

CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING: HOUSE BILL 4059 (2012)  
2019 Report to the Oregon Legislature



**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**PROGRESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS 3**

**EMERGING AND MERGING PERSPECTIVES 7**

Cover photo courtesy of Mt. Hood Community College, 2018

## PROGRESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

---

House Bill 4059 (2012) aimed to reduce obstacles for Oregon residents in receiving academic credit for prior learning. The legislation intended that HECC take action to:

- 1) Increase the number and type of academic credits accepted for prior learning,
- 2) Increase the number of students that receive such credit.

Additionally, the legislation directed specific operational goals, including requirements that HECC:

- 3) Develop transparent policies and practices in awarding academic credit to be adopted by the governing boards,
- 4) Improve prior learning assessment practices across all institutions of higher education,
- 5) Create tools to develop faculty and staff knowledge and expertise in awarding such credit, and sharing exemplary policies across institutions,
- 6) Develop articulation agreements when patterns of academic credit pathways are evident, and finally,
- 7) Develop outcome measures to track progress on these goals.

The legislation required broad representation to lead this effort, and designated that members for the CPL Advisory Committee be appointed from the sectors listed below:

Public Universities	Labor
Community Colleges	For-profit Institutions
Independent Not-for-Profit Institutions	Business Community
Student of Two-Year or Four-Year Institution	

However, the legislation also authorized the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to appoint additional members based upon a demonstrated interest in and knowledge of prior learning programs.

Although funding was not associated with the bill, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission worked diligently with their Oregon post-secondary community counterparts toward these goals. Detailed reports of the committee's work is outlined in earlier reports to the Legislature, available on HECC's [website](https://www.oregon.gov/highered/research/Pages/reports.aspx)<sup>1</sup>. Significant progress towards the goals of the legislation was made during the 2013-2017 time period, described under these representative examples:

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oregon.gov/highered/research/Pages/reports.aspx>

- 1) **CPL Pilot Project.** HECC staff initiated and facilitated the CPL Pilot Project (2014), which involved eleven institutions: community colleges (11), public universities (1), private, for-profit (1), and private, not-for-profit (1). This project involved HECC staff who worked with the schools for over two years to convene institutional cross-functional teams, develop an implementation plan and timeline, identify professional development/training needs and identify costs associated with implementing CPL Standards. This project helped build the foundational knowledge underpinning the Committee's work for the next five years.
  
- 2) **State standards for CPL.** Developed first version of state standards for credit for prior learning (2013), and through substantive statewide outreach efforts to higher education institutions, staff, faculty and students, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission subsequently revised and adopted the Oregon Credit for Prior Learning Standards<sup>2</sup> in 2017. The Standards are accompanied by a 'Frequently Asked Questions' document which addresses the predominant, reoccurring questions raised across several years and various events. These two documents were widely distributed to Oregon public and private universities, and community colleges as well as through Oregon institutional professional membership groups (e.g., Provosts Council, Oregon Community College Admissions and Registrars Directors, and Institutional Research) and posted for reference on HECC's website<sup>3</sup>.
  
- 3) **Environmental scans.** The CPL Advisory Committee, staffed by HECC, conducted two environmental scans to collect data on credit for prior learning across Oregon's higher education landscape. The first scan focused on implementation practices across Oregon's institutions, which led to development of policy and procedures that enabled a more consistent process (i.e., the Learning Standards). The second scan (2017) sought to define how Oregon's post-secondary schools were responding to HB 4059, how they were implementing CPL and the challenges they perceived to be associated with offering CPL. The data from these efforts highlighted the complexity, confusion, challenges and barriers perceived by institutional members. However, this information allowed the Advisory Committee to better target its efforts to leverage change aligned with institutional capacity.

