



Non Credit Instruction: Improving Access to Higher Education and Success in Skills Attainment

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Executive Summary

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Team Charge: The goal of this project is to identify the extent to which students begin their college education in non-credit instruction and determine what institutional changes can be made to encourage students to become degree seeking. What institutional practices encourage student success and what issues inhibit students from transitioning to credit enrollment?

Team Direction and Focus: After resourceful inquiries and extensive research, our team redefined the focus of our charge to: improving access to higher education and success in skills attainment, while creating pathways to encourage non-credit students to become degree seeking. After effectively developing into comparisons /contrasts of the CE/CT structure and practices of our own institutions, we discovered an array of variances among MnSCU institutions. It became apparent that if we were to be successful in achieving our team goal, we needed to create a structured and plausible framework (*see Appendix A*) expounding on four challenges/ strategies to be considered by CE/CT leaders:

1. Improve access to target market and create pathways
2. Plan organizational structure and approaches
3. Create stronger connection between noncredit and credit articulation
4. Track education outcomes

**Conclusions and Recommendations Based on inquiries and
Researching of CE/CT Best Practices**

- **Strategy #1:** Improve access to target market and create pathways by capturing student and employer needs allowing education and skill advancement to be the driving force to improving the “work life” of today’s society. Allow sequencing of coursework and training to meet work and industry standards and competencies. Incorporate flexible educational formats, multiple entry and exit points, and course portability to encourage convenience and seamless progression and pathways.
- **Strategy #2:** Review organizational structure and approaches and address non-credit outcomes, program structuring and financial implications. It is imperative to develop a sustainable funding structure that supports noncredit education, whether your institution’s non-credit division stands alone or is integrated. Build measurable outcomes and meet the needs and demands of the population and business industry you serve. Nurture coordination of credit and non-credit programs allowing dual enrollment and access to high value, affordable educational opportunities.
- **Strategy #3:** The need to strengthen the connection between non-credit and credit articulation is inevitable today in higher education. The effective application of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credits can bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world, as well as encourage student perseverance and success. Sound PLA policies and practices will strengthen institution and system-wide cohesiveness relative to credit and non-credit instruction.
- **Strategy #4:** Improve the tracking progression of students from non-credit to credit instruction by addressing student identification, transcripts, and financial issues. Track student movement through non-credit to credit to completion by collecting detailed registration information, providing one student ID and one transcript utilizing the same tracking software. Provide a feasible system for financially converting non-credit to credit in a pathway allowing stackable credentialing.

Teaming and Leadership Lessons Learned (see Appendix B):

- Clarification of your team goal is critical!
- Get organized with a *Leadership Toolbox*: agendas, minutes, project timeline, team calendar and logo;
- Create trust, unity, and a strong sense of commitment – “*be on the same page*” to foster synergy;
- Respect, value, and utilize differences and strengths and empower one another;
- Emphasize learning and discovery, practice inquiry and action learning to effectively problem-solve.
- Teaming and leadership is a transformational process ...

Introduction

Noncredit workforce education can play an important role in responding to local labor market demands by meeting the workforce needs of employers and the needs of students for immediate skills. It can also benefit students by providing access to credit programs, generating meaningful recorded outcomes for a range of student needs, and facilitating the long-term pursuit of degrees. Noncredit workforce education can play a central role in states that prioritize funding to support career pathways as part of their workforce development agenda by connecting short-term training to programs leading to degrees and credentials.

There is no preferred organizational structure to support noncredit programs; however, the structure chosen by an institution is driven by several factors: need for flexibility to responding to employer needs, state funding policies, and relationship between credit programs. Colleges may need to pursue unique organizational practices that best serve their needs. Either choice should create a stronger connection between credit and noncredit programs.

There are barriers to data collection and recorded outcomes and there are many implications for noncredit workforce education outcomes. As institutions are faced with reduced budgets, prioritization on revenue generating programs may seem more attractive, but with attitudes about noncredit instruction being of lesser parity than credit instruction how do we create seamless pathways from noncredit into credit coursework and how do we add value to the outcomes of continuing education and customized training?

The objective of this white paper is to identify the strategies that will encourage equity across credit and noncredit instruction. It will further explore the opportunities to create linkages that may leverage support and increase access to our desired learners while strengthening Minnesota.

**Strategy 1: Improve Access to Target Market and Create Pathways
(Student & Employer needs)**

Non-credit instruction is a growing significance. The forecast of higher education supply and demand is necessary because education is a gateway to further training and greater earning potential; colleges and universities represent only 35 percent of the entire postsecondary education and training system. Therefore, about 65 percent of the total dollars are spent outside of the formal postsecondary education system. One national data source suggests that close to 60 million people, or 42 percent of the workforce, need some form of occupational certification, registration, or licensure to perform their jobs. Some 45 million of these certifications are test based. (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2010).

Since there is a direct connection between educational demand and occupation, who should our target market be and how can we deliver the necessary instruction? A study from the Center on Education and the Workplace at Georgetown University forecasts that 63 percent of all jobs by 2018 will require some form of postsecondary education. The study further argues that employers will need 22 million new workers with Associate degrees or higher and 4.7 million new workers with postsecondary certificates (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010).

Continuing Education/Customized Training (CE/CT) can be classified as noncredit instruction and many people outside and even within the MnSCU system are not aware of or do not fully understand the importance of non-credit and how it serves Minnesota's needs.

Customized Training: Customized Training (CT) is education for incumbent workers – those already employed – who require tailored training to meet the specific needs of business, its employers or the industry as a whole. When a business requires assistance with on the job training (onsite) or simply classroom instruction to stay competitive, customized training can be developed to meet those needs.

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Continuing Education: The Continuing Education (CE) component of the system's efforts to serve training and development needs of the workforce, makes training possible through non-credit instruction. Through non-credit instruction, colleges and universities can provide coursework at an advanced level that leads to skill advancement and increased employability. The majority of people seeking opportunities to improve their work life tend to enroll in non-credit instruction.

Target Population

Individuals who enroll in this type of training are generally seeking skill upgrades to retain an existing job, improve upon their skills to support a new job or advance in their current position. Non-credit education is also sought by individuals seeking a wage increase.

