

Credit for Prior Learning Transitions

INTRODUCTION

Credit for prior learning (CPL) has emerged as one way that colleges can recognize and give students credit for the skills and knowledge that they bring to the college when they enroll. The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges published an article titled “Credit for Prior Learning as a Lever for Equity” in November 2020 highlighting that over half of Californians with a high school degree or some college experience but no degree are people of color who are working and gaining skills in the workplace. For these Californians, enrolling in community college and earning at least an associate degree is an accelerator for economic mobility. Credit for the training and skills they have built in the workforce or military can save them time and money. Active and veteran military often have advanced training and skills acquired through their years of service that is verifiable through the American Council of Education (ACE) Military Guide.

THE BEGINNING

Palomar College received a \$100,000 grant from the Foundation for California Community Colleges Success Center to develop an institutionalized model for CPL that could be shared across the state. They started by building a team to serve on the work group which included the articulation officer, CPL coordinator and technical curriculum reviewer, and the Dean of Workforce. Among all California community colleges, Palomar College has the largest population of active military students and a large veteran population. Therefore, they focused CPL efforts on intentional program and transition support for military and adult learners with work experience. Palomar College now has over 200 CPL-eligible courses incorporating all methods of assessment such as portfolio review, credit by exam, industry certification, and military transcripts. And the number of eligible courses continues to grow.

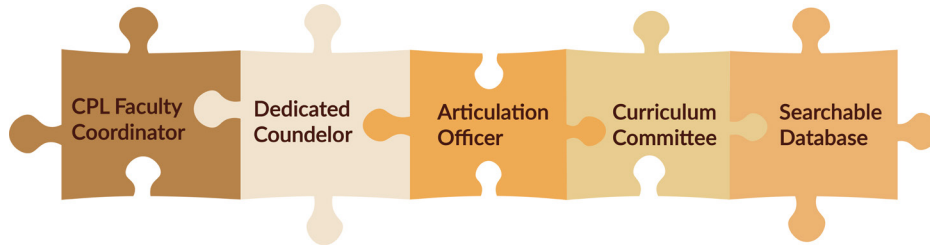
The work group then developed a plan to gain buy-in and interest starting with the faculty:

- Informed the college of the goals for CPL
- Identified specific disciplines with clear connections to military training
- Worked with individual faculty members to prepare their courses:
 - Held one-on-one meetings with faculty to determine which assessment method was most appropriate for the course — credit by exam, portfolio review, industry certification, or military transcripts
 - Created an inventory checklist for each of the disciplines

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PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Palomar's key components are identified below. More details can be found at Palomar's [CPL materials and resource page](#).



THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

During the onboarding to Palomar College, students are encouraged to complete a survey to help determine if their prior experience or training aligns with current CPL opportunities. After the survey is completed, counselors follow-up with students on an individual basis to walk them through the process:

1. Identify courses that align with the prior learning of the student.
2. Where courses require a portfolio assessment, discipline faculty assess the portfolio and process the forms to detail assessment and credit on the student's transcript.
3. Where courses require proof of certification or military transcripts, the counselor supports students in submitting documentation and processing forms to have their college transcript reflect prior learning.
4. After CPL is determined, counselors work with the student to develop an educational plan. The transfer landscape for CPL is not obvious or simple. Counselors work closely with students to help them understand where their CPL credits will and will not transfer. For example, colleges in the California State University (CSU) system widely accept CPL units while University of California (UC) institutions do not.

EMERGING LESSONS LEARNED

- Faculty leadership is essential in identifying courses for CPL and determining articulation
- Transcripts should state what type of CPL the student receives: military credit, credit by exam or credit by portfolio. This is important for transferring to a four-year university.
- Students must be educated and informed about the decision to take CPL or to retake a course.
- Individual counselor meetings and careful educational planning are key to a positive experience for students.

PALOMAR'S CONTINUED CPL DEVELOPMENT

The CPL team at Palomar College continues to innovate and make improvements. Their next steps focus on:

- Continued development of database that allows students to search for courses.
- Growth of CPL classes with articulation to institutions in the CSU system.
- Continued conversations with UC institutions to try to build articulation agreements for CPL.
- Military Leadership Apprenticeship Program: Launched in Fall 2020, active-duty marines in sergeant school can enroll in this new program to earn college credit for their military training. CPL supports students who completed sergeant school prior to the 2020 program launch.