**Adult Student Support Recommendations**

Executive Summary

In early 2019, the Adult Initiatives Committee reviewed data from the newly completed CAEL Adult Learner 360 assessment report, compared it to the 2016 CAEL Adult Learning Focused Institution (ALFI) report, and identified several priority areas to improve services and support for adult learners. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) was one of the most critical areas identified to benefit adult learners financially and improve their persistence and graduation rates, together with the need to provide adult-student specific support structures.

Based on the Adult Initiatives Committee decision to target the PLA process across campus as a key concern for adult student enrollment and success, a PLA subcommittee was formed to review the current policy and provide recommendations based on research, outreach, and interviews. In the process of developing recommendations about PLA, the committee formulated additional measures to improve the delivery of adult student support across campus, including strategic actions for becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). All recommendations were presented to the Adult Initiatives Committee and to the Provost, whose comments and recommendations have been incorporated and who support the recommendations contained in this proposal.

Based on the information collected by the Adult Initiatives Committee, the PLA Committee, and the Provost’s Office, we recommend the following:

* Establish a Center for Adult and Returning Students (CARS) to support pre-enrollment and enrolled students and serve as a source of information about adult students for faculty and staff
* Restructure the administration of the PLA Portfolio class to a one-credit course housed in the Provost’s Office and administered through the Center for Adult and Returning Students.
* Optimize the University website to ensure that relevant information for adult students is easy to find and navigate, including developing a CARS webpage.
* Train Staff in relevant offices (Admissions, Advising, Veteran’s Services, Financial Aid) to raise awareness of PLA options and train Faculty to make syllabi PLA-friendly and to serve as PLA reviewers.

These recommendations, singly and collectively, will address the longstanding need for better adult student contact with wrap-around support services. The structure of adult serving programs and the business models to sustain adult-focused programming were identified by the Chronicle of Higher Education Adult Student Report of 2018 as typical and crucial challenges faced by institutions developing strategies to cater to adult student populations. At UW – Parkside, centralizing contact for adult students is a low-cost way to provide a streamlined pathway to enrollment that can contribute to improved adult enrollment and help adult students find information about and apply for Prior Learning Credit (PLC), a significant factor for adult student persistence that can significantly improve graduation rates. Being intentional about serving adult learners provides a service to the local business and corporate community and can fuel economic development in the region and for the University.

**Background**

Nationally, adults make up about 27 percent of the seventeen million student population at the undergraduate level—4,590,000 students—with another 3,000,000 adult students enrolled in graduate and professional programs.[[1]](#footnote-2) Another 35 million people—21 percent of the adult population—have some college credit, but have not yet earned their degrees.[[2]](#footnote-3) In 2016, 143,000 adults over the age of 25 in Kenosha, Racine, and Lake Counties had completed some college credits but not yet earned their degrees[[3]](#footnote-4); as of 2019, at least 11,000 adult residents of Racine had some college credit and no degree.[[4]](#footnote-5) Despite these numbers, adult student enrollment at UW – Parkside has been declining steadily, in direct correlation with economic recovery following the Great Recession of 2008. However, in order to meet the anticipated educational needs of Kenosha, Racine, and southeast Wisconsin more broadly, including the anticipated arrival of FoxConn, many will need to earn degrees; 92% of current online job postings in the region require a Bachelor’s degree, in addition to other skills and certifications.[[5]](#footnote-6)

The Adult Initiatives Committee (Crista Kruse, Neil Baumgartner, Lisa Giampaolo, Denise Olstinske, John Skalbeck, Stacy Tinholt,) was created on September 17, 2015, to review UW – Parkside’s policies and performance serving adult students in the face of decreasing adult student enrollment and persistence. The Adult Initiatives Committee participated in CAEL’s ALFI self-assessment survey in 2016, which included data from current adult students and from faculty and staff across the institution. The ALFI results point explicitly to the need for better support structures for adult students, highlighting Prior Learning Assessment, which ranked as an entry point for improving additional adult student services. Other priority areas included academic planning, course structuring and scheduling, structure/coaching, and adult friendly programs and modalities.