CE/CT serves the needs of both the adult learners' needs and the employer's needs. Our success in meeting the needs of the learner and business & industry contributes to a viable state economy. Creating pathways improves access and success. The future of employment in the United States boils down to this: success will require higher education in one form or another. This growth in demand for postsecondary education aligns with two major trends. First, the fastest-growing industries – such as computer and data processing services – require workers with disproportionately higher education levels. Second, over time, occupations as a whole are steadily requiring more education.

Essentially, postsecondary education or training has become the threshold requirement for access and the pathway into the middle-class jobs. Career pathways align major education, training (degree and non-degree technical certificate programs), and workforce development programs to

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meet the skill needs of students, jobseekers and workers; and the skill requirements of employers in high pay/high demand industries and occupations.

Career Pathways

The way in which we deliver instruction should be replicable and promote quality improvement. Career pathways systems offer a clear sequence of education coursework and/or training credentials aligned with employer-validated work-readiness standards and competencies. Career pathways feature the following characteristics (Larsen et al. 2011).

- **Sector Strategies:** Career pathways education and training aligns with the *skill needs of industries important to the regional or state economies* in which they are located. They actively engage employers in targeted industry sectors in determining the skill requirements for employment or career progression in high-demand occupations.
- **Stackable Educational/Training Options:** Career pathway systems include the full range of secondary, adult education, and postsecondary education programs, including registered apprenticeships; they *use a non-duplicative progression of courses clearly articulated from one level of instruction to the next. They provide opportunities to earn postsecondary credits. And they lead to industry-recognized and/or postsecondary credentials.*
- **Contextualized Learning:** Career pathways education and training focuses on curricula and *instructional strategies that make work a central context for learning* and help students attain work-readiness skills.
- **Accelerated/Integrated Education and Training:** As appropriate for the individual, career pathways systems combine occupational skills training with adult education services, give credit for prior learning, and adopt other *strategies that accelerate the educational and career advancement* of the participant.

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- **Industry-recognized Credentials:** Effective career pathways lead to the attainment of industry-recognized degrees or credentials that have value in the labor market.
- **Multiple Entry and Exit Points:** Career pathways systems enable workers of varying skill levels to enter or advance within a specific sector or occupational field.
- **Intensive Wraparound Services:** Career pathways systems *incorporate academic and career counseling and wraparound support services* (particularly at points of transition), and they support the development of individual career plans.
- **Designed for Working Learners:** Career pathways are designed to meet the needs of adults and nontraditional students who often need to combine work and education. They provide childcare services and accommodate work schedules with flexible and non-semester-based scheduling, alternative class times and locations, and innovative uses of technology. All career pathways initiatives differ somewhat according to the needs of the states, regions, and individuals served. The career pathways system in Wisconsin, illustrates the continuum of services provided along a career pathway, including multiple entry and exit points and stackable credentials (Jobs for the Future, June 2012).

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The labor market demand indicates opportunities for recruitment and development of customized education and training programs. The educational programs that MNSCU institutions offer can be developed by prioritizing certain areas based on local, regional or even statewide needs. The

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Minnesota Career Fields, Clusters & Pathways identifies six (6) career fields, 16 career clusters within those sectors and 81 career pathways relating to the clusters (*see Appendix C*).

These key elements should align with the programs of study and curricula:

- Competency based curricula tied to industry expectations and skill standards;
- Sequential course offerings that provide strategic entry and exit points as needed throughout a lifetime - this leads to manageable “stepping stones” of skill building and postsecondary education completion;
- Flexible course and program formats convenient for learner segments;
- Course portability for seamless progression (noncredit leading to credit coursework);
- Multiple entry and exit points to support continuing education, returning adults, and dislocated workers;
- Connections between high school and postsecondary education, skill progression, and career opportunities that align academic credentials with job advancement in high-skill, high-wage or high-demand occupations.

The programs of study and curricula particularly pertain to the involvement of our educational institutes on the more granular level of the pathways systems where we focus on the delivery of instruction.

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Though, to some extent, we can become engaged in several or all of the six key elements of a career pathway framework as follows:

Build Cross-Agency Partnerships & Clarify Roles

•Key cross-agency partners at the local and state levels are engaged, agree to a shared vision, and gain support from political leaders. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and formalized.

Identify Sector or Industry & Engage Employers

•Sectors and industries are selected and employers are engaged in the development of career pathways

Design Education & Training Programs

•Career pathway programs provide a clear sequence of education courses and credentials that meet the skill needs of high-demand industries.

Identify Funding Needs & Sources

•Necessary resources are raised and/or leveraged to develop and operate the career pathway system, and education and training programs.

Align Policies & Programs

•State and local policy and administrative reforms are pursued to promote career pathway system development and to support implementation.

Measure System Change & Performance

•Assessments of system-wide change and measurements of performance outcomes are conducted to ensure continuous improvement

The Promise of Career Pathways Systems Change, June 2012

For developing programs, it's key to understand that adult students have more demands on their time. Adult students are also more likely to perceive their college education as a means to an end than traditional students. "For many traditional students, the campus experience and the process of gaining education is an event, a rite of passage. For adult learners, it is more likely a step to getting something else -- a better degree, a better job."

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Adult students are likely to be focused on that end outcome and are probably looking for the quickest and most convenient way to get to it (Jobs for the Future, June 2012).

Unfortunately, an economic downturn plays a role in creating a need for additional training to re-enter the workforce for those affected by job loss or those who need to re-train as a result of phased out jobs. Partnerships with private industry and public economic development agencies, such as the Minnesota Department of Economic and Employment Development (DEED) can increase opportunities to deliver much needed services. DEED's dislocated worker program exists to offer services that focus on preparing laid off workers to find suitable new jobs.

As prescribed by the Workforce Investment Act Dislocated Worker Program, the program measures success based on four primary outcomes:

- Percent of program participants who exit the program and **enter employment**
- Percent of those people who **retain that employment** for at least six months
- **Average earnings** over six months for people who have exited the program into employment
- Percent of newly employed program participants who also **obtain a credential**

Financial Implications

Our CE/CT model allows us to enter into an agreement with a business partner to develop a customized training program designed for upgrading the skills of their workers. It also allows us to develop program curriculum for credentialing individuals in certain industries.

