

# Is your campus prepared to maximize the Credit for Prior Learning experience?

Dr. Seth Marc Kamen, NCCCS State Director of Credit Mobility  
2025 NCSDAA/NCACCIA Joint Conference

# About Me



# Agenda

- Setting the foundation: Prior Learning Intro and Regulations
- Establishing a framework for a CPL audit and implementation
- The Three Steps: Policy, Culture and Students
- Next Steps and Summary

# What is Prior Learning?

NC State Code 1D SBCCC 800 says:

Curriculum credit awarded for college-level learning obtained through prior learning experiences other than curriculum coursework.

Colleges are authorized to award CPL using the following prior learning methods:

- (1) Apprenticeship
- (2) State or Industry Recognized Credentials/Continuing Education to Curriculum Credit
- (3) Courses listed in high school to community college articulation agreements.
- (4) Military education and training
- (5) Standardized examinations
- (6) Challenge exams/Proficiency
- (7) Portfolio assessment
- (8) Public Safety Training (PST) prefix courses

# Why Prior Learning?

A 2020 CAEL and WICHE study found the following learner outcomes:

- On average, post-traditional learners with CPL credit saved \$1,500 to \$10,200 compared to those without CPL credit.
- The average savings on time to degree was 9 to 14 months for CPL-credit holders.
- CPL increases the likelihood of credential completion among post-traditional learners by more than 17%.
- The completion increase due to CPL was 19% for post-traditional learners who received Pell grants, 14% for Black learners and 24% for Hispanic learners.
- post-traditional learners with CPL credit earned 17.6 more traditional course credits than those without CPL credit.

And, it found the following institutional motivators:

- Eighty-four percent of likely-to-enroll prospective learners stated the ability to receive college credit for their life and work experiences could influence their choice of an institution.
- Among those slightly- or moderately-likely to enroll, more than 55% indicated knowing about CPL offerings would positively impact the likelihood of their enrollment.
- In addition, 47% of likely enrollees reported having already applied for credit for their past life and work experiences, while another 48% expressed their intention to apply in the future. Only 5% stated they do not intend to seek CPL.

# NCCCS Data

Row Labels	Count of Credit By Exam / Challenge Exam
ACE	1
Advanced Placement (AP)	52
Cambridge International Exams	21
CLEP Exams	50
Credit By Exam / Challenge Exam	50
CTE Exams	1
DSST/Dantes Exams	34
International Baccalaureate (IB)	32
Sophia Learning	1
StraighterLine	1
Study.com	1
UExcel Exams	1

Row Labels	Count of My college actively accepts the following workplace, learning, and experience credit:
Apprenticeship Credit	31
Courses from NCCCS Workforce and Continuing Education programs (non-credit to credit)	48
Credit from the High School Articulation Agreement	49
Credit via a Competency Based Education Review	15
Credit via a Portfolio Review Process	24
Industry Credentials and Licenses	51
Military Occupational Credit	39
Military Training Credit	49

# Accreditation

**Higher Learning Commission (HLC):** “The institution has a clear policy on the maximum allowable credit for prior learning as a reasonable proportion of the credits required to complete the student's program. Credit awarded for prior learning is documented, evaluated, and appropriate for the level of degree awarded.”

**Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU):** There is no specific limit on CPL credits but requires member institutions to have clear policies in place regarding the awarding of such credits.

**Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC):** "The institution awards degrees only to those (undergraduate) students who have earned at least 25 percent of the credit hours required for the degree through instruction offered by that institution."

**Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE):** “Transfer of Credit, Prior Learning, and Articulation Agreements Policy and Procedures holds institutions accountable for consistency, fairness, and transparency in transfer of credit decisions. The Commission remains flexible and allows institutions to determine their own policy and procedures with regard to transfer of credit, so long as the institution strives for appropriate balance among consistency, fairness, flexibility, good educational practice, and academic program integrity. The new policy encourages institutions to minimize the loss of credits for students. It also encourages the consideration of new and innovative methods or sources for learning and alternative assessment methods.”

