

Identifying Advocates, Allies and Adversaries in Pursuit of PLA

CAEL Conference 2018

Presentation by

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**10 individually accredited
colleges across Maricopa
County (Phoenix &
Surrounding Cities)**

Our Mission

The Maricopa Community Colleges provide access to higher education for diverse students and communities.

We focus on learning through:

- University Transfer Education
- General Education
- Developmental Education
- Workforce Development
- Student Development Services
- Continuing Education
- Community Education
- Civic Responsibility
- Global Engagement



Our Vision

A Community of Colleges...Colleges for the Community...working collectively and responsibly to meet the life-long learning needs of our diverse students and communities.

IN 2015-2016:

Approximately

200,000

Credit and non-credit students

IN

800+

degree and certificate programs

RESULTING IN

27,908

degrees and certificates awarded



PimaCommunityCollege

- ★ Multi-campus college district in Tucson, AZ (six campuses)
- ★ Enrollment - over 33,000 credit students
- ★ Over 140 credit degrees and certificates offered



Also offer:

Clock-hour certificates

Adult education

Non-credit community
education courses



Recently implemented PLA

AZTransfer



AZTransfer is Arizona's statewide system supporting successful transfer of credits and degree completion for students in all Arizona public postsecondary institutions.

- AZTransfer.com website
- Full-time staff, Steering Committee, AZ Board of Regents
- Articulation Task Forces
- Institutional Facilitators
- Course-by-course equivalencies
- Statewide General Education Block-Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC)

3 Public Universities:

Arizona State University
Northern Arizona University
University of Arizona

10 Community College Districts:

Arizona Western College
Central Arizona College
Cochise College
Coconino Community College
Eastern Arizona College
Maricopa Community Colleges
Mohave Community College
Northland Pioneer College
Pima Community College
Yavapai College

2 Tribal Colleges:

Dine' College
Tohono O'odham Community College

Why PLA?

Arizona as a Case Study

- By 2020, over 68% of AZ jobs will require some postsecondary education, 3% higher than the national average of 65% (Carnevale, A., Smith, N. & Strohl, J., 2013).
- Arizonans with a college degree will earn over \$830,000 more during their lifetimes than those with only a high school diploma (Daly, M. & Bengali, L., 2014).
- Among AZ residents of working age (ages 25-64), 64% have no college degree, 14% have less than a HS diploma, 24.4% have a high school diploma or equivalent, 25.6% have some college but no degree, 8.5% have an associate's degree, 17.3% have a bachelor degree, and 10.2% have a graduate or professional degree (American Community Survey, 2015).

Why PLA?

It Serves Today's Student

- Traditional student paradigm is shifting
- Postsecondary education experience is more diverse; average student age is increasing
- Traditional approaches (2+2 models, dual enrollment programs, & direct instruction) don't solve a nontraditional problem
- Both students and employers disillusioned with traditional higher education
- Dwindling number of traditional students; new market comprised of adult learners and employers, market driving needs, career preparation, and flexible formats
- Higher education needs to be more responsive, and agile to support the needs of changing learner demographics

Why PLA?

It's the Ethical Thing to do

- As higher education institutions, we have a unique mission to provide open access and affordable, quality education to all who desire to learn.
- Institutional recognition of PLA is critical to the development of an equitable higher education system.
- As student advocates and colleagues, we should openly discuss matters affecting PLA with an emphasis on collaboration for facilitating academic, credit, and learner mobility.
- It's a shared responsibility between and among all postsecondary institutions.
- It is important to remember who public community colleges and universities serve – the public! Access to higher education and degrees, for everyone, matters.



What it feels like...



Group Share

What made you a PLA “believer?”

Why do you advocate for PLA?

How has PLA benefitted students in your
institution/state?



Advocates and Allies in Pursuit of PLA:

WHO THEY ARE

Internal Stakeholders
with Shared Interests
and Goals

Peers

Non-profits

Industry and Corporate
Partners

Research Organizations
(e.g., EAB)

U.S. Department of
Education

advocacy
to change “what is”
into “what should be”

Advocates and Allies in Pursuit of PLA:

CHALLENGES



Are often seen as contrarian because of unconventional views

The diagram features a green header with the title. Below it, four horizontal bars with blue and white segments point towards a central grey box. The text 'Are often seen as contrarian because of unconventional views' is in the first white segment. The text 'Can experience pushback internally' is in the second white segment. The text 'Might struggle to devote time necessary to advocate for the cause and implementation of PLA' is in the third white segment. The central grey box contains the text 'May give up'.