The Adult Initiatives committee continued to work with CAEL, applying for and receiving a grant in 2017 to develop as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), the first step of which was completing the Adult Learner 360 Study in 2018. Like the ALFI survey, the Adult Learner 360 study included data from current adult students, both Hispanic and non-Hispanic, as well as faculty and staff, and compiling results comparing student and institution perception of UW – Parkside’s performance for adult students. Survey results suggest that, while Parkside is able to accommodate adult learners once they are in the classroom, sufficient support structures for adult students remain lacking, particularly in the areas of Life and Career Planning, Strategic Partnerships, and Financing.

Specifically, within the Life and Career Planning category, granting credit for Prior Learning was a particular issue: 75% of student respondents and 66% of Institutional respondents recognized its importance, but only 31% of students rate their satisfaction with PLA opportunities as “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied,” while 50% of faculty and staff ranked the quality of the school’s performance as “poor” or “mediocre.”[[6]](#footnote-7) Similar responses and response gaps were illuminated in response to other questions about life and career planning, in line with the ALFI survey.[[7]](#footnote-8) The report also revealed that granting credit for prior learning resulted in two to eight times the completion rate among adult students and that Prior Learning Credit was found particularly beneficial for Hispanic students. [[8]](#footnote-9)

In the time between the surveys, the need for improved adult student support services had not been significantly addressed, particularly the need for Prior Learning Assessment, and adult student enrollment continued to decline. In response to the surveys and the 2017-2020 Academic Plan, an Adult Student Enrollment Counselor, Stacy Tinholt, was hired in 2018 to provide an adult-focused resource to help potential students understand the pathways and steps to earn a degree in advance, before they even enroll, and to help them begin to outline the coursework to get to graduation, rather than leaving space in their schedules for academic exploration, a clear benefit to adult students who prefer goal-oriented education plans.[[9]](#footnote-10)

In order to address the on-going concern around improving the ability to offer credit for prior learning, the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Committee (Crista Kruse, Theresa Castor, Ginger Emery, Lisa Giampaolo, Denise Olstinske, Stacy Tinholt, Gary Wood) was formed on February 19, 2019, to review and offer recommendations to improve the performance of granting Prior Learning Credit (PLC) at UW – Parkside. The committee has reviewed the school’s current PLA policy—which includes PLA Portfolio, Challenge Exams, military training and service, proficiency exams like AP, IB, CLEP, and Dantes, and language testing—the presentation of that policy on the website, surveyed department chairs and directors of programs about PLA in their units, and met with the Deans and faculty of each college to investigate the internal familiarity with PLA and the process of granting credit for prior learning. These investigations revealed that PLA is not well advertised and that knowledge about it amongst faculty is spotty across campus.[[10]](#footnote-11) Five of fourteen departments that responded to the PLA Committee’s survey offer PLA credit in some form, largely Challenge and Proficiency exams; two (Communications and Education) departments offer PLA Portfolio credit, though only five students have taken advantage of PLA Portfolio credit in the last five years, none through the school’s current PLA Portfolio class (LBST 108).

In addition, members of the committee have reached out to other UW System schools, specifically UW – Oshkosh, which instituted a seven-week, one-credit, online PLA Portfolio development class this past academic year, and UW – Whitewater, which has a long-standing fifteen week, 1.5-4.5 credit, online portfolio class offered annually in Spring Semester.[[11]](#footnote-12) Tracy Robinson from the University of Memphis also shared details about how her campus and the whole Tennessee system has optimized granting credit for prior learning. Based on the results of this internal and external research, the committee made recommendations for improving the accessibility and administration of PLA, especially PLC granted by portfolio review and enhancing faculty awareness of and support for Prior Learning Credit, to the Adult Initiatives Committee, which approved them and forwarded them to the Provost’s Office, which also supported them.

**Recommendations**

The Adult Initiatives Committee, the PLA Committee, and the Provost’s Office recognize that adult students are not receiving support enough currently to attract them to and keep them enrolled at Parkside and that the school needs to organize intentional efforts to recruit and retain adult students to fulfill the school’s educational mission and to preserve its financial solvency. In order to meet the critical need to provide mechanisms better to support adult students by improving their ability to connect with academic planning and advising, career advising, financial aid, and community partners, we offer the follow recommendations:

* Create a Center for Adult and Returning Students (CARS) to serve as a hub for both prospective and enrolled adult students.
* Staff the Center for Adult and Returning Students with the position to support adult pre-enrollment counselling and a new position to support PLA in all forms, instruct a PLA Portfolio Development class, and review other adult-focused programming, such as Certificates, online programs, and degree completion programs.
* Update and help maintain the webpages relevant for adult students and ensure that the Center for Adult and Returning Students has a highly searchable, easy to find and navigate web presence that is regularly reviewed and updated.
* Task the Center for Adult and Returning Students with providing training for faculty and staff regarding PLA and other adult-needs related programming, strategies, and support, as well as collecting data on the adult student experience.

