

Military Prior Learning Assessment (MPLA) Task Force  
Meeting of June 1, 2016  
1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Illinois Board of Higher Education  
1 N. Old State Capitol Plaza  
Suite 333  
Springfield, Illinois 62701-1377

1. Welcome and review of March 30, 2016 meeting notes  
Task Force Chair welcomed the members of the MPLA Task Force for the start of the meeting.

Members Present:

Dan Wellman, Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs  
Charlotte Warren, Lincoln Land Community College  
Amy Sherman, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning  
Kim Eck, Illinois Student Assistance Commission  
Jess Ray, Illinois State University  
Jeff Newell, Illinois Community College Board  
Cynthia Rathunde, City Colleges of Chicago  
Arthur Sutton, Task Force Chair, IBHE

Members attending by teleconference:

Walter Pearson, Loyola University  
Meegan Dugan Bassett, Lumina Foundation  
Alli Bell, HCM Strategies

Illinois Board of Higher Education Staff present:

James Applegate, Executive Director  
Dan Cullen, Deputy Director for Academic Affairs  
Amanda Winters, Assistant Director for Academic Affairs

2. The meeting notes from the March 30, 2016 meeting were read and discussed. It was recommended the following changes/additions to the notes be made:

Fueling the Study Results:

Students with PLA were more likely to persist and complete compared to their non-PLA counterparts.

Faculty involvement and work to have a deeper understanding alternative credit options

On-line Military guide –tool

Planning additional webinar in summer

Under Discussion Senate Bill 2960, add the following:

Discuss concerns over unfunded mandates.

Recommended that PLA subject-matter experts have the bill vetted before filing.

The meeting notes were accepted as amended.

### 3. Presentations

Discussion on PLA History and Overview:

There was discussion on the impact and importance of PLA and which students more likely to complete

Amy is going to take a look at the History section and see if there is anything she can add regarding impact of PLA. She will contact her colleagues at ACE to see if they have suggestions.

Do we know how many veterans actually use these PLA?

Jeff: The DOD does publishes the numbers for DANTEs as well as the number of requests for military transcripts issued. Jeff and Amy will work on getting this information.

Discussion on the definition of PLA:

Alli presented the History and Definition of the PLA draft and discussed the various points within the document. She said there no real definition of PLA but everyone (CAEL, ACE, most institutions) recognizes PLA is recommended assessment of learning that has happened outside of a formal learning environment. There are a number of different PLA methods including the exams you are familiar with: DANTEs, CLEP, individual exams that are designed by different institutions as forms of PLA. A lot of institutions do portfolio assessments and those look different depending on institution. A lot of places consider the GRE Subject Exam, the AP and IB exams as forms of PLA as well. It is really broad; a lot of different things that can be under this umbrella.

Amy said that AP and IB and even GRE Subject Exam is often a controversial discussion whether we consider that PLA or not. The first part of that document in terms of a definition quoted CAEL, is from "Fueling the Race." One thing that is missing from the document is self-start.

Self-study is something we should mention if we are going to talk about the various sources.

Alli reviewed the remainder of the document and asked if there were any comments on the draft.

Amy said that she believed a paragraph should be added that addressed GI benefits if we are going to talk about federal financial aid because it does cover things such as national tests, CLEP, and also even learning accounts assessment is covered as a national task.

Further discussion followed regarding the History and definition of PLA.

In addition there is a growing trend of evaluating and comparing PLA practices.

Need a subsection in the Definition Section.

Amy: Our group will schedule a phone call to discuss this.

Alli: "The first question I heard was: what is the difference between PLA and military PLA? There was some discussion for the need to make a distinction. The first draft was written focused on PLA generally knowing there would be discussion of what this as specifically needed.

Amy: Need to add what the JST, CCAF, military benefits.

It was recommended that the two groups need to review this document and send recommendations to Meeghan to present at the August meeting.

### Business Process Improvement.

Jess – we had an opportunity to meet and discuss the draft you have. We are trying to think the best way to make recommendations. One was calling out the college credit for heroes.

Jess – One of the things not in here – don't know if you are familiar with Victory Media –they have a website that lists GI jobs and publications. They just did a Webinar last week. They are going to raise the bar on us and look at some additional criteria. One of the things I caught in that Webinar is they are

really pushing the spouse policy. That's a way of success. I don't know if that fits inside of what we are doing. They really highlighted what makes things work and don't work. They are really pushing the positive outcomes. Those tend to be in the areas of tutoring, study skills, mentoring and peer mentoring, financial aid counseling, employment, career planning. They spent some time saying that Mentoring and peer mentoring was something where they are changing their definitions and they are giving goal standards. There are a lot of practices are out there. They said a lot of the things we do with the institutions aren't really in the best interest of the student because they start to rely on us rather than self-reliance. I'm not sure how that fits inside this framework.

