



February 1, 2022

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## Report to the Legislature on Credit for Prior Learning

MINNESOTA STATE



## I. Executive Summary

In its 2021 legislative session, the Minnesota State legislature requested a report detailing how the colleges and universities of Minnesota State are expanding credit for prior learning (CPL) in four key areas:

1. including as many forms of work-based and internship experiences as possible,
2. working with faculty to properly credit experiences for students seeking credit for prior learning,
3. proactively making students aware of credit for prior learning opportunities, including internships, and
4. taking steps to ensure gaining credit for college-level experiences and learning is easily accessible to students.

This report summarizes Minnesota State's progress in these areas.

Minnesota State has a long history of credit for prior learning (CPL) programs and services. In the past several years, the system has updated credit for prior learning [Board of Trustees policy and procedure](#), including [statements that](#) "Colleges and universities shall not limit the total number of credits students may be awarded for CPL."

In addition, both individual institutions and the system have closely examined credit for prior learning practices, developed new professional development opportunities, and funded the [VETS](#) re-entry program to expand and systematize military-related credit for prior learning.

Over the last three years, institutional CPL awareness and use have increased, as have the partnerships and grant funding needed for CPL expansion. The vision of Minnesota State is to provide people of all ages with equal access to high-quality, efficient learning opportunities. This vision recognizes that workplace and community-based experiences can increase employability and economic mobility. Credit for Prior Learning is a critical link between work/life experiences and postsecondary credentials when students can document or demonstrate college-level learning.

- Potential and current students learn about credit for prior learning options through the [Minnesota State website](#), [campus webpages](#), designated campus staff, [social media](#), and outreach to employer partners and community-based organizations.
- College-level learning is evaluated using a variety of methods and credit-bearing experiences, including military training and occupational experience, workplace and community-based training, internships, and industry-recognized certifications and licenses.

Minnesota State and its institutions have expanded options and opportunities for student success through CPL in a wide range of areas. For example, since 2015, South Central College has awarded 334 credits to 86 students using credit for prior learning for the manufacturing program. At Pine Technical & Community College, students with a Child Development Associate certificate can potentially save \$1,135.00 in tuition and fees using credit for prior learning. Minnesota State campuses have awarded 243,000 credits for military coursework and occupations, which has saved service members and veterans \$45 million in tuition costs.

**Minnesota State has invested in a variety of CPL-supporting processes:**

- [System-wide policies and procedures that guide campuses' CPL implementation.](#)
- [System-sponsored Credit for Prior Learning Assessment Network to support campus efforts.](#)
- A system-supported CPL web platform that will be accessible to students at Minnesota State campuses in Fall 2022.
- CPL technical assistance to campuses and students.
- Implementation of a \$350,000.00 Lumina grant to support adult learners using CPL.

Minnesota State understands that the attainment goal set forth by the state cannot be achieved without focusing on adult learners, typically age 25 – 65, and older, who often attend college with significant work and life experiences. Attainment gaps for Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous people of Minnesota need to be addressed. Using CPL as an equity strategy to credential more community members is in line with Minnesota State’s [Equity 2030](#) initiative, a major organizing framework for the system.

“We can support students by integrating CPL [into what we do]. We can recognize what skills [students] have and document what they can do and what they know. I think a lot of communities of color and Indigenous students believe ‘higher ed doesn’t care about me.’ We need to demonstrate that we care by supporting adult learners where they are at.”

**Teri Hinds, Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives,  
Minnesota State’s [Office of Equity and Inclusion](#)**

Across the college and universities of Minnesota State, changes to “award credit where credit is due” are occurring with investment in the resources and infrastructure needed for policy and procedure development, process standardization, staffing, technology investments, employee training and outreach to student and partner organizations.

Minnesota State recognizes the opportunity to increase campus capacity, and subsequently, student participation in CPL options by securing additional resources to support the following:

1. funding of CPL fees for low-income students,
2. system-wide CPL web platform for easy student navigation,
3. research on student participation and impacts on completion,
4. use of CPL liaisons to develop CPL partnerships and pathways with employers and community-based organizations, and
5. expanded professional development and resources for faculty and staff.

Minnesota State looks forward to providing future updates on the growth of credit for prior learning and positive impacts for students at its 30 colleges and seven universities.

## I. Legislative Overview

Section 41 of Laws of Minnesota 2021, 1<sup>st</sup> Spec. Sess., chap. 2, article 2 states, “Minnesota State Colleges and Universities must expand credit for prior learning to include as many forms of work-based experiences as possible, working with faculty to properly credit experiences for students, as appropriate. Minnesota State Colleges and Universities shall proactively make students aware of the credit for prior learning program and take steps to ensure gaining credit is easily accessible to students.”

By February 1, 2022, Minnesota State must submit a report to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees and divisions with jurisdiction over higher education on the success of credit for prior learning in granting credits and its continued development as required under this subdivision.”

## II. Overview: What is Credit for Prior Learning at Minnesota State?

Minnesota State defines credit for prior learning in [Board of Trustees Policy 3.35](#) as “academic credit awarded for demonstrated college- and university-level learning gained through learning experiences outside college or university credit-bearing courses and assessed by academically sound and rigorous methods and processes.”

Minnesota State has a long history of credit for prior learning programs and services. When Minnesota Metropolitan State College was formed in 1971, its core mission was the development of options for prior learning assessment for adult transfer students. Over the next three decades, individual colleges and universities developed local practices.

In the early 2000s, Minnesota State began to establish transfer policies for national examinations, such as the [College Level Examination Program](#), and continued to explore more options for serving adult learners, with an emphasis on military veterans. Individual institutional and collaborative initiatives across the system have led to an examination of credit for prior learning practices, new professional development opportunities for faculty and staff on credit for prior learning implementation, and the funding of Veterans Education Transfer System ([VETS](#)) re-entry program to expand and systematize military-related credit for prior learning.

In the past five years, Minnesota State has significantly developed systemwide policy and procedure, created a network to support the 37 campuses in credit for prior learning policy and practice implementation, and expanded continuous professional development opportunities to increase campus faculty and staff expertise and capacity.

## Minnesota State Credit for Prior Learning Assessment Network

In 2018, Minnesota State made a substantial commitment to the implementation and expansion of credit for prior learning across with the creation of the [Credit for Prior Learning Assessment Network](#) (C-PLAN).