**WASC Senior College & University Commission (WSCUC/WASC):** Limitation of CPL to 25 percent of the degree, with appropriate and relevant college-level assessment based on student learning, and existing disciplines and subject matters. All institutional policies must be transparent.

**New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE):** “Credit for prior experiential or non-collegiate sponsored learning is awarded only with appropriate oversight by faculty and academic administration and is limited to 25% for credentials of 30 credits or fewer. When credit is awarded on the basis of prior experiential or non-collegiate sponsored learning alone, student learning and achievement are demonstrated to be at least comparable in breadth, depth, and quality to the results of institutionally provided learning experiences. The policies and procedures for the award of credit for prior or experiential learning are clearly stated and available to affected students. “



# Discussion Structure

**A positive, accepting,  
knowledgeable environment**

**A positive  
journey**





# The Framework

Through a project with the Iowa Community Colleges and support from the California Community College System, we identified seven areas that are important to include in the framework. These include mission alignment, integrity in structures and processes, student equity, faculty engagement and professional development, student services, credit management systems and a focus on resources, planning and improvement.

Communication is a critical component throughout the process. Students must be informed about CPL from the moment they walk in the door until graduation. Faculty and advisors must be able to discuss CPL with transparency and clarity. CPL can be applied throughout a student's time at an institution, but clear and ongoing communication is needed to make this work.

**- Patricia Brewer, Faculty Member, Walden University**

# The Framework

In California, the community colleges adopted seven CPL Policy Standards:

- **STANDARD ONE: EQUITY** CPL policy ensures that all students have equitable access to consistent opportunities to earn credit for prior learning.
- **STANDARD TWO: PHILOSOPHY AND ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK** CPL policy is grounded in the institution's philosophical and academic framework and is consistent with institutional mission, goals, and approaches to learning.
- **STANDARD THREE: INTEGRITY** CPL policy ensures that all stakeholders (including faculty, institutional representatives, students, and any external contributors) promote integrity in the evaluation and documentation of prior learning.
- **STANDARD FOUR: FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS** CPL policy assures the involvement of qualified discipline faculty and the preservation of discipline faculty purview over the awarding of credit.
- **STANDARD FIVE: STUDENT SERVICES** CPL policy assures that students have timely and continuous access to transparent information, resources, and services to guide them on CPL.
- **STANDARD SIX: CREDIT MANAGEMENT** CPL policy clearly identifies how credits are organized and applied to student records.
- **STANDARD SEVEN: PLANNING, RESOURCES, IMPROVEMENT** CPL policy assures continuous improvement and scalability of processes by providing sufficient infrastructure and data to support policy implementation and review.

# Roadmap

- Where do you want to go?
- What are the deliverables?
- What are the key performance indicators?

## Deliverables

1. Assemble a CPL workgroup to review, make recommendations and help educate the M State community on the following:

- M State's CPL policy and procedure (after reviewing national, state and local policies and procedures)
- Fees
- Aligning CPL with academic curriculum
- Training faculty, student affairs staff and students
- Leveraging community partnerships

2. Develop CPL tools and resources for implementation.

- Create a CPL SharePoint portal for faculty
- Review and make recommendations to update the CPL application, forms, portfolio process and evaluation rubric
- Develop process flows for students, faculty and advisors
- Review academic programs for CPL curriculum alignment
  - › Challenge exams
  - › Standardized exams
  - › Industry-based credentials
  - › Portfolio course development
  - › Workplace training and development
  - › Military training and education
  - › Workforce development and non-credit
- Establish crosswalks for programs identified via the review of academic programs (e.g. Course Eligibility Template)

3. Create CPL awareness campaigns and present to students, staff and faculty.

- Student and student affairs information session topics:
  - › CPL and curricula connections
  - › Portfolio development
  - › MyCPL and CPL processes
- Targeted faculty information sessions topics:
  - › Assessment of prior learning
  - › Workplace experiential learning
  - › Military training
  - › Certifications and licenses
  - › Local articulations and MOU's
  - › Other possible experiential learning partnerships

## Key Performance Indicators/Metrics

- Number of sessions held
- Number of participants
- Survey data from students and faculty
- Number of CPL inquiries and applications
- Number of crosswalks developed
- Number of credits for prior learning awarded
- Approval of policy and procedure revisions



# Curriculum and Academic Policy

## **Transparency of information**

- Does your catalog have a clear CPL policy?
- Test Credit Equivalencies
- Process to accept or decline credit (Challenge Exams, Portfolio Assessment, etc.)
- Where are there inconsistencies with CPL policy and other institutional or academic policy?