This is one source of revenue generation. There is also some tension between credit and non-credit since some states provide general funding to support non-credit instruction. Some non-credit programs also depend on the support of the college's general fund for overhead and infrastructure which creates a perception that they are taking scarce funds.

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Since non-credit instruction costs are market driven, the cost can be higher than for credit instruction. State funding lowers the cost, which allows for greater access. States that receive general funds for support usually impose limits on charges for non-credit courses (*see Appendix D*).

We may apply a business model in order to identify our target markets: adult learners, business and industry and public sector agencies; and then we are tasked with creating an infrastructure, designing curricula and quality programs, establishing partnerships, identifying resources and responding to needs while ensuring access.

Recommendations

- Understand the trends and labor market demand (local or statewide)
- Create career pathways that align with education and training and incorporate the key elements of a career pathway framework
- Develop opportunities for the adult learner to enroll in courses and short-term credentialing programs
- Actively engage employers in in targeted industry sectors and create partnerships
- Leverage access to target population by working with public agencies, such as DEED

Strategy 2: Plan Organizational Structure & Approaches

The organizational structure and approach to noncredit instruction is dependent upon multiple facets from structuring (according to the institution's funding formula) to determining the structure or approach based upon the economic demand in relation to workforce development industry needs. There are multiple approaches in which colleges and universities can structure their noncredit division: the noncredit instructional programs are a separate structure and its division is an organizational unit within the college & university or as integrated structures where the noncredit instructional programs are intermingled within the academic units typically by content area. The three areas of which an improvement can be made are: noncredit outcomes, its program structure, and its financial implications.

Noncredit Program Outcomes

The outcomes of noncredit programs will fluctuate based on the demand of the institution, the enrollment trends, and the business and industry needs. These programs have a great impact and play a crucial role in reference to recruitment and training the future workforce. Some of these outcomes can be based upon the overall strategic direction of the college or a funding mechanism that involves an enrollment strategy for credit. The key is to develop a sustainable funding structure that will support noncredit education.

Since noncredit workforce education is not regulated by the academic rules that govern credit education, the recorded student outcomes from participating in a noncredit program vary and serve different needs (Van Noy et al. 2008). By building measurable outcomes for noncredit education it allows institutions to meet needs at a higher rate because the programs are not regulated and the divisions can be operated in an entrepreneurial-like manner. It gives institutions

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the flexibility to structure program outcomes based upon changes within the economy and the increased demand of employability skills.

Noncredit Program Structure

There are a few well-known practices to help integrate collaborative endeavors within colleges and universities in order to support the mission. There are a variety of noncredit program structures that range from separate units to integrated structures. Noncredit program structures have evolved; the structures are designed according to the demand of the population and the business industry. These structures extend beyond the academic realm of the institution. The noncredit structure promotes partnership opportunities for faculty to engage by interspersing credit programs within the noncredit structure while offering dual enrollment options. The separate structure allows for the unit to function more like a business structure with obtaining revenue in order to decrease expenses occurred from curriculum design, instructor fees, and materials costs.

The integrated structure supports the idea of the credit and noncredit programs to be the central contact for businesses or employers as the needs are being met of the individual student and the employer through workforce development.

In addition, noncredit integrated units can influence at all levels and assist with fostering changes that support the needs of business and industry.

The separate structure permit institutions to use a formula funding policy and build specific criterion measures to the funding goals that adhere to a greater outcome of fulfilling the institution's mission.

Financial Implications

There are several advantages and disadvantages of the noncredit organizational structures within the college. One advantage is the funding formula model allows for institutions to have defined criteria to follow in order to achieve results. Within an integrated structure, enrollment options can be offered as a dual offering to avoid cancellation of courses and loss of revenue. One disadvantage of funding formula would be the lack of qualitative data to incorporate within the funding policy. There are funding challenges that affect the type of structure that institution decides to adapt at their institution such as enrollment challenges because of the high cost of course offerings.

Recommendations

- Develop a seamless strategy around dual enrollment in order to increase enrollment for credit and noncredit courses.
- Recommend a stronger coordination effort of credit and noncredit programs to support the needs of MnSCU's Strategic Framework, "Ensure access to an extraordinary education for all Minnesotans, Be the partner of choice to meet Minnesota's workforce and community needs, Deliver to students, employers, community and taxpayers the highest value/most affordable option." (*see Appendix E*)
- Use noncredit funding to provide counseling and other student services that are equivalent to those provided to credit students.
- Adapt an equivalent program structure that will provide the greatest gain within the community and business needs.

Strategy 3: Create Stronger Connection between Noncredit and Credit Articulation

Providing increased opportunities for students to transition from non-credit instruction to college enrollment offers MnSCU institutions a prospect to enrich their program offerings. For MnSCU institutions, the factors that motivate or influence students to become degree seeking vary, but having solid research-based policies and practices in place is key for students to transition from noncredit instruction to credit enrollment. Creating clearer and easier pathways will ensure increased transfer and completion of degree laddering.

Noncredit Workforce Education and Noncredit-Credit Articulation

To meet the needs of a changing employment market, industry certification was created. Certification programs are generally sponsored, or affiliated with professional associations, trade organizations, or IT vendors interested in raising standards. Certifications are usually quite portable, are valid for a particular time period, and must be renewed periodically. The renewal process involves showing evidence of continued learning which is often accomplished through earning Continuing Education Units.

Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are a standardized unit of measure for quantifying participation in continuing adult education and/or training activities and are considered noncredit instruction. The International Association of Continuing Education and Training (IACET) provide guidelines to CEUs and according IACET, one CEU is equivalent to ten contact hours of participation.

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CEUs are generally compulsory for licensed occupations (e.g. nursing, teaching, and law). CEUs utility is often industry driven with much of its need and purpose based on industry demand. Some post-secondary institutions offer CEUs only for workforce courses while others offer it for any course associated to lifelong learning.

There is a wide-range of how noncredit student outcomes are recorded in post-secondary institutions. Noncredit education and credit education are not always governed or regulated the same. Recording and tracking student outcome from a noncredit program varies too. Some institutions may transcript both credit and noncredit courses of which either one can be on the same or separate document. In some instances, students are allowed to select whether they want their noncredit courses to appear on the same transcript as credit courses. Various post-secondary institutions speculate that transcripts may eventually move from the traditional documentation of academic credit hours to documenting competencies that a student has obtained.