C-PLAN is a Minnesota State collaborative that supports the seven universities and thirty colleges in CPL policy and practice implementation. Launched initially with one university and five colleges, C-PLAN has more than doubled in size and participation of active campus partners in the past four years. Its mission includes:

1. Providing Minnesota State students with increased access to CPL assessment opportunities, supporting students' progress to educational goals and degrees.
2. Facilitating a comprehensive spectrum of choices for campus faculty to assess student learning for credit, certify transferable student competencies, and ensure quality.
3. Collaboratively capitalizing on subject-area and resource-based strengths to offer effective CPL pathways, create cross-institution crosswalks, and expand the network of campus partners using CPL standards and best practices.



### III. What is the Role of Credit for Prior Learning in Serving Students at Minnesota State?

The vision of Minnesota State is to provide people of all ages with equal access to high-quality, efficient learning opportunities. This vision recognizes that a variety of learning experiences, including those that are workplace, internship, or community-based, can increase employability and economic mobility. As industry demands move more toward certifications, micro-credentials, and skill-specific requirements, Minnesota State must continue to address policy and practice barriers at a system level to facilitate noncredit – credit alignment as a workforce and economic development strategy. Credit for prior learning implementation at Minnesota State is a primary connector of workforce and academic goals, accelerating completion of postsecondary credentials.

[National research](#) shows that students using credit for prior learning are 22% more likely to complete postsecondary credentials and underscores the necessity of expanding outreach, options, and opportunities.

### IV. How Can Students at Minnesota State Earn Credit for Work-based Learning?

Students at Minnesota State bring many work- and community-based learning experiences. Those include military veterans with formal training and occupational learning experiences. Many other adult learners also have a wealth of experience through workplace and community-based organizations. Their learning may come from formal training, professional certification, internships, or apprenticeship programs, as well as experiences on the job and in their communities. Minnesota State campuses [can evaluate and award credit](#) for these programs.

For more informal work-based experiences that have not been evaluated through third-party validation, students at Minnesota State have additional CPL options for internships, on-the-job or community experiences to be assessed for academic credit. Through these [individualized assessments](#), students may be awarded credit through successful completion of an exam, skills demonstration, or portfolio of learning experiences.

## Initiatives and Partnerships to Expand Students' CPL Options

As part of its effort to provide students with opportunities to earn credit for work-based learning experiences, Minnesota State continues to expand its [Certificates to Credits \(C-to-C\) program](#). Piloted in 2019 by faculty developing rubrics and checklists for reviewing and assessing community- and work-based training and certificates, C-to-C has been adapted by several campuses to facilitate noncredit to credit pathways. The C-to-C process encourages faculty to collaborate on the creation of CPL pathways.

**“Many of my colleagues across disciplines engaged in CPL have been working collectively to establish processes.” - College Faculty, Business Administration**

C-PLAN provides a means for the 37 institutions to develop and share noncredit to credit pathways through credit for prior learning options and other “bridge” tools, such as the C-to-C program. C-PLAN disseminates strategies and tools to participating colleges to address policy/practice barriers and facilitate further discussion, development, and adaptation across colleges and universities in the system.

The Minnesota State All Learning Counts grant, funded by Lumina Foundation, has offered additional opportunities for testing and adapting assessment guides and processes. For example, Rochester Community and Technical College created a badging program under the auspices of this grant, and turned a low-cost, noncredit course in Microsoft Excel into credit for a course in the Administrative Office Professionals degree program. By adapting the [Certificates to Credits Faculty Checklist](#) and sharing their learning with the other campuses, they are disseminating an additional method for turning work-based learning into credits at Minnesota State campuses.

The [Minnesota State Centers of Excellence](#) have collaborated with colleges, employers, and professional associations to review training and certifications and identify opportunities for credit for prior learning pathways. Current CPL pathway projects under development include CPL awards for the Health Care Core Curriculum and the Commercial Driver's License training.

Minnesota State is collaborating with the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), campuses, and community-based organizations to identify work-based related training, in multiple areas such as IT, human resources, and business, to map to course equivalencies and academic credit. One example is industry certificates offered free of charge to Minnesotans through the [DEED-Coursera partnership](#) begun in June 2020. Minnesota State campuses are working together to review and award credit for a variety of certificates recently completed by Minnesotans.

Another CPL pathway to further postsecondary credentialing is the Certified Nursing Assistant program offered free of charge through Minnesota State Workforce Solutions. It has recently provided training to 1,000 members of the National Guard and expanded the training opportunity to other Minnesotans. Minnesota State campuses are creating credit for prior learning pathways to further postsecondary credentialing through recognition of the successful completion of the training and examination.

## V. How Do Students Find Out about Credit for Prior Learning at Minnesota State?

**Minnesota State has engaged in the following efforts to make all students more aware of their credit for prior learning options:**

- [Developed Minnesota State webpage.](#)
- Identified campus points of contact on the main webpage for each campus, with direct link to each campus's webpage on CPL campus policies and procedures.
- Provided student [CPL intake form](#), launched on the Minnesota State website in Summer 2020, to help prospective and current students identify CPL options and begin the CPL request process.
- Provided an [Ask C-PLAN](#) form for students and institutions to send any questions they have about CPL at Minnesota State.

These are first steps in helping students successfully navigate credit for prior learning options at Minnesota State and to connect them with CPL resources at the 37 campuses. These processes will be integrated into a CPL web platform under development, which will streamline campus processes and subsequently enable greater numbers of students to access CPL options more readily.

Potential and current students learn about credit for prior learning options in multiple, reinforcing ways: CPL information and [intake forms](#) on [campus websites](#), [social media](#), outreach to employers, and from admissions and other staff and faculty at campuses and through community-based organizations.

Minnesota State understands that the learners it currently serves, and would like to serve, have often experienced multiple transitions in education, work, and community life, especially since March 2019, and the emergence of the pandemic. They are more likely to look for short-term training to help them with job re-entry and transition. Much of this workplace-related training warrants evaluation for academic credit through credit for prior learning options.

In partnership with the Office of Higher Education, Minnesota State developed and launched the [Skill Up Minnesota](#) web portal for accessing short-term training options at Minnesota State in support of workers displaced by the pandemic. It also [provides learners](#) with information about making use of training as an on-ramp to further education through credit for prior learning options.

## Campus Highlights: How do Learners Find out about CPL?



“I want [students] to know they have done a great job working [outside of college] and they can get credit for that. Right now, we are working to make sure this information will be available on paper program plans, online, and in orientation folders. And then we will do specific program marketing. Our next step is to get an icon next to every course that provides CPL in our online [class scheduling] system.” - **Sarah Dorn and Denine Rood, Pine Technical & Community College.**



“We are identifying students who have stopped out or dropped out to tell them about work-based learning experiences.” - **Nerita Hughes, North Hennepin Community College**



South Central College links all of their [Credit for Prior Learning](#) material on one easily accessible webpage, which includes information on CPL criteria, types of CPL, a course list, methods for assessing prior learning, FAQs, a link to an intake form and student testimonials.