## **Integration and support within the curriculum**

- When developing your local curriculum, do you consider how to apply CPL?
- What is the process to articulate WCE to Curriculum courses?
- Is CPL integrated into your pathways?
- How customizable is CPL?

## **Aligning with transfer and pre-college coursework**

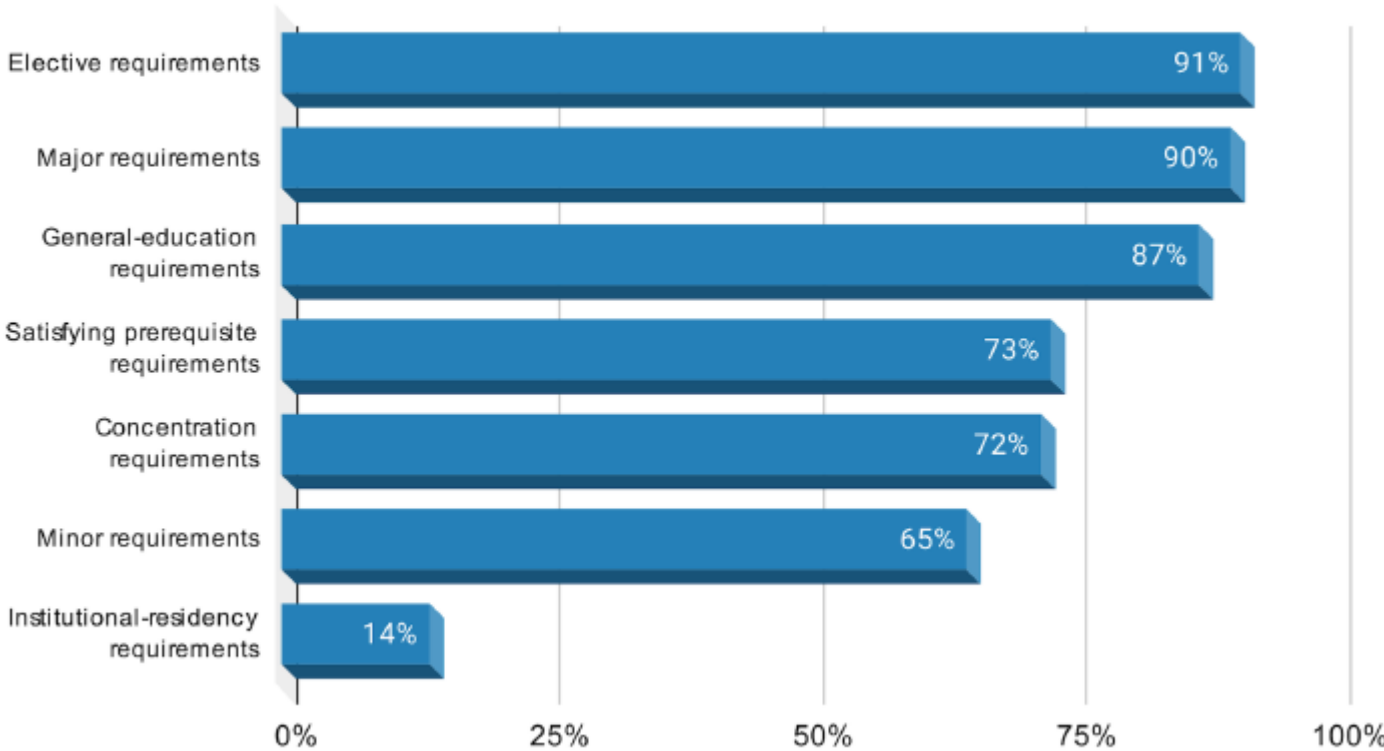
- How does CPL work with high school credit, SparkNC, or other pre-college experiences?
- How do you transfer in already accepted-CPL coursework?



