What is CPL and Why Should it Matter to My Department?

With the passage of HB 4059, the Oregon legislature has indicated strong interest in implementing mechanisms for incorporating CPL as an option to a time and cost saving path to college degrees. In late 2012, the HECC appointed a Credit For Prior Learning Advisory Committee (CPL) to achieve the goals of HB 4059. The committee identified a set of eight standards to ensure that OUS colleges and universities develop and maintain high quality processes for granting prior learning credit. In October 2013, the standards were distributed to OUS institutions for review and comment. Our group of faculty, staff, and students assisted with that review here at PSU. The Standards were approved in December 2013 and Portland State was selected as one of the HECC Pilot Institutions for CPL in the State of Oregon. CPL Policies developed by the PC#92: Credit for Prior Learning group were approved by Faculty Senate in spring of 2014.

The HECC Report states that Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) is the granting of college-level credit for prior learning. Per HB 4059, “prior learning” is defined as “the knowledge and skills gained through work and life experience, through military training and experience, and through formal and informal education and training from institutions of higher education in the United States and other nations.”

According to Standard Five of the HECC framework, there are 4 Types of CPL (this definition excludes IB & AP):
- **Portfolio**: Credit granted for the preparation and defense of a collection of evidence by a student to demonstrate and validate college-level credit for learning acquired outside the classroom.
- **Institutional Challenge Exams**: Credit granted through the assessment of student learning offered by the institution or credit granted for tests of learning, including DSST/DANTES, CLEP, Excelsior, NYU Foreign Language, etc. May result in credit being awarded, or degree requirements being waived.
- **Military Credit**: Credit granted through evaluation of ACE published credit recommendations for formal instructional programs offered by non-collegiate agencies, both civilian employers and the military.
- **Industry Certifications**: Credit granted for industry certifications for proof of applied knowledge and skills in an industry-identified area.

The Rationale for Developing a Credit for Prior Learning Program at PSU

- **CPL serves PSU’s mission of providing access to a quality liberal education.**
- **CPL provides a non-traditional pathway for degree completion that will give PSU a competitive edge in attracting a new and currently underserved student population.** In deciding on colleges, non-traditional students rated credit for prior learning as more important than class size or the availability of financial aid. (University of Wisconsin System CPL Review, 2010)
- **Credit for prior learning has been shown to improve academic outcomes, graduation rates, and motivation, especially among underserved student populations, as well as saving students and universities considerable time and money.** (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 2010)
- **CPL provides opportunities for those who might otherwise be unable to complete a degree.** CPL programs free up classroom space, provide incentives to begin and finish a degree, and give more flexibility and control to the student. (University of Wisconsin System CPL Review, 2010)
- **CPL serves PSU’s mission of providing access to a quality liberal education.**
- **CPL provides a non-traditional pathway for degree completion that will give PSU a competitive edge.**

Does Your Department Already Award CPL?

- Do you allow students to take standardized CLEP exams in order to earn credit for introductory courses?
- Do you allow students to take placement tests or test out of certain major requirements?
- Does your department administer challenge exams for certain classes?
- Do you allow students to present portfolios or participate in auditions to assess their readiness for upper division coursework in your discipline and bypass lower division courses?

If you do any of these things, then your department already participates in CPL. Awarding credit for prior learning can range from administering quarterly challenge exams to evaluating musical or theatrical auditions or assessing portfolios documenting prior student learning.
Approved PSU Faculty Senate CPL Policies – May 2014

Key Presumptions: These policy recommendations presume that each academic unit, as designated by course prefix, will determine whether any of the various types of CPL options are appropriate for credit within their discipline, and for which particular courses. It also presumes that necessary administrative support and resources will be available to guide the student and department through the process.

1. CPL can be awarded for any discrete numbered course in any subject area that PSU offers, including course numbers 100-level through 400-level, at departmental discretion. CPL cannot be awarded in subject areas/academic disciplines that PSU does not offer.

2. Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and Military (MIL) credit, like transfer credit will not be included on the official PSU transcript. PSU Exam and Portfolio credit, like institutional credit will be included on the official PSU transcript.

3. CPL is limited to Pass only grading. If the CPL review process results in a non-award of credit, no record will be entered on the transcript. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) portfolio and PSU Exam credit will be counted in the current 45 credit P/NP limit. AP, CLEP, IB and MIL credits will continue to be exempt from the 45 credit P/NP limit.

4. CPL for a course for which a student has previously earned a D or F does not remove the prior grade from the calculation of the GPA (not eligible to use the PSU repeat policy).

5. CPL will not count toward the necessary residence credits, nor will it interrupt the calculation of the requirement that “45 of the last 60 credits must be at PSU.”

6. CPL can be used in all areas of the baccalaureate degree requirements, unless it is restricted in a major by a particular academic unit.

7. AP/IB/CLEP/MIL credit will be evaluated and awarded as transfer credit at the time of admission, prior to matriculation/enrollment.
   - PSU Exam credit requires the student to be admitted and matriculated/enrolled.
   - PLA, portfolio based CPL requires the students to be admitted, matriculated/enrolled, and in good academic standing.

8. PSU Exam and Portfolio type PLA credit will not be used to establish UNST placement. AP/IB/CLEP/MIL type CPL credit will continue to be used to establish UNST placement.

9. There is no limit on the number of CPL credits a student can be awarded, although there are limitations on the number of credits that will be applied to the degree based on previous policy limitations, including P-grading limits in #3 and PSU Residency requirements in #5 above. PLA portfolio credit and PSU Exam credit are limited to 45 credits combined.