Metro 100, [Getting Credit for What You Know](#), a course at Metropolitan State University, has been offered free of charge to adult learners in transition since the onset of the pandemic. The course assists those learners in assessing their potential options in credit for prior learning, degree programs, and careers.



When I meet with new students, I explore CPL and whether they would be a good candidate. I ask about their lived experiences, their major, and how their experiences might apply. I try to have that conversation to determine if CPL is a fit for them.” - **Anthony Riesberg, Riverland Community College**

In addition to outreach by individual institutions, Minnesota State has expanded CPL information through Twitter, Facebook ads, and marketing for Minnesota State Week. Information is also included in the [Minnesota State Guidebook](#).

## VI. How are Campuses Evaluating Students’ Work-Based Learning?

In Summer 2021, C-PLAN completed a systemwide survey of CPL assessment practices. Thirty out of the thirty-seven institutions responded. The survey, the most comprehensive of its kind at Minnesota State, provided a baseline of CPL current practices, highlighted strengths, and identified opportunities for growth.

### Key Findings

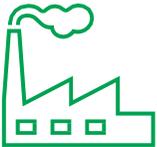
- A majority of campuses applied CPL for military training and occupations to program requirements.
- A growing number of campuses award CPL credit for workplace training, including organizations with American Council on Education (ACE) credit recommendations, applying those credits to courses that meet degree requirements.

- A majority of campuses award CPL credit for industry-recognized certifications and licenses, applying those credits to courses that meet degree requirements.
- Most campuses use individualized assessment methods, such as challenge exams, skills demos, interviews, or a combination of methods to evaluate students' learning that has not been validated through formal training or certification.

## Campus Highlights: How are learners' prior learning experiences evaluated?



“Our Technical Management degree is the most successful credential within the business program at DCTC. 70% of the learners in the program are returning adults. We have worked with licenses in the airline, power plant, and cosmetology industries. Those licenses are all cross-walked [to our courses, so students earn credits].” - **Scott Gunderson, Dakota County Technical College**



“Industry credentials are integrated into a few of our programs, like manufacturing. Students can earn credits for classes. In entry level manufacturing, for example, students who have experience in the field can pay a test fee, take tests on site at SCC, and then those credits can be applied to their transcript. Since 2015, we have awarded 86 students 334 credits {in manufacturing}.” - **Annette Parker (President) and Kelcey Woods-Nord, South Central College**



“We offer work-based learning options like getting credit for industry experience in Cyber Security or turning an OSHA course into credits. Every technical program on campus offers at least one course where credit for prior learning can be applied. Pine Tech’s most recent certification that translates into credits is the Child Development Associate certificate (CDA for Early Childhood). Students who have earned this certification can be awarded up to 6 credits or two courses towards their Early Childhood Development degree. Using credit for prior learning for these courses saves students \$1134.48 in tuition and fees.”  
- **Sarah Dorn, Pine Technical & Community College**



“A student doing project management for 20 years can document their learning in six sigma or quality assurance, which is evaluated and treated as transfer credit. Rather than taking a 3000-level QA course for the degree, they can document their work experience and receive credit for it on their transcript.”  
- **Lynn Johnson, Bemidji State University**



“We revised the policy this past year and included aspects of work-based learning that weren’t included before. We added the NOCTE (National Occupational Testing Institute) and added assessment of professional credentials – e.g., fire safety recently reviewed and are planning to review and affirm the associated credential. We are looking at apprenticeships as a form of CPL and digital badges. We would also give credit if there’s a required internship in the program.” - **Barb Embacher, Riverland Community College**

## VII. How is Minnesota State Removing Barriers to Student CPL Access and Advancing CPL Success?

### Student Navigation - CPL Web Platform

Another major investment by Minnesota State to expand credit for prior learning assessment implementation is the development of a systemwide CPL web platform to be launched in fall semester, 2022. The Minnesota State CPL platform will streamline student requests, help students and campus stakeholders easily navigate the process, provide process guides, and facilitate expansion of CPL options by building campus capacity.

The platform will house and display noncredit to credit crosswalks for work-based learning and provide an easy to access source of information for students across the system. In conjunction with task force recommendations for more consistent and transparent coding and transcribing of CPL credit, the platform also will enable the system to capture more accurate metrics on the number of industry crosswalks implemented by the campuses and throughout the system. An implementation coordinator and team will help campuses onboard and offer information webinars to make students and campuses aware of the new platform.

### Campus Awareness and Implementation

Campus awareness and implementation is critical to students’ success using CPL options. In the Summer 2021 systemwide CPL Assessment Survey developed and hosted by C-PLAN, campuses indicated their use of standards, rubrics, and checklists in evaluating students’ learning. They noted as well the challenges with, and opportunities for, keeping up with policy and procedure, establishing effective workflows, finding guidance on best practice, and building capacity to do the CPL work. Through C-PLAN, Minnesota State provides campuses with a range of resources and tools including:

- Virtual and campus visits
- Advisory sessions
- Cross-functional group discussions
- Faculty and/or staff workshops
- Bi-monthly Ask C-PLAN Webinars recorded and archived for viewing
- Repository of information briefs
- CPL Listserv to ask questions and share practices
- Technical assistance in policy and practice development

## Faculty Engagement

The role of faculty in guiding and assessing students in the evaluation of prior learning is critical to student success, persistence, and completion. Minnesota State continues to identify ways in which faculty work can be supported, subsequently broadening student access and success through CPL pathways.

Faculty across the system champion CPL because they believe in the power of recognizing student learning. Minnesota State has supported faculty efforts with regular CPL Assessment Development Webinars for and by faculty, workshops and webinars at individual campuses, multi-campus faculty convenings, evaluation rubrics, and information briefs.