Noncredit instruction offers many benefits to students such as: easy enrollment procedures, flexible scheduling, and an informal classroom atmosphere thus a less threatening learning environment. For post-secondary institutions, the ability to offer new noncredit education programs swiftly (respond to emerging industry needs) is advantageous and as well as having the student transition to a credit-bearing status later on. Having noncredit workforce education courses can also function as a bridge or pathway into the credit side of the institution.

While there are benefits to noncredit instruction, there are drawbacks to it as well. Disadvantaged students have limited access and opportunities when it comes to noncredit workforce education. Students in general, have limited access to higher education funding when it comes to noncredit education. In many post-secondary institutions, noncredit education has limited higher education funding. Noncredit is generally regarded as an entrepreneurial activity that could provide revenue.

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Often times, contract training is the primary source of revenue in noncredit workforce education. Institutionally, having that separation between noncredit and credit programs have created a division of all sorts—buildings, administrators, faculty, staff, etc.

Credit for Prior Learning

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is a method of granting credit for noncredit workforce education. It is a process that is used widely by universities and colleges to evaluate learning that has occurred outside the traditional post-secondary classroom. PLA provides retroactive credit to individual students by assessing the student's areas of knowledge. In most cases, PLA seeks to evaluate a person's learning and knowledge gained through work, employer training programs, military service, independent study, volunteer or community service, and open source course study. Since 1974, The American Council on Education's Credit Recommendation Service (CREDIT), one of the oldest and largest national programs, has been making credit recommendations for prior learning. PLA has never really taken foothold. Many colleges grant credit with the recommendations of CREDIT, College Board's College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) and the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), however; proportionally the numbers of students receiving these credits on their transcripts are very few.

Transfer of credit is typically granted when one or more of the following occur:

- if there is a clear content match-up and the rigor/quality of the noncredit and credit course are the same;
- at times, students may need to do extra course work
- pay a fee in order to receive credit;

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- prior learning credit may involve exemption credit whereas the student may move up sequentially without having to take a prerequisite course;
- students may need to take a challenge exam in order to get the credit

Procedures for awarding credit for prior learning could include:

- credit applied on a course-by-course basis and determined by an academic department
- student portfolio
- challenge exam or competency test
- articulation agreements to an existing campus class
- military experience



Caption: "I'm sorry, Mr. Gates. The computer science department refuses to give you any prior learning credits for your work in industry."

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With the advent of President Obama's challenge to have all Americans complete some form of post-secondary education/training, the importance of improving affordability and access to higher education for adults has become even greater. Many experts contend that PLA is often a disregarded strategy to assist adults in degree completion. PLA advocates reason that when a student is able to earn credits faster and with less expense, a PLA can significantly subsidize a students' perseverance toward a degree. The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) conducted a study in 2010 (Fueling the Race to Post-Secondary Success) that examined PLA and graduation rates. The study concluded that overall PLA students had much higher degree-earning rates than non PLA students. Moreover, PLA students that did not earn degrees did complete 80% or more of the credits toward a degree compared to the non PLA students who earned 22% of the credits toward a degree. Many post-secondary institutions are being held accountable for completion rates, so PLA students can certainly be a good investment for an institution. Additionally, the study cites that PLA students already possess the motivation and academic success thereby it helps to boost the student forward toward degree attainment. A PLA in and of itself, is a sometimes a powerful self-esteem and confidence booster for students. Overall, PLAs have better retention statistics.

Another need for PLA lies within the baby-boomers. There are many boomers that are continuing to work past age 65. The mature workers of today will need to improve their jobs skills to stay in their current jobs. Some of this mature talent may also be pursuing an "encore career" according to the 2012 CAEL report entitled *Tapping Mature Talent: Policies for a 21st Century Workforce.* This opens up countless opportunities for education and training older adults.

Financing education and training can sometimes be an obstacle for the adult learners. In a 2012 report entitled *Not Too Late for School*, CAEL provides a noteworthy approach to financing

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postsecondary education is to have working adults establish Lifelong Learning

Accounts (LiLAs). LiLAs are portable, matched savings accounts for adult learners to use toward their education and training.

There are many national PLA programs/models that could serve as a resource for MnSCU institutions. One such national model to emerge is CAEL's online entry portal for students is named LearningCounts.org. Here, students are charged \$500 to take a three-credit course on portfolio preparation and experiential learning theory. There is an additional fee of \$250 if the student's portfolio is reviewed by a CAEL-certified reviewer. In order to receive the credits, the student also needs to describe key course concepts that align themselves with the content of the actual syllabus in that course.

American Council of Education (ACE) serves Higher Education by providing a voice of advocacy for matters of public policy in Washington D.C. It seeks to escalate the number of adult learners who are college and career-ready. ACE is a well-recognized organization that connects workplace learning with colleges and universities by helping adults gain access to academic credit.

Indiana's Workforce Development and Work One Centers, and Workforce Investment System recently adopted a policy (December 2011) to use Workforce Investment Act (WIA) training funds to support PLAs. This key workforce investment strategy will save students time and money toward completing a degree or certificate program.

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PLA benefits for the student and institution may include:

- creates pathways to programs of study
- shortens the time needed to complete a program/degree which motivates student that may have otherwise been discouraged with the length of time
- gives validation to students for their accomplishments
- recognizes that learning that takes place outside the classroom and in the work environment is important
- serves a “non-traditional” type of student
- does away with repetition or duplication of learning—knowledge the student already has.

Conversely, one big drawback to students may be that if they don't know how ask for prior learning credit, they probably will not be told about it because some institutions don't really want to advertise this too much. Why? Because it is a disadvantage to post-secondary institutions if students receive PLAs in large volumes, it could reduce the number of courses that they may typically offer, hence; reducing revenue. Additionally, many institutions have a PLA policy developed but really do not do much with it. Nationwide, a very small number of students get credit for prior learning.