# Curriculum and Academic Policy

## Do you accept CPL, or do you apply it?

Figure 4: General Applicability of CPL Credits to Program Requirements (all that apply)



# Curriculum and Academic Policy

## Faculty Engagement

- Aligning training with college courses
- Setting policy (as applicable)
- At the state level, we convene discipline-groups to evaluate credentials that align with, primarily, high-workforce needs. Locally, you can do the same.
- These workgroups should focus on:
  - Reviewing content to align with learning outcomes from Common Courses
  - Meeting the needs of students, the college, and local industry
  - Academic Integrity
- Dispelling myths via data

# Policies

## Institutional Control:

- Regional credentials to accept
- CPL equivalencies
- Applying CPL to curriculum
- Grading
- Timeline for evaluation
- Portfolio Review
- CBE work

## State Board Code and Accreditation:

- Minimum score acceptance of exams
- Residency requirement
- Transfer of CPL between NCCCS schools
- Faculty credentials
- Transfer of CPL Credit

## NCCCS Recommendations:

- Data Entry into Colleague
- Equivalencies (Forthcoming)



- Created a Faculty Learning Community
- Faculty comfort with assessment should not be assumed
- Provided a platform for assessment promoted reflection and new learning enhanced faculty adoption
- Faculty respond well to opportunities to do their own research and learning, arriving at their own conclusions
- Identified the LMS as a key tool for sharing and evaluating coursework
- Monthly meetings and conference attendance



- Faculty Teams consisting of curriculum and instructional designers, assessment specialists, academic technology, and coaches
- Faculty governance established standards and approval processes
- Engaging Enrollment management to explore transcripts





# Campus Culture

## Understanding CPL

- **The Basics.** Is CPL a commonly understood concept at the institution? Does the community understand the How, What and Why?
- **Equity.** Do you accept and award CPL to support all students?
- **Institutional Support.** Is there a willingness to accept CPL, or how can you change the culture to be more open to accepting credit? Do you have senior leadership buy-in?

## Resources

- **Staffing.** Do you have a CPL functional lead?
- **Technology.** Does your technology support CPL? How can you utilize AI?
- **Finances.** Can the institution support the CPL project?

## Data, Decision Making and Communications

- **Definitions.** Are there common definitions and understanding of CPL-related terms?
- **Data Access.** Do you have data to support CPL-related decision making?
- **Communications.** How are communicating CPL-related policies, practices and momentum?

# Campus Culture

## Engagement

- Workforce and Curriculum Faculty
- Staff and Administration
  - Registrar, Admissions, Advising, Financial Aid, Student Services, Career Services, Veteran Services, Technology, Governance, Transfer and Articulation, Policy Director
- High School Partners
- Business and Industry
- Advisory Boards
- Students and Alumni

## Student Experience

- **Use-friendly CPL application.** Is it easy to complete, or does it require a student to be at a certain point in their journey to get access to the information they need?
- **Documentation.** What is needed and how accessible is it?
- **Cost.** How much do you charge for CPL Evaluation, and is it affordable?

# The Student Experience

## **Access to Information during Admissions/Conversion**

- CPL information on the website and included in marketing materials
- Knowledgeable admission representatives, recruiters and advisors
- A CPL slide in your open house presentation
- A question about CPL on your admission application
- Identifying potential CPL student in your Colleague, CRM or advising tool?