### Campus Highlights: How are faculty involved in awarding CPL for student success?



“Our faculty are very involved with industry. They feel that students shouldn’t have to take classes for work they already know how to do. They can progress through the program quicker with CPL. Many of our faculty received CPL and believe firmly in it.” - **Denine Rood and Sarah Dorn, Pine Technical & Community College**



“I am a recipient of credit for prior learning in both of my degree programs and was able to get my dream job. I benefited from my CPL experiences and wanted my students to have the same opportunity.” -**Tricia Olinger, Rochester Community and Technical College**



“I see that nontraditional students have this feeling of empowerment to come back with pride having received CPL; they already have attained something.”  
- **Christine Pigsley, Minnesota State University, Mankato**



“We have found that students in our program that complete credit for prior learning go on successfully and complete their degrees. My motivation is to assist all my students in their path to graduation. We create consistent and clear rubrics rooted in the learning outcomes.” - **College Faculty, Graphic Design**



“The Center for Extended Learning has done workshops on CPL for faculty over the years. CPL is now incorporated more and more into our conversations. Ten years ago, faculty would say, ‘What is this [CPL] process?’ But now faculty ask specific and informed questions so we can offer CPL to students. The response is not ‘we don’t do this,’ it’s ‘how can we do this?’” - **Lynn Johnson, Director, Extended Learning, Bemidji State University**

To expand support of this important faculty work, C-PLAN will launch a workgroup with campus faculty members in 2022 to identify resources and tools to increase faculty expertise and capacity to engage in CPL assessment work.

## Policy and Procedure

In 2023, the Minnesota State system office will again review credit for prior learning policy and procedures to advance identified changes in support of greater student access and success. Meanwhile, Minnesota State and its campuses continue to examine and improve institutional and system processes. Current activities through C-PLAN promote consistency, transparency and subsequently, CPL accessibility:

- Comparing policies on the system and campus websites.
- Providing coding and transcribing guides for ease of transfer.
- Facilitating policy and procedure workgroup to eliminate inequities.
- Collaborating with affiliate groups such as Transfer Specialists to share best practice across campuses.

## External Collaboration/Partnerships

Minnesota State is collaborating with state agencies to identify sources to fund student fees for CPL options such as examinations and skills demonstrations. This will increase accessibility for students who need individualized assessment of their prior learning in community- and work-based settings.

Minnesota State recognizes the critical role that licensing agencies play in the standards applied to the award of credit for prior learning for internships and work-based learning in career, technical, and professional degree programs. With that in mind, the system is working with the Department of Education on sharing information on credit for prior learning to increase understanding across licensing agencies and professional organizations and to remove any barriers to credit for prior pathways.

## VIII. How have Metrics/Results Informed CPL Priorities at Minnesota State?

At Minnesota State, there are 26,990 students aged 25 and above at colleges, and 14,910 at universities, in credit bearing programs, for a total of 41,900, or 30 percent of the Fall 2021 headcount population. Many of these students would benefit from credit for prior learning options that recognize “outside of classroom” learning experiences. While Minnesota State students have taken advantage of dual enrollment credit programs and academic credit for military training and occupations, there is much more opportunity for CPL growth in workplace and community-based training and certifications.

Specifically, the percentage of Minnesota State students engaged in credit for prior learning opportunities reflects results of a recent national research study, conducted by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) on CPL uptake. Metropolitan State University and Inver Hills Community College are two Minnesota State campuses that participated in this research. Findings across the 72 participating institutions in the nationwide study showed that an average of 11 percent of students learn about and participate in credit for prior learning options.

### Campus Highlights: How Have Students Succeeded?



“Since 2009, Minnesota State campuses have awarded 243,000 credits for military coursework and occupations which has saved service members and veterans \$45 million in tuition costs. That also saves them on military education benefits. Our faculty made a strong effort to ask, ‘What can we do so we are welcoming our service members?’ And there has been a strong impact on educational access as the data show.” - **Gina Sobania, Military Education Programs, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities**



“In terms of workforce and technical programs, one of our successes is that we built a degree called Construction Technology which is specific for students who are in an apprenticeship. Within that program, our full-time faculty member did a CPL assessment for 25 trades. Now students can receive up to 27 credits for their experience for a 60-credit degree.” - **Nerita Hughes, North Hennepin Community College**



“Don Shelby, most recently a television news anchor in Minneapolis, just completed his bachelor’s degree, almost all of through credit for prior learning. In policy we say there is no limit to CPL...Community activism, a rich professional life...we want to leave this open as a possibility. Most students are receiving up to 15 credits but there are some who receive 30-40 credits.” - **Charles Tedder, Metropolitan State University**

## CPL and Equity

Minnesota State data also reflect [national data](#) on the need to better inform and guide students of color and Pell-eligible students. Gaps in attainment for Black, Hispanic and Native American Minnesotans especially need to be addressed, and research studies have shown that BIPOC students, students receiving Pell grants, and students enrolled in community colleges benefit from receiving credit for prior learning. The focus on CPL implementation is critically important for Minnesotans without a credential, especially those from communities of color.

In 2015, the State legislature set an attainment goal of 70 percent for residents between the ages of 24 and 44. Included in the statute is an acknowledgement that reaching the goal “will likely be difficult without achieving attainment rates that are comparable across all race and ethnicity groups”. (Laws of Minnesota 2015, chapter 69, article 3, section 6). Based on data from the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, supporting Indigenous, Black and Hispanic Minnesotans in earning credentials is critical to meeting the attainment goal.

## IX. How Does Minnesota State Plan to Sustain Credit for Prior Learning?

Because of progress on CPL, Minnesota State has received almost \$2 million in grant funding and has been invited to participate in a national project to further expand CPL.

- Minnesota State has received numerous grants to support implementation work. Most recently, the Lumina Foundation’s All Learning Counts Initiative helped to advance systematic CPL work across the Minnesota State system.
- This work was also supported by an MSP WIN grant, the Placement for Under-Represented Adult Learners grant, and recently received 3M grant, which together total almost \$2 million. This funding supports the continued development of an infrastructure to help under-represented adult learners earn credit for prior learning by

developing a web platform, creating system-wide crosswalks, helping faculty ensure work-based learning is recognized, highlighting successful regional projects, encouraging statewide consultation, and conducting policy work.

- Minnesota State, through a multi-campus collaboration grant, has funded the seven state universities to develop graduate-level CPL pathways for high school co-enrollment instructors to maintain teaching eligibility criteria required by the Higher Learning Commission.
- Minnesota State was invited to participate in a national project, Noncredit to Credit Alignment Lab to remove barriers and increase opportunities for students with work-based learning to earn academic credit. Five colleges in several industries, such as early childhood education, transportation, and business will provide a model to be disseminated throughout the system via C-PLAN training and resources. Through this project over the next two years, Minnesota State will continue to improve policies and procedures that streamline the recognition of work-based learning.
- Minnesota State campuses and C-PLAN are collaborative partners with Goodwill Easter Seals, the lead organization in DEED's Bridge to Career Pathways, Pathways to Prosperity Competitive Grant. The Business Professional Pathway Bridge Model will integrate credit for prior learning opportunities to facilitate students' access to postsecondary degree programs.