These measures will centralize the contact point for adult students, providing a one-stop-shop to help connect them with resources across campus in order to address the long-standing need for improved Admissions, Advising, Financial Aid, and Veteran support for adult students, while also providing faculty and staff a source of information for questions and issues surrounding adult students and adult-student specific needs that can help departments and colleges build adult-friendly programs that boost enrollment.

* Center for Adult and Returning Students (CARS)

A Center for Adult and Returning Students will serve as a central location for information and support for adult students, as proposed in UW – Parkside’s Academic Plan (Section C, Initiative 2, “Integrated, One-Stop Center for Adults,” p. 33), expediting their time to enrollment and providing post-enrollment support services. Such a Center will provide a highly visible location to house PLA support services, especially the PLA Portfolio development class, and a platform from which to raise awareness of PLA amongst faculty and staff. In addition to pre-enrollment counselling and assistance with predictive scheduling and PLA, a Center for Adult and Returning Students will connect adult students with support services demonstrated to improve their enrollment numbers and persistence to degree, concentrating information about and access to Financial Aid, Career Services, Veterans Services, and other support resources.[[12]](#footnote-13)

The Center for Adult and Returning Students should be located in the Continuing Education Department as a unit with an established mission of serving adult learners and experience with adult learner needs. The Center will act as a prime location to facilitate adult students’ contact with additional wrap-around services indicated as wanting by the CAEL Adult Learner 360 Report, including Financing and Life and Career Planning. Initially, the Center for Adult and Returning Students will be staffed by the individual teaching the PLA Portfolio course and the Adult Enrollment Counselor, who will co-report to the Director of Continuing Education, establishing a direct line of reporting to the Provost’s Office.

The primary function of the Center initially will be to offer students a single source of information about the opportunity of starting or returning to school and a centralized point of contact for PLA application and support, offering a high touchpoint support system for the school’s adult student population. As an information hub, the Center will help pre-admission students navigate the institutional process of applying for admission and financial aid, transferring credits, and connecting with Career Services and Veteran Services, when appropriate, easing the path to enrollment in a way that can quickly adapt as community educational needs change. Creating a funnel to connect incoming adult students immediately with the full range of wrap-around support services will explicitly address students’ frustration with gaps in institutional support to connect their education to their life and career goals revealed by the CAEL Adult Learner 360 Report. As a PLA hub, the Center will help admitted students navigate the institutional process of applying for Prior Learning Assessment, with a particular focus on offering support for compiling and submitting PLA Portfolios and arranging for Challenge Exams, but supporting other forms of PLA as well. Developing a centralized hub for these purposes will help the institution address gaps in services long indicated by adult students as needed and will benefit faculty by boosting student enrollment and serving as a mediator between faculty and students interested in PLA.

Position Descriptions for both the Adult Enrollment Counselor and the new PLA support and adult-programming specialist are attached to this report as Appendix A. We understand that the staffing needs of the Center for Adult and Returning Students will change as the Center develops, and, thus, suggest that the positions associated with the Center and their job descriptions be re-evaluated as needed, best to meet the needs of adult students on campus.

A timeline for the Center’s initial development, including the immediate steps to be taken by the start of the 2019-2020 academic year, are included below as Appendix B.

* PLA Portfolio Course

Regarding the PLA application process, the highest priority based on the PLA Committee’s survey and research is ensuring that PLA Portfolio Review is emphasized as an underused tool for granting Prior Learning Credit, which includes restructuring the support offered for compiling a PLA Portfolio.

The Adult Initiatives Committee and the Provost’s Office enthusiastically support the PLA Committee’s recommendation to revise the current three-credit Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Development Course (LBST 108) into a one-credit, fifteen-week PLA Portfolio Development course to be approved as an online and in-person course, offered first online and coded as a UWP course. The PLA Portfolio Development course would be offered both Fall and Spring semesters to maximize students’ opportunity for producing a portfolio via the course, though the course would not be a requirement for submitting a PLA portfolio. Such a structure provides notable advantages for students, faculty, and the institution by creating an established process for students and faculty to work together to reward prior learning, which in turn helps the institution in its education mission by offering an incentive to adult students to enroll and minimizing their time to graduation.