According to article, *The Transformation of Higher Education through Prior Learning Assessment* (Kamenetz, 2011), “Like credit for internships and field research, PLA credits bridge the gap between classroom and the real world; like independent study, they allow for customization of the curriculum.” The article goes on to say that institutions need to pay attention to the research and statistics of exemplary models that incorporate PLA successfully. Creating a stronger link and connection between noncredit and credit articulation seems almost inevitable

given the future of higher education. PLA could change the essence of teaching and learning like nothing we've ever seen before.

Recommendations

- Institutions need to regularly monitor, review, evaluate and revise prior learning assessment policies and practices to maintain and improve institutional standards.
- Institutions should seek to enhance funding to remedy the disparity between noncredit and credit funding without interruptions to the current credit funding.
- Faculty unions and administration system-wide need to work together to bargain the upcoming changes for faculty workload anticipated with the increase of PLAs.
- Increase student career pathways by making accessibility to PLAs visible and student friendly.
- Institutions should offer a variety of opportunities to support learners' progress through the assessment process such as: single point of contact, advisors, one-stop access, and portfolio templates (*see Appendix F*).

Strategy 4: Track Education Outcomes

Colleges must be successful in tracking students from non-credit to credit instruction before a thorough analysis of progression rates and factors affecting those rates may be accomplished.

Within the MnSCU system, three suggested areas for improving tracking progression are: student identification, transcripts, and financial issues.

Student Identification

System colleges and universities vary in how they register and identify non-credit vs. credit students (Oleksiw, et al. 2007). Often students enrolled for non-credit courses are not “fully admitted” into the ISRS database system the same way that for-credit students are enrolled.

Customized training students admission might only have the name of the student and the company as information in the database. Continuing Education may only have student name and phone number in the database. This lack of information in non-credit registration creates a situation where, when the student registers for credit courses, their previous records might not be readily found. When this happens, generation of another student ID for the same person occurs. That student’s information as to progression from non-credit to credit education is then lost.

Lumens is a system used to register students in continuing education courses. However, it is not used consistently to register students in customized training courses. With this situation, information on student education progression is lost. Also, the information from Lumens does not consistently transfer to the ISRS database, where the information on students taking classes for credit is held.

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Student information is entered in three different systems when they register for non-credit courses: Lumens, ISRS, and Finance. This has the potential for errors in data entry, which may result in the possibility of inaccurate tracking of student progression information.

Transcripts

Colleges and Universities across the MnSCU system are not consistent in how transcripts are generated for non-credit courses. Some institutions transcript all credit and non-credit courses either on the same transcript or separate transcripts. Some institutions do not transcript non-credit courses. The same variances occur for recording of student activities, which makes it difficult to utilize those activities in a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) evaluation.

Some transcribing issues relate to the above situation regarding differences in student identification. When the student is not fully identified, they may end up with more than one transcript as they enter into different educational opportunities within the institution.

Financial Differences

There are institutional differences in the cost of credit vs. non-credit courses. In some cases, one class may have both credit and non-credit students enrolled and sitting side-by-side. However, the student receiving credit is paying more for the same course than the student not receiving credit. In other instances, the non-credit student is paying more for their course than the credit student.

Funding for non-credit vs. credit courses has a long history of challenges. Across the United States, state and federal funding and scholarships are generally higher for credit courses. This creates a challenge in that, to be feasible, non-credit courses must either break even or be profitable. This results in inequities in faculty to student ratios, student services, instructor

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qualifications, and possibly quality of instruction and learning (Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, 2009; and Oleksiw et al. 2007).

One method to manage this issue is to create an adjustment fee that non-credit students may pay to convert their courses to credits. For instance, a student may take a Certified Nursing Assistant course to obtain their CNA certification. If they wish to convert this program to college credit, they might be allowed to pay a small fee per credit. Allowing a student this option would create a situation where the student may “try out” school at a lower rate before committing to a higher tuition cost.

Recommendations

- Enter all non-credit students into the same tracking software as credit students.
- Collect detailed registration information for each student, including: date of birth, social security number, phone number, and email addresses. This will allow ongoing evaluation of student movement through non-credit to credit and to completion. E-mail information will also allow for marketing of credit programs to non-credit completers.
- Provide a student ID number for all non-credit students which will follow them into any MnSCU credit courses.
- Provide one transcript for all credit courses, non-credit courses and activities.
- Provide a system for students to convert non-credit to credit courses (i.e. pay \$20 per credit when they want to convert) in a pathway that provides students stackable credentials.
- Create pathways from non-credit to credit. Market those pathways directly to non-credit students.
- Create a “College Credit through Advanced Standing Guide” for non-credit students

Conclusion

As colleges and universities strive to enroll more of the growing adult student market, they face significant challenges. As a part of our infrastructure we can develop plans to market to the adult student who may benefit from career pathway systems. Career development, the labor market demand and how we respond drives those crucial activities. We must also develop our infrastructure (which includes implementing tracking systems to collect data and record outcomes), create better ties between noncredit and credit programs, establish priorities and build capacity in order to support MNSCU's strategic framework. Along with this, establishing partnerships can leverage our outreach to our desired population of learners and at the same time sustain Minnesota's economy.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Team 8 Framework