## Campus Highlights: How Are We Building CPL Sustainability?



“We are developing a business model, are in a thriving community with many business and industry partners. and plan to make as much use of CPL as possible going forward. An opportunity we have now is that Amazon has a warehouse in North Fargo; they are looking for training for employees who primarily are ESL speakers, and we may articulate that into the business, especially because employees can get \$,5000.00 in education grants per year. Employees with our employer partner, Crystal Sugar, take safety and other training from our Workforce Development department. We are actively working on how this training can be translated into credit so they [employees] can continue with us and finish a degree.” **-Marsha Weber, Minnesota State Community and Technical College**



“Our crosswalks are focused on how employers identify their outcomes. In our mini-grant, faculty worked with Goodwill Easter Seals to show them how to develop learning objectives so they could match up with our curriculum. We are also building out a Public Administration grant and we are going to replicate the Construction Technology model for that degree. The faculty member will build out the CPL for the degree. When we first started, we had conversations with League of Cities, a number of cities, counties, and others. Everyone is on board with the degree. This will be the first and only two-year program in Public Administration in Minnesota. We had the conversation with government partners and some of the counties said that degree would be a make or break in terms of getting an interview.” - **Nerita Hughes, North Hennepin Community College**



“For nontraditional students, we are widening the cylinder, where we are focusing on insurance, manufacturing, healthcare workers. For example, they are using six sigma green belts, Lean, and other certifications. Where there is a connection with a national or organizational standard [we can offer credit]. We are learning lessons from our technical and community college partners. What they are doing in skill trades we are expanding to other professions.” - **Christine Pigsley, Minnesota State University, Mankato**

## Investment in CPL Sustainability at Minnesota State

Earlier sections in this report have highlighted system and campus efforts in the areas of policy and procedure, student outreach, and faculty engagement. One other effort, in conjunction with the development of the web platform, is the standardization of coding and transcribing of credit awards for prior learning across the 37 campuses, with specific expansion of categories for work-based training and experiences.

This standardization will enable Minnesota State to accurately track CPL uptake across campuses and degree programs and analyze the impact of recognition of work-based learning on persistence and completion by age, gender, race/ethnicity, Pell eligibility, and program. The current coding system allows Minnesota State to have a beginning baseline, highlighting gaps and opportunities for further development.

Minnesota State continues to invest in CPL sustainability in the following areas:

### **Campus Capacity**

Currently Minnesota State has a CPL liaison position through a grant to connect campuses, community-based organizations, and employers to develop crosswalks of work-based training and certifications to academic credits in degree programs. This pilot effort will create the framework for developing an infrastructure for local and regional approaches to CPL pathways and partnerships.

### **Best Practice**

The CPL Academy, an online course to orient faculty in guiding students on CPL options and developing assessments, is being expanded to offer the CPL Community, with just-in-time training and resources for all campus stakeholders, from student recruitment and admissions to advising and assessment. The CPL Community helps campus stakeholders work as a cross-functional team, with the student journey as the focus. The CPL Academy will also provide faculty with additional tools and resources on the evaluation of work-based learning.

### **CPL Funding for Access and Equity**

Minnesota State, through C-PLAN, has studied the challenge of resources for CPL fees for individualized CPL assessments for students. Minnesota State has discussed potential options for funding CPL fees for eligible students with the Office of Higher Education and the Department of Employment and Economic Development. The system will continue exploring avenues such as the Workforce Development Scholarships to support expansion of funding options.

### **Research**

Building on its 2021 campus CPL assessment survey, Minnesota State, via C-PLAN, will conduct a 2022 student survey to ascertain access, uptake, success, and challenges to participating in CPL options. This will help Minnesota State learn more about the guidance, support, and outreach needed to support students and the campuses that serve them.

### **Academic Programs and Student Support**

As part of its further development to ease transfer of credits, Minnesota State examines and identifies ways to streamline integration of CPL options in the Transfer Pathways programs. The Guided Learning Pathways framework promotes well-articulated, coherent pathways, including

credit for prior learning, aligned with careers. Advisors are oriented to credit for prior learning options to help them guide students.

Minnesota State recognizes the opportunity to increase campus capacity, and subsequently, student participation in CPL options by securing additional resources to support the following:

1. funding of CPL fees for low-income students,
2. system-wide CPL web platform for easy student navigation,
3. research on student participation and impacts on completion,
4. use of CPL liaisons to develop CPL partnerships and pathways with employers and community-based organizations, and
5. expanded professional development and resources for faculty and staff.

As described in this report, Minnesota State has built a solid credit for prior learning infrastructure through which students can get a jump-start on their college success, progress more quickly toward their educational goal completion, be more likely to complete their certificate or degree, and save money.

Minnesota State looks forward to providing future updates on the growth of credit for prior learning and positive impacts for students at its 30 colleges and seven universities.

## **X. Report Development**

In preparation for this report, C-PLAN staff conducted a system-wide needs assessment and 12 targeted interviews to understand the current state, challenges, and opportunities in CPL practices and implementation, and what is needed for systemwide CPL continuous improvement.

Themes from campus interviews included the following: vibrant local partnerships with industry exist that support the importance of CPL expansion; awareness of the importance of CPL is growing on campuses; CPL is used most often for career/technical program students and military veterans; faculty and administrators play a critical role in promoting and accepting CPL; and campus practices and successes vary, suggesting the need for system investment and

support. (Quotes stemming from interviews with faculty, staff, and administrators from campuses in all regions of the system are provided throughout this report.)

Finally, multiple system and campus stakeholders reviewed the report, including two faculty Inter-Faculty Organization members, Sara Fier, Southwest Minnesota State University, and Jennifer Chernega, Winona State University, who provided feedback on areas of importance from a campus, system, and faculty perspective.

