

Are You Getting the Credit You Deserve?

ENSURE THAT YOUR ACADEMIC EVALUATION REFLECTS THE TRUE YOU By Todd Siben, Assistant Director of Portfolio Assessment

You have applied to the University, provided the necessary transcripts and documentation and received your Academic Evaluation. Congratulations on that big first step!

If you are like most of our new students, you are working on interpreting your Academic Evaluation and making decisions about the completion of your undergraduate degree. Given the demographics of our students, most likely you're over 30 years of age and you've come to the University with background and experience as a working adult. You know things.

Now, you're looking for a strategy — an approach to degree completion.

The first important piece of that strategy is the accuracy and completeness of your Academic Evaluation. Do all the credits you attempted to transfer to us appear? Have they been applied to your degree program? Are there a substantive number of credits listed as "other courses" that are not being applied to your degree program? Is there anything else for which you earned credit, but we may not know about? That information is important for us to know so that we don't assume you need credit in something that you may have already completed.

The next important piece is your choice of degree program. Is the degree you selected making the best use of the pool of credits you've already completed? Are you in the best degree program for the credits you have yet to earn? An academic advisor can assist by looking at your completed credits to see how they might apply to any other degree program offered by the University.

Perhaps a different degree program could be a better fit.

Once you've ironed out these basics, take another look at your Academic Evaluation. Focus on the blank underscore lines that indicate where credits are still needed. For



Todd Siben, assistant director of Portfolio Assessment at Thomas Edison State University.

each of those remaining degree requirements, ask yourself: "Do I already know this? Do I have college-level knowledge in this subject already?" If you keep this mindset, the remainder of your degree requirements fall under two categories: what you know and what you don't.

Perhaps you can earn credit for what you know already. Credit for what you already know? Yes! That's prior learning assessment or PLA. As long as it's knowledge and can be equated to what

would be learned in a comparable accredited college course, there is opportunity to earn credit for what you already know.

Very often students talk about how quickly they need to earn a degree. If you're in a rush, credit-by-exam is the quickest and most cost-efficient way to earn credit. Along with the University's TECEP® exams, we also accept credit from exams taken through the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP®), DSST® exams, Excelsior College Examination Program (UExcel), New York University Foreign Language Proficiency exams and other examination programs. There are more than 200 exams that can be taken for college credit, so this is worth your investigation. By reviewing the list of exam options, you can make some initial determinations about exams that you believe you can pass. Convey that information to your academic advisor. Your advisor will determine which of those potential credits will or won't apply to your remaining degree needs. Once the approvals for those exams are plugged into your degree plan, you can consider all credits remaining (again, noted by the blank underscore lines in your Academic Evaluation) to fall into one of two categories:

"I don't already know this subject, so I need to take a course" (or) "I know this, but there is no exam for it, so I could submit a portfolio for assessment."

If you're like many of our students, you may be curious about completing a portfolio assessment. It's important to note that portfolio assessment places a value on the ways your knowledge equates with a college-level course, as opposed to how long you've been in your field or profession. And, portfolio assessment is not limited to this potential credit connected to just your career. If you're employed as an accountant, for instance, there is a good chance that you can earn credits in that area of study; however, you may also be a talented guitarist or sing in the church choir and can document your proficiency in those areas too.

If you're interested in learning more, visit www.tesu.edu/PLA or email PLAWeb@tesu.edu ■

Interested in Learning More About Your Prior Learning Assessment Options?

Two courses can serve as a valuable tool in utilizing prior learning assessment.

Introduction to Prior Learning Assessment (PLA-100) is a 1-credit, letter-graded, four-week online course that can count toward your general education elective credits. The course covers the various PLA credit-earning methods and introduces you to the portfolio development process.

Already completed PLA-100 and you're still interested in utilizing portfolio assessment for credit? The **Introduction to Portfolio Development (PLA-200)** is a 2-credit, letter-graded, eight-week online course that can also count toward your general education elective credits. The course provides additional guidance on identifying potential credits you might earn through the portfolio assessment process as well as instruction on writing and uploading portfolios and submitting them for assessment.