



# 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**



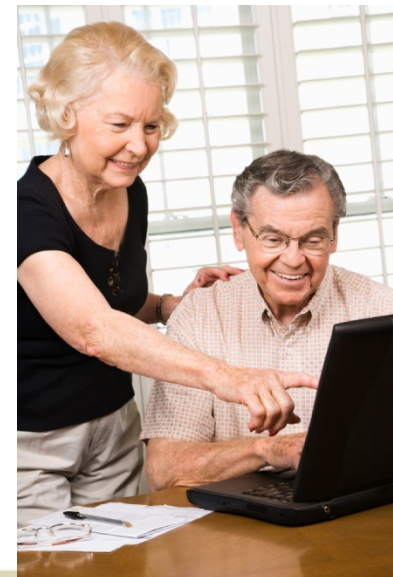
## Prior Learning Assessment at Thomas Edison State College

- **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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