



Prior Learning Assessment at Thomas Edison State College

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Background

- **Thomas Edison State College founded 1972**
- **Public institution intended to provide assessment, degree completion to NJ adults, other state colleges**





Serving Our Students

- **Prior Learning Assessment:**
 - TECEP: credit-by-exam
 - Portfolio development and evaluation
 - Office for Assessment of Professional and Workplace Learning: academic review of training programs, licenses, certificates
 - College accepts most other sources of college credit: CLEP, ACE, NCCRS, Excelsior, StraighterLine
- **Initially, TESC did not offer courses**



Prior Learning Assessment at Thomas Edison State College

- **Focuses on adult and non-traditional students: assumes that they have brought something with them to the College**
- **Embraces all forms of external, college-level learning**
- **Emphasis on Learning Outcomes**
- **Includes multiple methods of assessment of prior learning: testing, portfolio, review of training and certificate programs**
- **Begins with a course sequence that explains PLA to students, and then guides them through the process of documenting their prior learning**



PLA at Thomas Edison State College

- **Both traditional and non-traditional students can be served by good PLA policies**
- **PLA policies and advising help students persist and complete degrees.**
- **Acknowledgment of what students learn outside of college helps create better alignment with workforce development needs.**





PLA-100 and PLA-200

- **PLA-100: Intro to Prior Learning Assessment**
 - 1-credit, 4-week course focused on exposing students to ways of earning credit for what they already know
 - Topics covered include: What is college-level learning, and do I have any? What are learning outcomes? Bloom's taxonomy and other models
- **PLA-200: Intro to Portfolio Development**
 - 2-credit, 8-week course focused on developing a portfolio
 - Topics include articulation of goals, documentation and evidence, mapping knowledge to courses and curriculum
 - End result is at least an outline of portfolio
 - Completed portfolio sent to Subject-Matter Experts for review
- **Courses meet General Education requirements**
 - Information Literacy, Communication, Lifelong Learning



Office for Assessment of Professional and Workplace Learning

- **Conducts reviews of training, licenses, certificates offered by non-educational organizations**
- **Business, non-profits, government, military, trade unions**
- **Similar to ACE and NCCRS but different goals:**
 - Creating partnerships as pathways to enrollment
 - Focus on local workforce development
 - Reviews are tied to our curriculum
- **Some TESC degree programs require OAPWL-reviewed training and/or licenses**
- **Working with other like-minded colleges to share reviews and resources**



Integration of PLA Services

- **Each subject or expertise must be evaluated in the most effective way (for students, discipline, and the College)**
- **Some training not suited to program review: portfolio offered as alternative**
- **Certain subjects (e.g., quantitative) not suited to portfolio: TECEP exams in place for 29 courses**
- **Most important: emphasis on learning outcomes equivalency across all College offerings**
- **Competency-based approach helps connect these offerings**



NJ PLAN

- **New Jersey's Statewide PLA Network**
- **Thomas Edison State College at center of PLA network**
- **Provides PLA services (portfolio, testing, program evaluation) to state colleges and others**
- **Saves other institutions administrative costs and infrastructure**



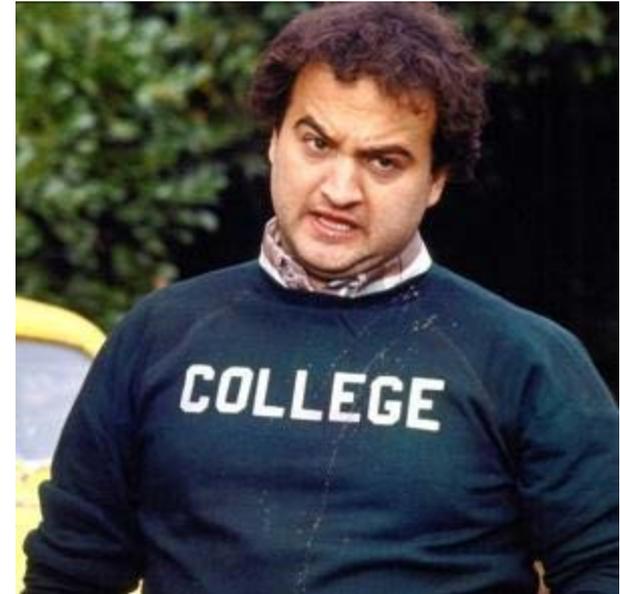
What's Needed for an Effective Program

- **PLA advising: Good intake advising**
 - Where have you been?
 - Where are you headed?
 - What is your situation now?
- **Clear, transparent policies**
 - The basis on which you'll be assessed
 - Where the credit will be applied
 - What are the options for earning credit?
- **Good marketing and communications**



How to talk about PLA

- **“PLA—credit for what you already know”**
- **What PLA is not:**
 - Credit for Experience
 - A Cheap and Easy Way to get a Degree
- **What it is:**
 - Validation of what students learn on their own
 - A link between higher ed and the workforce





National Institute on the Assessment of Adult Learning

Thomas Edison State College
presents
The
National Institute
on the Assessment of
Adult Learning 2014

June 18-20, 2014
WITH OPTIONAL PRECONFERENCE
WORKSHOPS ON JUNE 17

Nassau Inn • Princeton, NJ

Small conference focused on PLA and assessment of non-traditional students: virtual learning, workforce development, learning outcomes, open educational resources.



Contact/questions?

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