## **XI. Acknowledgements**

This report was developed with input and feedback from the following Minnesota State staff, faculty, and administrators:

1. Scott Blankenbaker, Faculty, Music, Riverland Community College
2. Dr. Jennifer Chernega, Faculty, Sociology, Winona State University
3. Sarah Dorn, Registrar, Pine Technical & Community College
4. Barb Embacher, Vice President of Academic & Student Affairs, Riverland Community College
5. Dr. Sara Fier, Faculty, Counseling, Southwest Minnesota State University
6. Scott Gunderson, Faculty and Advisor, Business & Management Department, Dakota County Technical College
7. Tara Hammill, Faculty/Program Leader, Healthcare Office Professional Program, Rochester Community and Technical College
8. Colleen Harris-Severns, Senior Office and Administrative Specialist, C-PLAN
9. Dr. Nerita Hughes, Academic Dean, North Hennepin Community College
10. Lynn Johnson, Director, Center for Extended Learning, Bemidji State University
11. Kris Lovstad, Transfer and CPL Coordinator, South Central College
12. Jess Niebuhr, Senior Manager for Strategic Partnerships, System Office
13. Dr. Charlotte Nitardy, Minnesota State C-PLAN Advisor & Coordinator and Psychology faculty, Metropolitan State University
14. Tricia Olinger, Faculty/Program Leader, Administrative Office Professional Program, Rochester Community and Technical College
15. Dr. Annette Parker, President, South Central College
16. Dr. Christine Pigsley, Associate Professor & Program Director- Applied Leadership, Minnesota State University, Mankato
17. Anthony Riesberg, Academic Advisor, Riverland Community College
18. Dr. Denine Rood, Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Pine Technical & Community College
19. Dr. Mary Rothchild, Senior System Director of Workforce Development, System Office
20. Gina Sobania, Director of Military, Veteran, and Adult Learner Services at Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, System Office
21. Dr. Charles Tedder, Academic Dean, College of Individualized Studies and the Center for Educational Innovation, Metropolitan State University

22. Marsha Weber, Dean of the School of Business and Information Technology, Minnesota State Community and Technical College
23. Kelcey Woods-Nord, Director of Strategic Partnerships & Employer Engagement, South Central College

**Report Authors:**

1. Mary Beth Lakin, Director, Credit for Prior Learning Assessment Network (C-PLAN), Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
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## MINNESOTA STATE

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## XII. Appendices

### Appendix A: Minnesota State Policies and Procedures

1. [Policy 3.21 Undergraduate Course and Credit Transfer and the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum](#)
2. [Procedure 3.21.1 Transfer of Undergraduate Courses, Credit, Associate Degrees and the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum](#)
3. [Policy 3.35 Credit for Prior Learning](#)
4. [Procedure 3.35.1 Credit for Prior Learning - External Assessments](#)
5. [Procedure 3.35.2 Credit for Prior Learning – Internal College/University Assessments](#)
6. [Procedure 3.35.3 Military Courses and Military Occupations](#)

## Appendix B: Social Media Examples



 **Minnesota State**  
@MinnStateEdu

Minnesota State Week is next week! When visiting campuses, ask about Credit for Prior Learning opportunities that can save you time and money. More info at [MinnState.edu/CPL](https://MinnState.edu/CPL). #MinnStateWk #MinnStateCPL



MINNESOTA STATE WEEK  
JUNE 21-25, 2021  
**EXPLORE YOUR FUTURE**

8:00am · 18 Jun 2021 · TweetDeck

## Appendix C: C-PLAN Advisory Council Members

1. Brenda VanVossen, Business Instructor; CPL; Interdisciplinary Studies, Inver Hills Community College
2. Charles Tedder, College of Individualized Studies, Metropolitan State University
3. Dr. Charlotte Nitardy, CPL Advisor and Coordinator, Minnesota State
4. Dr. Christine Mollenkopf-Pigsley, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences Assistant Professor; Applied Organizational Studies Coordinator, Minnesota State University, Mankato
5. Colleen Harris-Severns, Senior Office and Administrative Specialist, Minnesota State
6. Evan Barshack, Business Programs Instructor, Saint Paul College
7. Gina Sobania, Director of Military Veteran and Adult Learner Services, System Office
8. Jennifer Fager, Vice President Academic and Student Affairs, South Central College
9. Jess Niebuhr, Senior Manager for Strategic Partnerships, System Office
10. Jodie Swearingen, CPL Liaison, System Office
11. Julie Jazskowiak, Credentials Evaluator; DARS/Transfer Specialist CPL, Century College
12. Katie Coil, Assistant Director of Transfer Student Services & Credit for Prior Learning, Century College
13. Kelcey Woods-Nord, Director of Strategic Partnerships and Employer Engagement, South Central College
14. Kirsten Fabozzi, Registrar, Century College
15. Kris Lovstad, Transfer and CPL Coordinator, South Central College
16. MaiNhia Yang, Transfer Specialist, Saint Paul College
17. Mary Beth Lakin, C-PLAN Director, Minnesota State
18. Mary Rothchild, Senior System Director of Workforce Development, System Office
19. Matthew S Loeslie, Dean for the School of Applied Technology, Minnesota State Community and Technical College
20. Michael Eisenbeisz, IT Services Project Manager, Metropolitan State University
21. Michael Olesen, Project Manager for Educational Innovations, System Office
22. Nichole Sorenson, Dean of Institutional Research Planning and Grants, Saint Paul College
23. Paula DeMars Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Coordinator, Northwest Technical College
24. Sara Leiste, Student Directed Learning Director, Metropolitan State University
25. Sarah Dorn, Registrar, Pine Technical & Community College
26. Scott Gunderson, Business Management Senior Faculty Member, Dakota County Technical College
27. Steven Anderson, Faculty, Department of Academic Support, St. Cloud State University
28. Tara Hammill, Healthcare Office Professional Faculty, Rochester Community and Technical College
29. Tarah Sachdev, Director of Admissions Registration and Records, Saint Paul College
30. Teri Hinds, Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives - Equity 2030, System Office
31. Teri Wallace, Interim Associate Vice President for Research and Dean of Extended Campus, Minnesota State University, Mankato
32. Tracy Wilson, Dean of Business and Service Programs, Saint Paul College

## Appendix D: Certificates to Credits Faculty Checklist\*

- \* Example of Documents Used in Reviewing Work-Based Training and Certifications. For more information about the process, please contact [cpl@minnstate.edu](mailto:cpl@minnstate.edu).



# MINNESOTA STATE

## Credit for Prior Learning Assessment Network

### Certificates to Credits Faculty Reviewer Checklist

#### Faculty Reviewer Instructions:

Complete the following questionnaire according to the best of your ability and knowledge based upon the agency's application you are reviewing. Complete a separate review form for each different certification title or training. There are several long-form questions at the end of the checklist for your in-depth review.

This PDF file is interactive and designed to be downloaded and opened in order to be filled out. Most sections contain either drop-down boxes or matrix select tables. If you need a printable, non-interactive version or another format, contact [cpl@minnstate.edu](mailto:cpl@minnstate.edu).

#### Reviewer's Information

Review Date:

Full Name

Star ID

Your college or university:

Title and Department

Phone

E-mail

#### Agency Information

Name of the agency applying:

Certificate title, credential or training being reviewed:

Describe the course equivalency/number/Minnesota State program the applying agency's program is being reviewed for (if any):

## EVALUATION

Choose an answer from the drop-down boxes below.