---

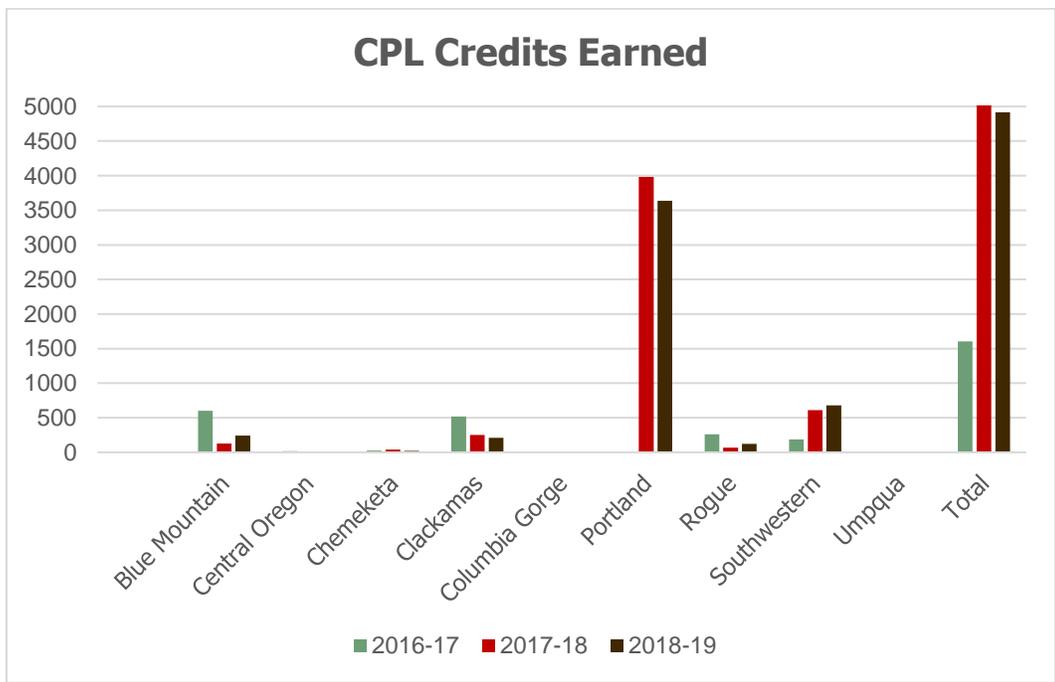
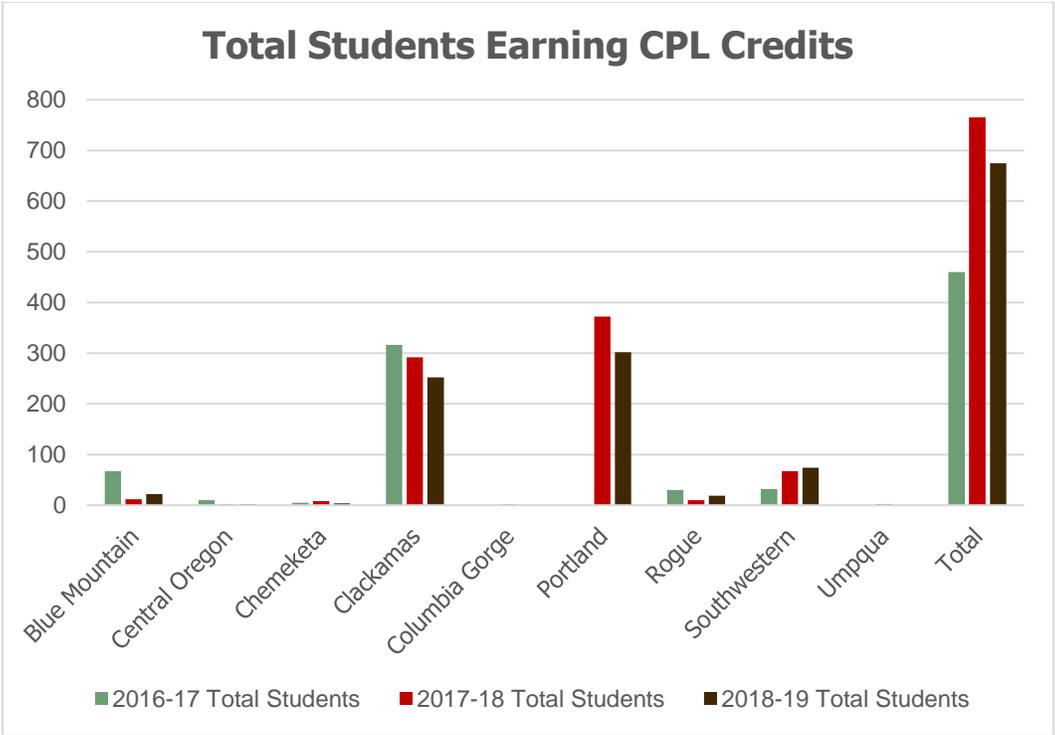
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.oregon.gov/highered/policy-collaboration/Documents/Transfer-Credit/2017-CPL-Standards-2017-Final.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.oregon.gov/highered/policy-collaboration/Pages/credit-prior-learning.aspx>