## **Evaluation and Credit Applicability**

- Ensuring CPL evaluations are done at the same time, format, and with the same regularity as transfer credit
- An equitable, accessible, and completely online process

## **Retention and Graduation**

- CPL usage post-enrollment
- Upskilling, stackable credentials and transfer of CPL

# CPL Webpage

- Policy Documents
- Equivalencies
- Request Process
- Contact Information

## Make sure:

- Easily accessible
- Relevant and Updated
- Speaks the student language
- Provides guidance, not just information

## Credit for Prior Learning Options

### Only take the classes you need

Accelerate your academic goals at CCBC by receiving credit and recognition through Credit for Prior Learning (CPL). CPL assessments evaluate your existing skills, projects and experiences to help you save time and money on your academic journey.

### Your CPL options

Explore our assessments

<b>EXTERNAL ASSESSMENTS</b> 📄 Take a test in exchange for college credit, getting you steps closer to graduation at a fraction of the cost.	<b>INTERNAL ASSESSMENTS</b> 📄 Get credit for your work experience, professional development, volunteerism, personal experiences, prior knowledge and more!
<b>INDUSTRY CREDENTIALS</b> 📄 Stack your credentials! If you have a state or federally recognized certification or have completed an apprenticeship, it may count toward a CCBC program.	<b>MILITARY EXPERIENCE</b> 📄 Earn college credit for your service, whether that be through work experience, military courses or other completed training.

### Credit by external assessment

- External assessment options
- How to earn credit for an external assessment

Home / [Students Resources](#) / [Testing Services](#) / Credit For Prior Learning

Course Placement and Assessment
<b>Credit for Prior Learning</b>
Advanced Placement Credit
CLEP Exams
Credit for Training and Certificates
DSST Exams
Earn Credit for Training Programs
Experiences in the Armed Services
International Baccalaureate Diploma
UExcel Exams
Exam Proctoring
Exams
Midterm and Final Exams
Testing Centers Procedures

### Contact Info

2323 W. 14th St. Tempe, AZ 85281  
frontdesktesting@riossilado.edu  
Phone: (480) 517-8560

Hours

Monday - Thursday:

## Credit for Prior Learning

Credit for prior learning allows you to receive college credits for learning that you acquired through your work or other experience. Prior learning can be evaluated for college credit through national standardized tests or departmental credit by evaluation, existing certificates and licenses. Explore the options below for more information.

### Get College Credit for What You Already Know

You may be able to earn credit for past participation in these areas and more:

- Independent study
- Non-credit courses
- Volunteer or community service

### How Many Credits Can I Earn?

You may be awarded up to and including 30 credit hours, unless credits are required by a specific program of study within the Maricopa Community Colleges.

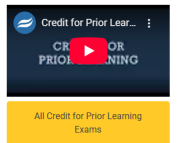
### Do the Credits Transfer?

Credit for prior learning is transferable within the Maricopa Community Colleges, but may not transfer to other colleges and universities. You should meet with your program advisor or contact the college or university you plan to attend for more information.

### Credit by Exam or Evaluation

There are two ways to receive college credit for prior learning: credit by exam and credit by evaluation. To earn credit by exam, students pass standardized tests that assess knowledge of material typically taught in introductory college classes. To earn credit by evaluation, students submit prior military credentials or previously completed training, licensing and certifications to be evaluated for applicability toward a college certificate or degree program.