### Administration

The organization has been fully engaged in enrolling learners, as well as delivering courses and programs for the last two years.

The organization can provide successful documentation of what knowledge individual learners acquire and can issue proof of certification/credential or passing of the certification exam.

The organization has a systematic process in place for securely maintaining learner records.

There is a written policy regarding the retention and release of learner records.

The sponsoring organization must demonstrate administrative control over the courses, meaning that the organization has approval on course content and keeps student records.

### Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes associated with the established certification or credential are comparable with college-level learning and are measurable.

The learning outcomes meet generally accepted learning requirements for certifications and credentialing learners in this subject or field.

### Learning Evaluation/Assessment

The agency's internal assessment(s) align with the learning outcomes.

The assessment methods are measurable or observable, clearly stated, and focused on the performance of the learner.

The passing score or other measures are aligned with college-level academic standards.

**Report to Legislature on Credit for Prior Learning**  
**Trainer(s) Qualification and Evaluation**

The sponsoring agency assures that the lead instructors, learning facilitators, curriculum developers, and training development staff possess appropriate educational qualification and/or tested experience in their positions and roles.

Updated CVs or resumes are on file.

The lead instructors are regularly evaluated to determine evidence of teaching effectiveness.

**Design/Delivery**

The process used to develop the certifications or credentials aligns with academic standards.

Security measures are taken to maintain the integrity of the entire assessment process.

The training and course require a minimum of 15 hours.

## **Leveling Guide Rubric**

The rubrics on the following four pages provides an opportunity for you to assess the program according to different collegiate learning levels, as well as whether the learning outcomes are in the developmental or non-collegiate credit stage. It will help determine at what level any potential credit should be awarded. For each level, assess that the following learner outcomes listed in the matrices are present. The assessments are:

- Exceeds expectations
- Meets expectations
- Does not meet expectations
- Unknown or not applicable

Please note that each level in the rubric should be scored and that the options are mutually exclusive. You may only choose one assessment per statement.

**Developmental/No College Credit**

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations	Unknown or Not Applicable
Discusses foundational topics that act as a prerequisite for lower-division courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prepares students for college-level thinking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Designed to raise skills up to post-secondary standards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Lower Division**

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations	Unknown or Not Applicable
Applies principles, for example to solve problems and/or explain a process and/or engage in an action	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrates sound knowledge of the basic concepts of a subject	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Designed to raise skills up to post-secondary standards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utilizes different approaches to solving problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Able to analyze the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrates (at least) limited application of information into new or unique situations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Applies tools, techniques and methods common to the field of study to questions or problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Upper Division

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations	Unknown or Not Applicable
Critical thinking is introduced or fostered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Analyzes and/or synthesizes information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Broadly applies information into new or unique situations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understands complex body of knowledge, some of it at the current boundaries of an academic discipline or field	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develops analytical techniques and problem-solving skills that can be applied in many types of practical or employment situations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evaluates evidence, arguments and/or assumptions to reach sound judgements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Possesses qualities needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making in complex and unpredictable circumstances	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Graduate Level

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations	Unknown or Not Applicable
Demonstrates high-level application, analysis, and synthesis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Investigates and clarifies major theories, research methods, and approaches to inquiry and schools of practice in the field of study	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Articulates significant challenges involved in practicing the field of study, expands on its leading edges and explores the current limits of theory, knowledge and practice through a project	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assesses the contributions of major figures and organizations in the field, describes its major methodologies, and practices and illustrates them through project papers, exhibits or performances	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

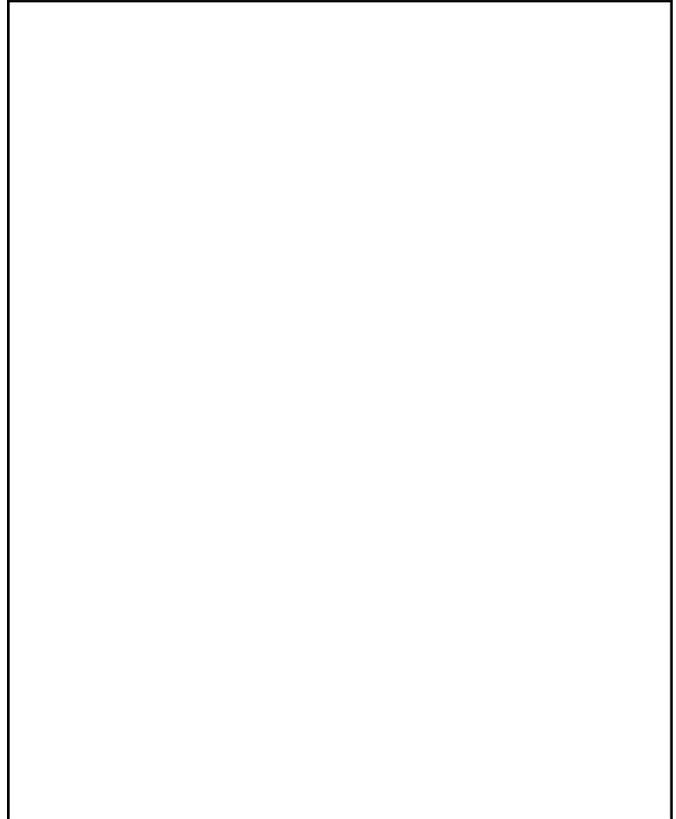
Based on the rubric results above, indicate academic level of credit to be awarded:

How many credits do you recommend for transfer award?

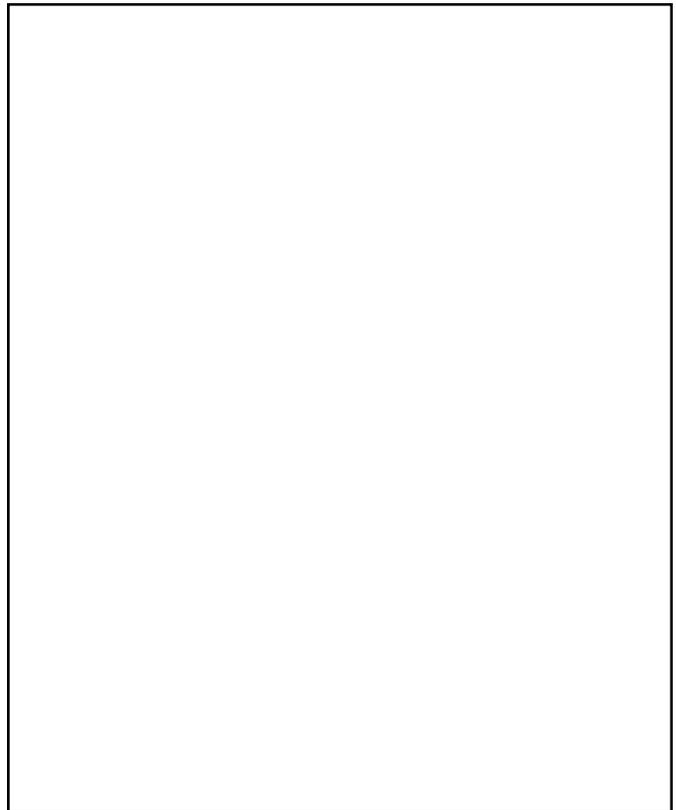
Provide your rationale. If you answered "Other" on the above question, list the number of credits recommended, and why, here.