Appendix B: Team Development and Dynamics

Appendix C: Minnesota Career Fields Clusters and Pathways Wheel

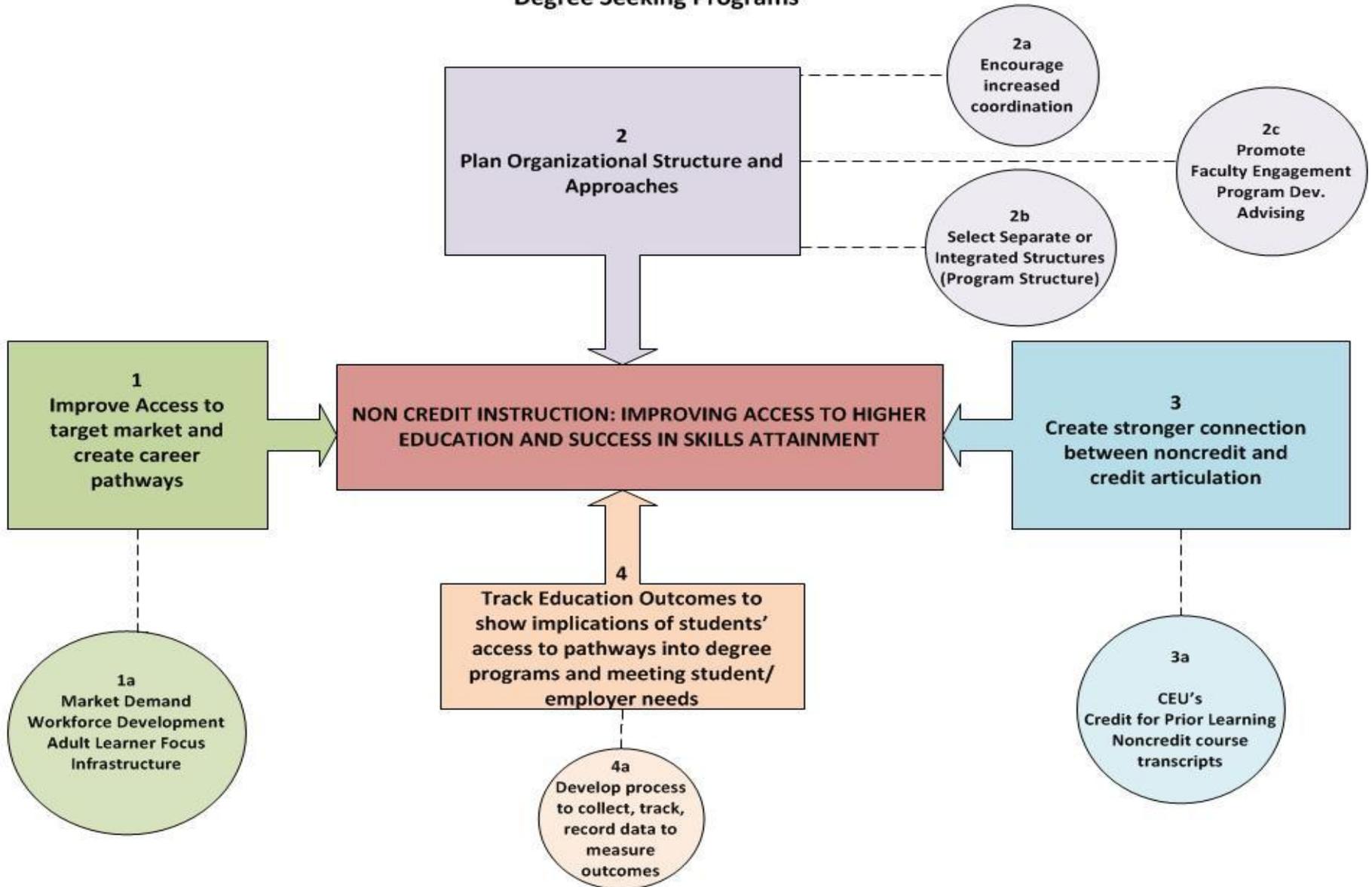
Appendix D: State Policies on Noncredit Workforce Education

Appendix E: MnSCU's Strategic Framework

Appendix F: MnSCU 2-year Colleges PLA Contact Information

APPENDIX A

Institutional Recommendations that Position and Motivates Individuals to Seek Skills Attainment or Transition into Degree Seeking Programs



Acknowledgement: Developed using Van Noy, M., Jacobs, J., Korey, S., Bailey, T., & Hughes, K.L. (2008). *Noncredit enrollment in workforce education: State policies and community college practices* [Report]. Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges and Community College Research Center. Available from the AACC Web site: <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/noncreditenroll>.

Luoma Leadership Academy

Action Learning Team #8

Team Development and Dynamics

Our Team and Blend of DiSC Behavioral Styles

Team 8, composed of six committed female leaders proved eager to take on the team charge of improving access to higher education and creating pathways to encourage non-credit students to become degree seeking. With a unique blend of MnSCU institutional representation, leadership roles, and DiSC styles; our team formed, stormed, normed, and performed over an eleven month period.

Our varied leadership positions include:

Interim Director of Professional Training & Development; Manager CE/CT, Grants and Contracts/Purchasing; Director of Nursing; On-Line Store Coordinator; Director of Secondary Relations/Perkins Coordinator; and Dental Hygiene Faculty Member /CE Educator

The group comprised of an objective thinker, practitioner, developer, results-oriented individual, and two appraisers, blended and created a team that learned to value and leverage each other's expertise and strengths. Five out of six individuals carry a "C" DiSC component representing conscientiousness which reflected in several signs of a "C organization". We were cautious in interpreting our team goal, established high standards, thought analytically, and emphasized accuracy and detail. We approached tasks quite deliberately and methodically, but with four "I" Disc components, we instilled opportunities to generate enthusiasm, sharing, and sociability. We aspired to be successful in maximizing our skills. This quote by Henry Ford, presented by a team member on our December Agenda sums up our team direction: *"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."*

Team Development

Strengths and Tools

Our steps and practices geared us to become a "next level team" of which included our initial emphasis on getting organized. To get us started, our Action Learning Coach scheduled monthly ITV meetings from August 2011 through June 2012. Our first ITV meeting was instrumental in establishing team guidelines, ground rules, and expectations. We were driven and committed from the start and agreed to rotate the role of meeting facilitator to encourage participation and empower all team members. Our meeting agendas evolved into structured sources for staying on task. The roles of timekeeper and recorder were also recognized. To create a system that promoted free flow of energy and sharing of useful information, we routinely shared good news and leadership experiences. *A Leadership Toolbox* was utilized to maintain pertinent Team 8 information. *Google Docs* served as a repository for meeting agendas, minutes, team calendar, PDF articles, and contact information. A Team 8 logo was designed to portray our team-spirit and cohesiveness. A project timeline kept us on task and was often utilized for backward planning. The team calendar tracked monthly roles for meetings, kept us informed of key dates and team expectations. Our meeting minutes provided a review tool and a means for tracking progress.

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After several months of meeting, we discovered that clarifying our team goal would prove to be an ascertaining process. We had inquired, researched, and deliberated extensively in the initial months, effectively utilizing skills of analysis, clarification, and validation. To determine specific actions to take, we resourcefully consulted our sponsors. The key question: *What did our sponsors perceive as a valuable action learning project outcome?* With a clear response to this question, we became successful in maximizing our skills, placed trust in one another, assigned tasks, set deadlines, and pursued the writing of a survey and White Paper that would provide MnSCU institutions with strategies for success with CE/CT best practices.