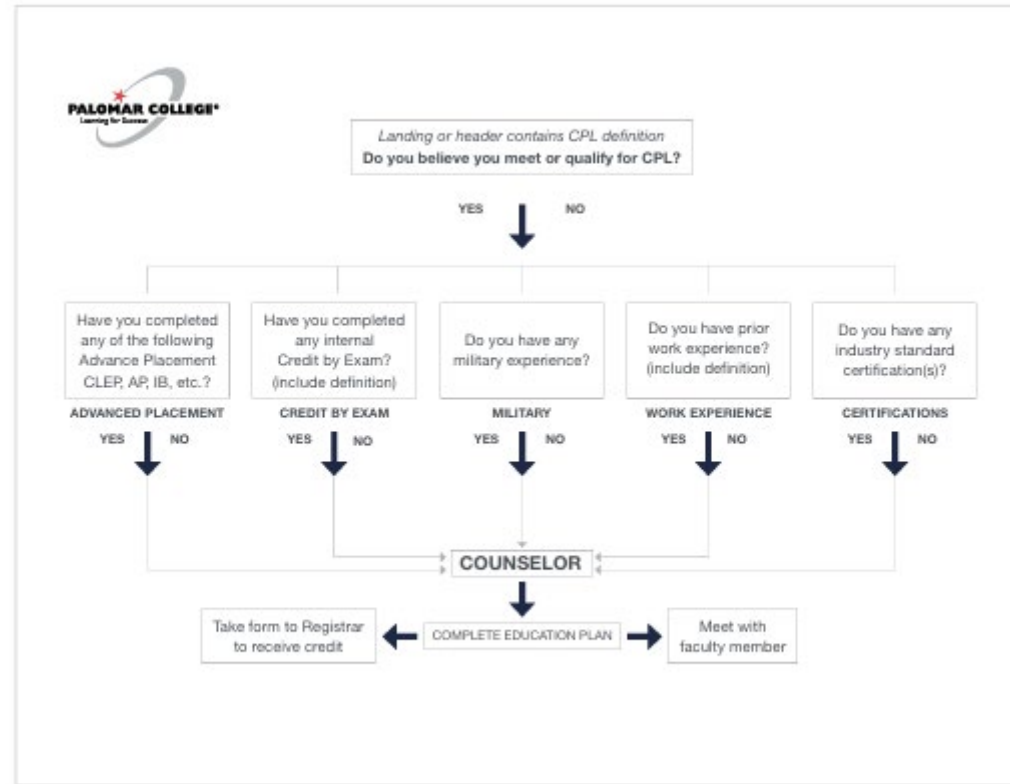
Credit by Exam



### Helpful Links

- [Testing Exams Offered](#)
- [Testing Center Procedures](#)
- [Testing Locations](#)
- [Academic Advisement](#)

# Process Guides



## American Council on Education: Maximizing Credit for Prior Learning in a Data-Informed Ecosystem

Institutional Functions	New/Emerging Stage	Developing Stage	Effective Practice Stage
	<i>Has a basic understanding of prior learning with demonstrated institutional interest</i>	<i>Begins to deepen understanding of prior learning across the institution and develops standard policies, practices, and procedures</i>	<i>Has broad and deep understanding of prior learning and acknowledges its role in equity and postsecondary pathways; sustains systematic and accessible CPL practices</i>
<b>Academic Engagement</b>	Determination of prior learning credit by pockets of faculty; grants credit awards on an ad hoc basis in response to requests	Provides professional opportunities for faculty and staff, including conferences and research; encourages faculty to include CPL activities in annual reviews; implements other incentives	Supports prior learning across institution; actively involves faculty in crafting policy and practice, such as crosswalks and articulations; creates venues for information sharing across the institution; invests in automation for standardized tasks (e.g., credit awards for known experiences) to optimize human resources for new assessments
<b>Student Support and Outreach</b>	Accepts prior learning on ad hoc basis in response to requests; CPL options are not yet fully transparent or well coordinated across institution	Shares CPL policies and options on website and through orientations and advising	Informs students of prior learning options before admission; uses all types of communication tools to share information with students; provides transparent and up-front guarantees of credit awards for prior learning; proactively grants CPL credit awards
<b>Institutional Supports</b>	Identifies policies, processes, practices, and governance structures that will help meet institution's CPL goals	Establishes policies and practices; puts people, resources, and structures into place to manage programs	Executes new, data-informed policies and refines practices in a continuous improvement process; shares best practices and benchmark data with peers; engages effectively with ecosystem partners; supports CPL for student success
<b>Technical Capacity/Data</b>	Collects best practices on how to manage CPL data but may not fully integrate CPL data and processes in SIS platforms	Records, tracks, and collects data related to CPL credit awards systematically; consistently tracks equivalency decisions; expects technical proficiency in roles and responsibilities	Manages, tracks, and shares CPL data internally and externally for maximum transparency; uses historic data to make proactive CPL awards; automates standardized tasks (e.g., credit awards for known experiences); provides ongoing training to encourage technical proficiency
<b>Ecosystem Engagement</b>	Researches and identifies best practices for partnerships with state-level entities, workforce boards, employers, other institutions, or credential providers; initiates and sets foundation for relationships with partners	Establishes a regular meeting cadence with ecosystem partners to share data, understand needs or requirements, and remove barriers to collaboration	Maintains tight alignment and collaboration between partners that supports direct-hire pipelines, custom training, and upskilling options for learners