Questions about list itself -

Jess mentioned that Janet, who could not be here, did share some recommendations on edits: the recommendation to have 2 staff members. She said that is a little restrictive and to reduce the stipulation number.

Arthur: Is there a distinction as to what happens at the universities vs. community college and other institutions?

Jess: There is very little difference and they are pretty much doing the same thing.

The challenge is when you go to another institution; whether you go from a four- to a four-year or a two- to a four-year – the problem is the client is getting a different recommendation based on the rules of where they are going.

Amy – Before we make recommendations, we need to have our own definitions. Fees –posted and clear - any recommendations regarding transparency – military-specific.

Worth looking at states that have verbiage around this.

Do we want to have recommendations around fees? The transcript? Transparency?

Jess: When you talk about fees, are you talking about fees specific to the processing the ACE recommendations on the JST, or the community college, or do I need to take a proficiency exam? Are we talking about PLA or military-specific?

Amy: My recommendation is fees should be posted, very clear and advanced. I don't they should ever be the same as courses. I think I would talk about military-specific. We need some general guidelines about fees.

The biggest thing is the transparency of the policies. It's not just having the policy but communicating it. If you don't what's the point of having it.?

Does IBG cover PLA in any way? Does it cover anything?

James Applegate – Maybe you need a paragraph stating the issues that are undermining veterans' ability to complete college credit. Reinstating state funding for veterans. This came up when talking about assessment at corporations and their reimbursement policies. Because there are corporations who have tuition reimbursement policies, but did not include fees for prior military assessment in their policy which was really, from a business standpoint, stupid because they would want to pay a fee to get 9 credits for their employees rather than pay full tuition for 3 courses. That was the issue there.

Part of Illinois' efforts to be veteran-friendly, veteran focused and focus of this report on military credit and streamlining the idea of insuring proficiency exams could be included.

Jess will review recommendations and edit based on discussion. Will send to Arthur and he will send out to all.

Clarify that these are recommendations so they do not become a mandate.

In terms of military training, is there any intent of additional funding and support to colleges or is it just do it on your own.

There were some efforts to get some grant funding and we weren't able to get.

Three-year grant. Amanda has been working with Ashley on the RFP. Planning is ongoing. There some limited funds.

Recommendation – there is a need to support more training in understanding this. This kind of training is important to institute. Sustainable training.

Walter – look at what other states are doing.

Amy – picked out states that are doing good work. We want to know more than what is in the guide.

State policy procedures – on CAEL website.

Start with publication. Good model to look at and start with.

Amy – do you think that as a recommendation that there be some support for training and development similar to something else we can do a comparison?

James Applegate – the group needs to look at the publication and discuss at August meeting.

The committee agreed that they would love to hear from other states and their progress.

Amy – willing to talk with people in other states and ask that do presentation to share with us what they have done and their progress. Pick out schools (Texas, Washington State, Colorado) who are really doing good work. See how they have organized and what they have done.

Meeghan – Alli is prepared to come to the next meeting in person and do a presentation on best practices. At one point the committee had discussed what they would like to hear about from other states. We have a list of those and will let us know if you want us to do that.

Amy – what state would we like to hear from? Texas – It is interesting to see how they have organized and see what they have done. Washington has done really good work. It will be interesting to hear from them as well.

Amy – Meeghan and Alli – do you know of a state or set of states that fit the criteria of having made recommendations or better yet, mandated, have those policies that would form models

Meehan – Yes, I believe Alli does. The team had come up with a couple of questions. Specific states they would be interested in – Texas, Colorado, and Washington.

Amy – Willing to come up with a couple of possibilities and e-mail them out to committee. Will consult with Meehan and Alli. We can attach the updated state guide.

Arthur said the committees should schedule conference calls and continue working to put a draft together before the August 3, 2016 meeting.

James Applegate – As we think about moving forward with the recommendations, I want to hear from this group - communications plan. What would be some useful ways to disseminate, to engage stakeholder groups; who would they be and how would we engage them, around the work of this Task Force, particularly if you want to get them engaged ongoing.- Whatever groups should be involved, Presidents/CEO's and make recommendations to the Legislature.

Amy – Wanted to bring attention to the article in the New York Times where ACE was personally attacked. ACE is working on a response. She just wanted everyone to be aware of it.

Arthur thanked everyone for their participation and closed the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.