Challenges

Initially, it wasn't natural for our team to apply skills of inquiry and action learning. We struggled with this, but found our Action Learning Coach effective at prompting our new style. Team members are now eager to engage in this process and value the outcomes.

Our team persevered through a few shifts related to the absence of team members. Our Action Learning Coach was on leave for several months and we lost a valued team member early spring to a new employment opportunity outside the MnSCU system. As a result of these changes, we confirmed our roles as Team 8 stakeholders, jumped in, and took initiative to take on new roles and maintain a high level of performance.

Team members concurred that it was challenging to balance typical work responsibilities with the time needed to complete Luoma Leadership Academy obligations and assignments. Over the past months, we often found ourselves reassuring one another and keeping each other on task.

Team communication was quite consistent and would often create e-mail chains that even the most efficient e-communicator would find challenging. Team members learned to decipher when e-mail conversations were critical and when offering input was optional. As expected, our four face-to-face meetings proved to be more fun and productive than our nine ITV meetings.

Lessons Learned

Clarification of your team goal is critical

Create trust, unity, and a strong sense of commitment

Get organized with tools to ensure staying on track

Respect, value, and utilize differences and strengths

Teaming and leadership is a transformational process

Inquiry and action learning is an exceptional tool for problem solving

Embrace opportunities to learn from one another

Be patient, thorough, and learn from each others' perspectives

Emphasize learning and discovery

It is critical as a team to be on the same page, to create synergy and foster a team personality

Enjoy one another and the process – have fun!

APPENDIX C

Minnesota Career Fields, Clusters & Pathways



APPENDIX D



State Policies on Noncredit Workforce Education

State	Funding						Regulations/Guidelines				
	State gen. funds	Type of general funds			CC role in funds	Limit on charges	Reporting required	Data system	Noncredit definition	Transcripts	Retroactive credit
		Contact hr. based	Bundled	Fixed amt.							
AL					X		X				
AK	X		X		X		X			X	X
AZ	X			X					X		X
AR					X		X		X		X
CA	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		
CO					X		X		X		X
CT							X		X	X	
DE											
FL	X	X			X		X	X	X		
GA					X		X	X		X	
HI											
ID	X		X		X	X	X		X		
IL	X	X			X		X	X	X		
IN					X						
IA	X	X			X		X	X	X		X
KS											
KY	X		X		X		X				X
LA											
ME					X	X			X		
MD	X	X			X		X		X		X
MA					X		X				
MI	X		X		X		X	X			
MN	X			X	X		X		X		X
MS	X		X		X		X				
MO					X				X		
MT	X		X				X	X		X	X
NE	X	X			X	X	X		X		
NV											
NH							X	X			
NJ	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X
NM	X			X	X		X		X		
NY					X						
NC	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	

State Policies on Noncredit Workforce Education

State	Funding						Regulations/Guidelines				
	State gen. funds	Type of general funds			CC role in funds	Limit on charges	Reporting required	Data system	Noncredit definition	Transcripts	Retroactive credit
		Contact hr. based	Bundled	Fixed amt.							
ND	X		X		X	X	X		X		
OH					X		X	X	X		
OK	X		X		X		X				
OR	X	X			X		X	X	X		X
PA	X			X			X		X	X	X
RI											
SC	X	X			X		X		X		X
SD	X		X		X		X				
TN					X				X		
TX	X	X					X		X	X	X
UT	X			X			X	X	X		
VT											
VA	X			X			X		X	X	
WA					X		X	X			X
WV	X		X		X		X		X		
WI	X			X	X	X	X		X	X	X
WY							X				
Total	28	11	10	7	35	8	38	14	27	9	16

APPENDIX E



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
& UNIVERSITIES

**A Strategic Framework for Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
An Update for the Board of Trustees – November 16, 2011**

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities play an essential role in growing Minnesota’s economy and opening the doors of educational opportunity to all Minnesotans. To that end, we will:

1. Ensure access to an extraordinary education for all Minnesotans

- Our faculty and staff will provide the best education available in Minnesota, preparing graduates to lead in every sector of Minnesota’s economy.
- We will continue to be the place of opportunity, making education accessible to all Minnesotans who seek a college, technical or university education; those who want to update their skills; and those who need to prepare for new careers.

2. Be the partner of choice to meet Minnesota’s workforce and community needs

- Our colleges and universities will be the partner of choice for businesses and communities across Minnesota to help them solve real-world problems and keep Minnesotans at the leading edge of their professions.
- Our faculty and staff will enable Minnesota to meet its need for a substantially better educated workforce by increasing the number of Minnesotans who complete certificates, diplomas and degrees.

3. Deliver to students, employers, communities and taxpayers the highest value / most affordable option

- Our colleges and universities will deliver the highest value to students, employers, communities and taxpayers.
- We will be the highest value / most affordable higher education option.