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# NCCCS Data

Row Labels	Count of My college has, in place, the following:
A marketing or enrollment plan that includes CPL	5
A CPL procedure manual	25
A CPL steering or advisory committee	10
A CPL-specific website	14
A dedicated CPL faculty or staff member	10
An office dedicated to CPL	4

# NCCCS Commitment and Resources

- A full-time staff member
- Systemwide coordination of trainings and access to additional resources
- Data collection
- Minimum acceptance recommendations
- A CPL Advisory Committee to explore policy, marketing/recruitment, data, and more
- Web page and online information exchange



Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) is a process by which students can earn college-level, academic credit for past knowledge and experiential skills, and competencies that students have obtained because of on-the-job training, the awarding of a certificate or license, military service, or other life experiences. It is an alternative way for students to be awarded credits towards their credential completion.

A screenshot of the openNCCC website's 'Credit for Prior Learning' group page. The page features a blue header with navigation links: Discover, Hubs, Groups, and Learn More. A circular logo with a circuit-like design and the text 'CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING' is prominent. The main content area includes the group title, a description of the group's purpose, and statistics: 42 members and 3 affiliated resources. There are two buttons: 'Contribute to this Group' and 'Leave this group'. A 'Manage Group' link is visible at the bottom.



# Check List



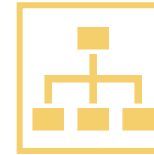
Receptive and willing institutional culture



Leadership Support and Buy In



Faculty Engagement



Staff/Administrative Knowledge Base



Technology and Research Support



Policy and Procedures



Student-focused processes



Timely and accessible online information

## In Summary:

The future of higher education will require greater alignment between learning and the workplace, a sharper focus on addressing issues of equity and inclusion, and effective strategies to customize learning for student needs. Each of these characteristics will be supported by tools and strategies that recognize and value learning regardless of how or where that learning is acquired.

Recognition of learning will need to be more efficient, effective, and equitable – and will need to leverage technology in new ways.

Key considerations will be how to change institutional culture to be more supportive of these changes; how postsecondary and workforce can align learning expectations; how postsecondary funding models can support flexible and less transactional forms of learning recognition; and how workforce and higher education data systems and funding streams can be more integrated.

## What's Next

- National Recognized Exam Inventory
- CPL Advisory Committee
- Virtual Training Events
  - Wednesday, April 16 from 2pm - 3pm - CPL 101, The Basics of Prior Learning
  - Thursday, May 1 from 1pm - 2pm - Understanding CPL-related State Board Code and Curriculum Guidelines
  - Tuesday, May 6 from 12pm – 1pm - Designing a CPL website
  - RSVP at <https://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/credit-for-prior-learning/>, under Resources for Colleges/Upcoming Events and Trainings

# Questions and Thanks!

**Dr. Seth Marc Kamen**

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Is your campus prepared to maximize the Credit for Prior Learning experience?

**Presentation Description (100-150 words)**

Offering and leveraging Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) is essential for enrolling and retaining all students. But standing up and using a CPL program is not a siloed experience. It involves offices and people from across the college and the community. This session explores how you can conduct an inventory of your campus climate, policies and practices to assess your readiness to offer or expand your CPL program. Pulling from national best practices and successful institutional-models, attendees will walk through various policy and procedural steps from the student, faculty and institutional journey to determine where there may be roadblocks or opportunities. Additionally, the session will review NCCCS's commitment to CPL and provide an introduction to the new resources available to assist the community colleges. Faculty and staff who work in academics, student success, and enrollment management are encouraged to attend.