Can experience pushback internally

Might struggle to devote time necessary to advocate for the cause and implementation of PLA

**May
give
up**

Advocates and Allies in Pursuit of PLA: ***STRATEGIES***

Define mission, goals, and benefits of an alliance

Define what value you bring to the table

Know your partners

Establish relationships

Leverage each other's progress, wins, and successes

Maintain independence to grow

Divide and conquer work leveraging strengths of each advocate

Faculty allies and advocates are critical

Example of PLA Allies/ Advocates: *Peer Institutions*

In 2017, the Consortium on Prior Learning Assessment (CPLA) was formed.

The consortium is a self-organized group that consist of representatives from Arizona's community college districts. The Council creates a statewide forum for college personnel and faculty to discuss shared interests and common issues concerning Prior Learning Assessment.

This collaborative alliance toward equity can contribute significantly to larger, collective efforts supporting certificate and degree attainment. Transfer access should be for all, regardless of where or how a student begins the path toward completion.

Example of a PLA Ally: ***Non-Profit Organization***

Achieve60AZ is an alliance of business, community, education, and philanthropic organizations formed last year in Arizona to increase the number of Arizonans earning a job certification or degree from 42 percent to 60 percent by 2030. Nationally, more than 30 states have set similar goals.



**Potential
PLA Ally/
Advocate:
*U.S.
Department
Of Education***

Students' inability to utilize PLA certainly bears cost implications, though the cumulative financial effects on students and the federal government are unknown.

The full impact of these policies both on students' lives, taxpayers' wallets, and even college/university enrollment may never be determined as few, if any, institutions collect or track data specific to non-transferable credits.

While it is in the federal government's interest to see that students who have earned credits with the assistance of financial aid at a Department of Education Title IV approved institution do not have to repeat coursework or prolong their time to completion, it is also - ultimately - in taxpayers' best interests as well.

Group Share

Who are your advocates and allies?

What successes have you had in
leveraging these alliances?



Adversaries in Pursuit of PLA:

WHO THEY ARE

"THERE IS NO
EDUCATION
LIKE
ADVERSITY."

- BENJAMIN DISRAELI

THE WICKED BOY

Internal Stakeholders

Traditional Higher
Education

"Seat Time" versus
"Competency Based"
Learning Advocates

Adversaries in Pursuit of PLA:

CHALLENGES

Skeptical of the quality of learning

Focus on learning method, not outcomes (WHO and WHERE instead of WHAT)

Comforted by status quo, fear of losing control

See PLA as competition

Often unfamiliar with what PLA is

**PLA
Potential
Unrealized**

Adversaries in Pursuit of PLA:

STRATEGIES

Building trust through transparency

Ensuring that prior learning assessment really fits the mission and organizational culture of an institution

Emphasis placed on assessment and verifiable college level learning

Implementation of a Faculty Driven Decisions and Engagement Model to gain faculty buy-in for PLA projects

Transform thinking - PLA evaluates WHAT the student has learned, not WHERE the student has learned it or from WHOM

Example of PLA Adversaries: *Partnering Universities*

In Arizona, two of the three state universities do not currently accept PLA credits except some military credit--mostly as electives--and national standardized exams (no challenge exams, portfolio assessment, departmental “challenge” exams, industry certifications, for example).

Statewide policies preclude using courses in the AZ General Education Curriculum (AGEC) certificate that do not transfer to all three state universities. This prevents community colleges from applying PLA to the AGEC. Universities have greater institutional authority to evaluate learning than the community colleges.

Discussions are occurring at the AZ Transfer Steering Committee, but there is resistance.

Group Share

Who are your adversaries?

What challenges have you encountered?

What opportunities do you have to transform
adversaries into allies and advocates?



Conclusion and Questions

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

