through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). These programs ensure quality in the assessment of prior learning by adhering to CAEL's [ten assessment standards](#), recognized and accepted by all regional accrediting organizations.

Costs*

There will be a flat fee for each institution of \$24,500 for a two-year period, the Adult Learner 360, and two additional services as selected by the institution (as outlined in *Appendix - CAEL Product Details*).

How to Apply

Please contact Dr. Leslie Urofsky at leslie.urofsky@deac.org to request an application to participate in the CAEL-DEAC pilot. Applications are due on or before July 1, 2018.

* Edited on 5/29/18 to clarify cost for participation in the CAEL-DEAC Pilot Initiative.

Appendix - CAEL Product Details

Adult Learner 360

In 1998, with funding from several organizations including the Lumina Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trust, CAEL developed a unique process to measure, evaluate and improve institutional capacity to serve adult learners. The survey tool was named the Adult Learner Focused Institution or ALFI. In 2016 - 2017, again with foundation funding and in collaboration with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), CAEL revised the tool, adding an additional principle (Adaptivity), updating the benchmarks, building a more sophisticated technological infrastructure, improving the participant experience of both students and colleges, and re-branding the tool as the Adult Learner 360. This tool helps identify the measurable change or changes that will most significantly affect adult learner enrollment, persistence, completion and post-completion success.

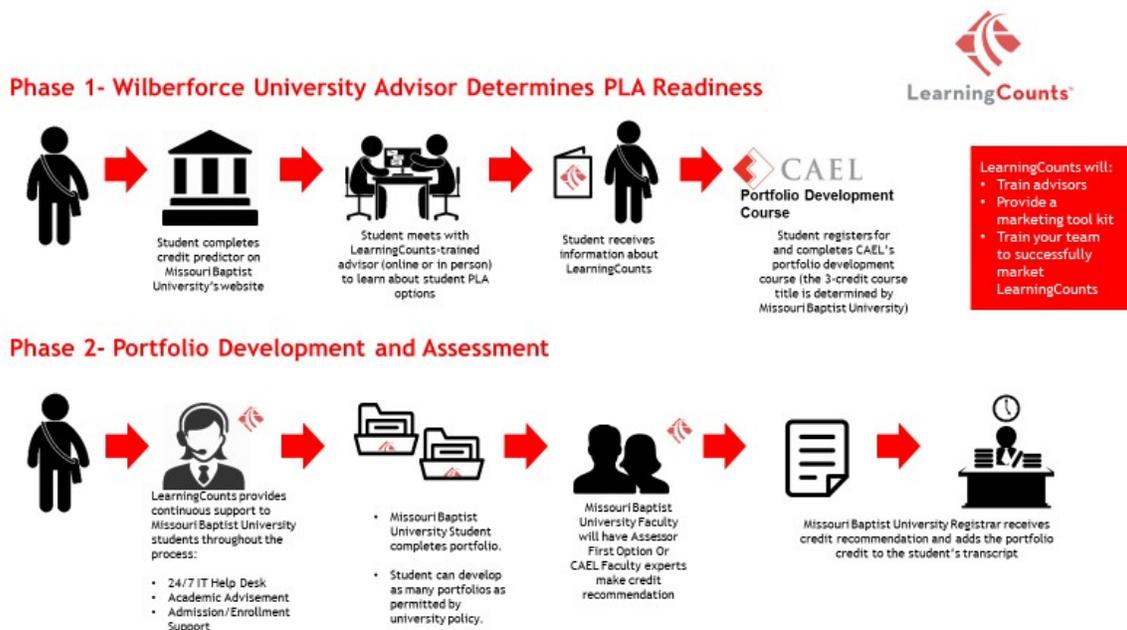
The Adult Learner 360 survey contains two instruments: an institutional self-assessment and an adult learner questionnaire. The results are provided to institutions through the lens of the Ten Principles for Effectively Serving Adult Learners. The strengths, challenges, and disconnects between the two instruments are revealed through a gap analysis. When delivering the results of the Adult Learner 360 to institutions, CAEL provides written recommendations that promote strengths, improve on challenges and examine disconnects.



Learning Counts

The LearningCounts program includes the following components:

- *Portfolio development instruction for your students.* CAEL offers a self - paced workshop or an instructor - supported portfolio development course. Institutions can offer either one or both of our courses in their course catalog.
- *Portfolio Tool.* CAEL offers a secure single-sign on environment for students to complete the portfolio development instruction and build their course - match portfolio.
- *Portfolio evaluation.* Our CAEL-trained faculty assessors will evaluate course-match portfolios and provide credit recommendations. Credit recommendations are sent to the institution's Registrar (or designee).



CAEL faculty assessors are drawn from regionally accredited colleges and universities, and have appropriate academic credentials and qualifications in their academic disciplines. Portfolio credit recommendations are Pass/No Credit. All LearningCounts faculty assessors utilize a common assessment rubric to evaluate the student's portfolio. It is comprehensive in nature and covers all of the core components of the portfolio, regardless of subject matter. Assessors tailor their feedback to the subject matter and the student's ability to demonstrate his/her learning as related to the specified course and stated outcomes.

Participating institutions, known as Featured Network Institutions or FNI receive ongoing support provided by the LearningCounts team. This includes a dedicated member of our Partnership team who works closely with the institution to support the success of the program, a student services advisor to support students enrolled in the program and a 24/7 technical support (Help-Desk) for students enrolled in the program.

PLA Accelerator

Identifying the right students for PLA can be a challenge. Advisors and enrollment staff may not be prepared to provide the right guidance around PLA options. They may also have difficulty finding the time required for a full evaluation of each student's PLA potential. Additionally, when the process around PLA implementation is not mapped, there may be hesitation to promote the program, thus reducing the take up among students.

To assist institutions in addressing these challenges, CAEL has developed the PLA Accelerator, an online tool that guides students through the process of documenting their work and learning experiences. Responses are captured in the tool and can be viewed by trained advisors, allowing them to have more informed conversations about PLA with students and to track their recommendations. The PLA Accelerator not only helps identify specific areas of knowledge and expertise, it can also enable students to self-assess their skills against a college or university's academic programs' specific learning outcomes. The PLA Accelerator adds structure and consistency to a typical PLA intake session, creating efficiency in the advising function by automating the PLA intake process, and providing a framework for tracking data on student engagement with PLA.

The PLA Accelerator provides advisors with an administrative interface to view student reported data on education, work and life experiences to assess the student's candidacy for PLA and the methods that would most likely have a successful outcome. Students actively participate in the process by self-assessing their college-level work and life experiences through the lens of course learning outcomes. The tool also provides administrators with reports of who has engaged with the tool, what areas of learning they have and PLA credit recommendations.

Implementation includes a webinar to train advisors on how to talk to students about PLA and LearningCounts, how to use the PLA Accelerator, and how PLA may fit into a student's degree plan. CAEL also offers ongoing marketing support and guidance including a training webinar for your marketing, enrollment and admissions staff on how to use the PLA Accelerator and/or LearningCounts as recruitment and retention tools.