- 4) **Technical assistance.** Extensive outreach with faculty/staff from Oregon institutions through presentations at 2015 & 2016 Student Success Conference, CPL Assessment Event, ACE Transcription and Assessment event, and through the two-year Pilot Project, as well as to students via scheduled student panels.
- 5) **Improved understanding of CPL data collection.** The Community Colleges and Workforce Development agency (later subsumed into the HECC) had instituted requirements for tracking and submitting data on CPL in 2012. A wide-ranging set of stakeholders (including agency staff, college registrars, and college institutional researchers) then agreed upon standards and methods for meeting these requirements. Two events in 2016 helped advance CPL data reporting further. The first was a data summit in May 2016 that included a variety of presentation and interactive discussions between community college and HECC staff. Second was a meeting of Oregon Council of Community College Institutional Researchers, at which the CPL Advisory Committee co-chair, and HECC's CPL Administrator engaged in an interactive session that identified barriers and gaps in CPL reporting across the community colleges.

However, most institutions continued to report challenges in adapting their course coding processes to incorporate CPL and submit data as planned and as required for HECC to standardize institutional CPL reporting. Institutions also report an ongoing need for funding to support data submission changes. Comments suggest the low number of students requesting CPL reviews in many institutions (for other than military or test-based challenge exams) seems to lower the priority for funding such efforts.

Data submitted by the institutions are therefore limited, although there are insights from nine schools that did report data. There is a range of both students and CPL credits awarded, generally following the size of the community college district's enrollment. In 2018-19, Portland Community College was responsible for the largest number of credits awarded (3,684) and the greatest number of participating students. However, the average benefit to students varied. For example, in those three years, Clackamas College had a range of 252 to 316 students who received CPL credits, however those students earned only an average of 1 credit each. In contrast, Portland Community College had more participating students (302-372), but those students earned a much higher average of nearly 12 credits. The two charts on the next page summarize the last three years' available data.



## EMERGING AND MERGING PERSPECTIVES: 2017-2019

---

Across 2017 and 2018, there was a reconceptualization in state education goals, leading to a more holistic perspective on adults across multiple HECC initiatives. The impetus was the redefinition of the 40-40-20 goal for Oregon educational achievement.

In 2017, House Bill 2311 articulated that Oregon's 40-40-20 goal inherently applied to young adults who would be expected to realize the goal as they exit secondary or postsecondary education. It did not focus explicitly on older adults who may, instead, need some kind of credential to enter or advance in the workforce. Efforts began to articulate the details of a new adult attainment goal, through a designated Adult Attainment Workgroup.