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Institution/Campus	URL with Credit for Prior Learning Info	Name of Mail CPL Contact <small>Names with * are Graduate Minnesota campus contacts</small>	Email address	Phone	URL for CPL policy
Alexandria Technical and Community College	http://www.alextech.edu/en/AboutATC/Policies/Chapter3-EducationalPolicies/StudentAssessment/AdvancedStandingTestOutsExperientialLearning.aspx		records@alextech.edu	888-234-1222 ext 4050	
Anoka Technical College	http://www.anokatech.edu/commoncontent/pdfs/PriorLearnignAssessmentForm.pdf				
Anoka-Ramsey Community College	http://www.anokaramsey.edu/student/cpl.aspx#Credit%20for%20Prior%20Learning%20Options%20Recognition%20at%20Anoka-Ramsey%20Community%20College	Jan Pomeroy *	Jan.Pomeroy@anokaramsey.edu	(763) 433-1340	http://www.anokaramsey.edu/student/cpl/~media/Files/Student/Experiential%20Learning/CPL%20Self%20Assesment.ashx
Central Lakes College	http://www.clcmn.edu/new/current/student_handbook_pdf/Academic%20Policies.pdf	Lynn Anderson	landerso@clcmn.edu	(218) 855-8254	
Century College	http://www.century.edu/currentstudents/transferservices/transferofcredit.aspx http://www.century.edu/files/coursecatalog1112.pdf	Brenda Lyseng *	Brenda.Lyseng@century.edu	(651) 779-3447	http://www.century.edu/files/policies/3.33.0.1%20College%20Level%20Examination%20Program%20(CLEP)%20Credit%20-%20Procedure.pdf http://www.century.edu/files/policies/3.35.0.1%20Credit%20for%20Prior%20Learning%20-%20Procedure.pdf
Dakota County Technical College	http://www.dctc.edu/future-students/programs/credit-for-prior-learning/index.cfm	Scott Gunderson *	scott.gunderson@dctc.edu	(651) 423-8295	
Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College	http://www.fdlcc.edu/current/graduation/transfer-policy.shtml	Leah Tollefson *	leah@fdlcc.edu	(218) 879-0746	
Hennepin Technical College	http://www.hennepintech.edu/current/pages/317		info@hennepintech.edu	(952) 995-1300	
Hibbing Community College	http://www.hibbing.edu/admissions/transfer-information/credit-for-prior-learning.html?searched=clep&advsearch=oneword&highlight=ajaxSearch_highlight+ajaxSearch_highlight1		admissions@hibbing.edu	(218) 262-7200	
Inver Hills Community College	http://www.inverhills.edu/about/CollegePolicies/pdfs/Current/Academic/CPL.pdf?zoom_highlight=credit+for+prior+learning#search=%22credit%20for%20prior%20learning%22			(621) 450-3367	
Itasca Community College	http://www.itascacc.edu/academics/transfer/credit-for-prior-learning.html			(218) 322-2300	
Lake Superior College	http://www.lsc.edu/FYE/StudentResources.pdf	Michele LaPorte *	m.laporte@lsc.edu	(218) 733-7788	
Mesabi Range Community and Technical College	http://www.mesabirange.edu/assets/files/depts/campus_policies/3.35_Credit_for_Prior_Learning_Policy_12-2011.pdf	Sue Twaddle	s.twaddle@mr.mnscu.edu	(218) 749-0315	
Minneapolis Community and Technical College	http://www.minneapolis.edu/About-Us/Policies/Academic-Affairs-Policies/302-Earning-Academic-Credits		admissions.office@minneapolis.edu	(612) 659-6200	
Minnesota West Community and Technical College	http://www.mnwest.edu/index.php/academics/earning-credit	Jennifer Bendix	jennifer.bendix@mnwest.edu	(507) 235-3385	
Minnesota State Community and Technical College	http://www.minnesota.edu/?id=124	Dan Harrison		(218) 299-6533	
Normandale Community College	http://www.normandale.edu/counseling/Course_Equivalencies.cfm	Robert Lowe *	robert.lowe@normandale.edu	(952) 358-8829	
North Hennepin Community College	http://www.nhcc.edu/main/AcademicPrograms/CreditForPriorLearning/~media/DepartmentSpecific/ProfessionalTrainingDevelopment/PLA20Handbook.ashx	Char Baines *	cbaines@nhcc.edu	(763) 424-0730	http://www.nhcc.edu/main/ProgramsAndMajors/CreditForPriorLearning.aspx
Northland Community and Technical College	http://www.northlandcollege.edu/about/policies/_docs/3150P.pdf	Susan Harrie		(218) 793-2389	
Northwest Technical College	http://www.ntcmn.edu/about/policies/3000_academic/3020-4-02_Transfer_Course_Substitution_Adv_Standing_Request_Form.pdf			(218) 333-6600	
Pine Technical College	http://www.pinetech.edu/academics/transfer-information?searched=credit+for+prior+learning&advsearch=oneword&highlight=ajaxSearch_highlight+ajaxSearch_highlight1+ajaxSearch_highlight2+ajaxSearch_highlight3+ajaxSearch_highlight4	Nancy Mach	machn@pinetech.edu	(800) 521-7463	
Rainy River Community College	http://www.rrcc.mnscu.edu/applynow/transfer.cfm	Berta Hagen	bhagen@rrcc.mnscu.edu	(218) 285-2207	
Minnesota State College - Southeast Technical	http://southeastmn.edu/become_a_student/apply.aspx?id=2394	Gale Lanning *	glanning@southwestmn.edu	(507) 453-1443	
Ridgewater College	https://www.ridgewater.edu/marketing/aboutus/policies/Documents/Chapter_3_Academics/CourseCreditTransfer05_29_08.pdf	Leah Kadelbach	leah.kadelbach@ridgewater.edu	(320) 222-5980	
Riverland Community College	http://www.riverland.edu/admissions/	Sue Jech	sue.jech@riverland.edu	(507) 433-0820	http://www.mnscu.edu/board/policy/335.html
Rochester Community and Technical College	http://www.rctc.edu/catalog/general-info/academic_opportunities.html		registration@rctc.roch.edu	(507) 285-7268	http://www.rctc.edu/policies/education/Credit_Prior_Learning_CBE.html
St. Cloud Technical and Community College	http://www.stccc.edu/current-students/academics/academic-policy/academic-policy-credit-life/work-experience	Lana Feddema	lfeddema@stccc.edu	(320) 308-1595	http://www.stccc.edu/college-policies-and-procedures
Saint Paul College	http://www.saintpaul.edu/CurrentStudents/Pages/PriorCredit.aspx?Title=VHjhNvmZxgQ2Vud6Vv	CLEP Contact, Cindi Braun, 651.846.1553. Also refer to a Prior Learning Coordinator but unable to locate a name.		(651) 846-1555	
South Central College	http://www.southcentral.edu/academic-policies/test-out-advanced-standing-by-departmental-examination.html	David Miller	david.e.miller@southcentral.edu	(507) 332-5803	http://www.southcentral.edu/academic-policies/transfer-policy.html
Vermilion Community College	http://www.vcc.edu/about/old/policies/vccpoliciesdetail.cfm?key=42	Nadine Forsman	n.forsman@vcc.edu	(218) 235-2191	http://www.vcc.edu/about/old/policies/vccpolicies.cfm