**Report to Legislature on Credit for Prior Learning**

What course equivalency(ies) should be considered, if any? Provide your rationale.

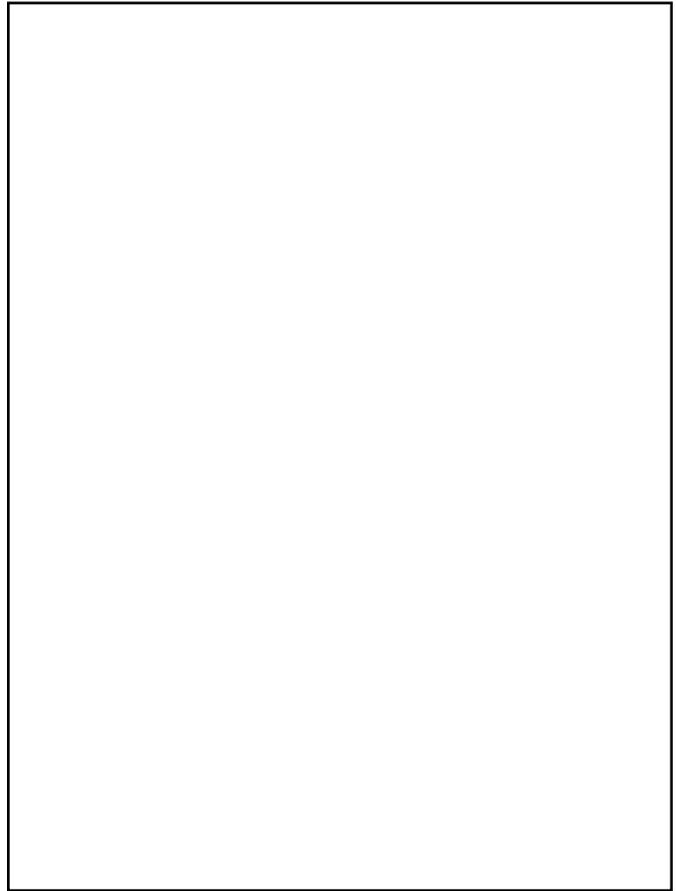


What application to a major/minor or program should be considered, if any? Provide your rationale.

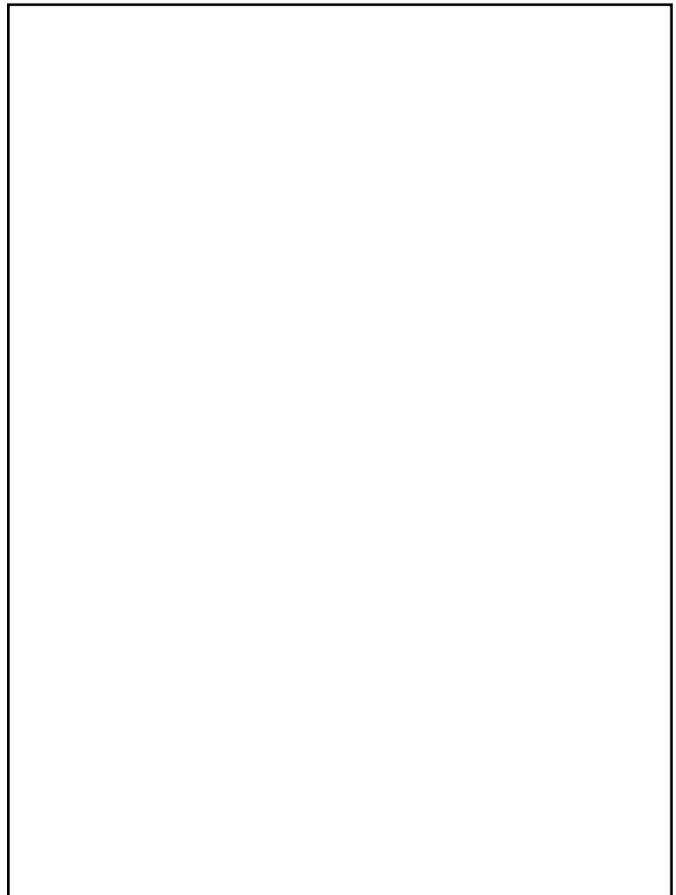


**Report to Legislature on Credit for Prior Learning**

What application to General Education and/or General Education Goal Areas should be considered, if any? Provide your rationale.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for the user to provide their rationale for the application to General Education and/or General Education Goal Areas.

In addition to your faculty department, which academic department(s)/program(s) should provide programmatic review for authorization of the faculty reviewer's credit recommendation?

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for the user to specify which academic department(s) or program(s) should provide programmatic review for authorization of the faculty reviewer's credit recommendation.

**Report to Legislature on Credit for Prior Learning**

Please identify any cross-campus alignments or course equivalencies that may be affected by this credit recommendation, if any:

If this recommendation should be reviewed earlier than three years from date of review, indicate the recommended next review date by month/year:

**Comments:**

Please add any additional comments, considerations, issues or concerns that you have regarding the program's eligibility.

**Guides are adapted from:** 1) American Council on Education (ACE) Criteria to Determine Eligibility to Participate; 2) American Council on Education (ACE) Guide to Initiating a Credit Review; 3) Charter Oak State College, Connecticut Credit Assessment Program for Training Providers; 4) Metropolitan State University Pre-Assessment of Certification and Training (PACT) Project. September 2015; 5) Riccioni, R. and J. Nagrod. Academic Program Review Guide: Rubrics and Resources for the Review Team. Creative Commons Licensed: April; adapted for Thomas Edison State University by J. Nagrod, August 2015; updated May 2016.; 6) The standards of the National College Credit Recommendation Service, The University of the State of New York.