Concurrently in 2017, the CPL Advisory Committee was coming to perceive that a broader scope of college completion and student success efforts was possible. Because the CPL initiative was well established at that point, the Committee planned less frequent meetings for late 2017 while HECC realigned the mission of the Committee with the state's needs. However, by early 2018, as the work wound down, the committee lacked enough attendees at meetings to move forward or to reach a necessary quorum for decisions.

By September 2018, the Adult Attainment Workgroup, completed their task to define a new educational goal for the adult population. Passage of the new goal occurred in November 2018, with the final adult attainment goal stated as follows:

Oregon anticipates more than 120,000 additional jobs requiring post-secondary training or education between now and 2030. In order to meet this need, 300,000 additional adult Oregonians should earn a new degree, certificate or credential valued in the workforce during that time. Because Oregon has substantial attainment gaps among minority, low income and rural Oregonians, the state will also commit to reducing those attainment gaps by half during the decade.

The Adult Attainment Workgroup still had unfinished work, particularly in defining credentials of value and discerning how they might be tracked, but before its last meeting in September 2018, HECC staff were able to submit a grant proposal for an

Adult Promise grant from the Lumina Foundation for Education (“Lumina”)<sup>4</sup>. In December 2018, HECC was awarded nearly \$700,000 from Lumina to support agency efforts on closing attainment gaps by race/ethnicity, with a portion focused explicitly on adult attainment efforts. Given the focus of the grant, it was well-timed to advance HECC’s ongoing efforts.

Thus, the new adult attainment goal, the promising work envisioned by the Adult Attainment Workgroup, and the award of the Lumina grant began to coalesce to guide HECC efforts. In order to achieve the goals of the Workgroup, and inform the work of the Lumina grant, the Adult Learner Advisory Committee (ALAC) was created. As the Committee’s Charter began to emerge in discussions, it began to suggest promising synergy with the Credit for Prior Learning efforts. Transitioning efforts to increase the awarding of CPL into a key strategy of the broader ALAC was discussed in a meeting with a small group of CPL Advisory Committee members in summer 2018, resulting in general endorsement for such a change.

The final ALAC Charter was finalized in the summer of 2019, and provided the framework or the committee’s purpose, membership, role and expected outcomes. Several key details from ALAC’s charter help to inform this report’s topic, and specifically, suggest that efforts previously managed under the CPL Advisory Committee may be productively addressed under the oversight of the ALAC.

The Adult Learner Advisory Committee shall:

1. Develop strategies and disseminate best practices regarding how adults gain skills outside the traditional P-20 education pipeline,
2. Serve as an advisory group to connect and align multiple adult attainment efforts within the HECC,
3. Investigate and provide recommendations regarding the evolving definition of “credential of value”, and
4. Evaluate the impact that Credit for Prior Learning Standards may offer to benefit adult students, and
5. Evaluate progress toward achievement of the Adult Attainment Goal.

---

<sup>4</sup> The Lumina Foundation has established the Strategy Labs Talent, Innovation and Equity Partnership program (“TIE Partnership”).

Overall these suggest that HECC's efforts on Credit for Prior Learning may be better framed as one tool in a toolkit of multiple strategies that can maximize adults' efforts to reach their educational goals. This warrants consideration particularly at this juncture in time, with the achievement of the CPL Standards, well-implemented by the former CPL Advisory Committee.

One of the summary statements from the 2018 Credit for Prior Learning Report to the Legislature suggested, "HECC will examine an expanded set of initiatives for adult learners that incorporates and leverages the work done for CPL in an effort to combine CPL with future adult attainment initiatives". Over the course of late 2018 and 2019, this consideration has occurred deliberately as well as organically. HECC staff evaluated the wholesale integration of the CPL Advisory Committee into the ALAC, but opted instead to create a membership for ALAC that overlaps that of the former CPL Advisory Committee with some additional breadth from industry, workforce development, and additional offices of the HECC. As ALAC makes progress on its work, staff will continue to develop a plan for integrating the work of the CPL Advisory Committee into a broader agenda to support reaching Oregon's adult attainment goal.