Formalizing and simplifying the process to apply for PLA credit via a portfolio creates an explicit, accessible pathway for adult students to have relevant experience recognized by the institution. A one-credit, online course structure permits students to acquire credit for the intensive process of assembling a portfolio, whether the portfolio is successful or not, but keeps their cost low and, therefore, optimizes their opportunity for Prior Learning Credit. Through the process of portfolio completion, students gain a better understanding of course requirements and learning outcomes and evaluate for themselves whether their experience coordinates with those requirements, which creates mutual understanding between students and faculty if portfolio review is unsuccessful. Initially unsuccessful portfolios are also positioned for remedial action, depending on faculty opinion, where students work with faculty to address information gaps to earn course credit.

A one-credit, online PLA portfolio provides students guidance and mentoring to assemble their portfolio and allows faculty to focus on PLA portfolio review as its own, self-contained endeavor, rather than an extra-instructional responsibility. Having a dedicated PLA portfolio instructor simplifies the application process for students, who have a single contact for the course, and also eases the PLA review process for faculty, who can work with the PLA instructor to lay out their expectations and who then have a single point of contact for questions in the process of accessing the portfolio. Faculty retain control over determining whether credit should be granted for courses they teach.

Faculty should be offered a stipend for their time and effort to review portfolios; other UW campuses currently offer a stipend of $75.00 per portfolio review, and we suggest budgeting for a $100.00 stipend within two years of the course’s implementation to add incentive for faculty to participate in the review process.

Because the PLA Portfolio Course will interact with all colleges at UW – Parkside, it will be housed in the Provost’s Office, as a program that supersedes disciplinary boundaries and College divisions. The Provost can assign the administration of the course to the administrative unit at the University who seems best able to advertise and administer it, and the Vice Provost of Academic Affairs can serve in place of a Dean as needed.

The PLA Committee proposes Continuing Education as a logical choice for administering the PLA Portfolio course, given the adult-focus of their mission and their established marketing and administrative structure, a proposal with which the Adult Initiatives Committee and Provost’s Office agree. Alternatives include housing the PLA Portfolio Course in the College of Arts and Humanities as a component of the Liberal Studies program, where it is currently located as a part of their degree-completion program and, therefore, a location where adult students are already concentrated and likely to be looking for such a credit-granting opportunity; however, in this location, no student has enrolled for the PLA Portfolio course in the last three years. Similarly, the College of Business, Economics, and Computing could house the PLA Portfolio course as a college likely to have many students applying for PLA credit via other methods, such as challenge exams. Housing the PLA Portfolio course in either CAH or CBEC risks pitching the course to majors in that College, giving the impression that the course is not open to those in other colleges, whereas the Provost’s Office and Continuing Education are college-neutral locations.

* Website

The Center for Adult and Returning Students will need a dedicated webpage on UW – Parkside’s website. This webpage will consolidate information needed by prospective and enrolled adult students, linking to relevant offices and resources and providing clear contact information for Center staff.

In addition, the Prior Learning Credit page of UW – Parkside’s website is out-of-date and disconnected from other pages targeted at adult learners. The PLC webpage needs to be connected to the page for Adult Education and to the Admissions, Veteran Services, and Financial Aid pages to create an interconnected information loop for prospective adult students. Given the propensity for webpages to become quickly outdated, the PLC webpage needs to be made as static as possible, eliminating dates and updating contact information; the current page lists dates in 2017 and contact information for employees no longer with the University.

Finally, the pages for adult students were not included in the first wave of website Search Engine Optimization (SEO) done by the Marketing Department and many remain un-optimized. Prioritizing SEO for all pages relevant to adult students will ensure that the information most needed by prospective and enrolled adult students is easy to find at the top of search lists. Stacy Tinholt, the Adult Student Enrollment Counselor, has already begun communicating with the Marketing Department to work on these changes and should continue that cooperation until the website is updated by Fall 2019, then check in with them as needed to update the Center’s webpage, its various access points, and information for adult student information across the school’s website.

* PLA Training for Faculty and Staff

The Center for Adult and Returning Students will provide training about Prior Learning Assessment to boost internal awareness of PLA and its benefits for departments and the institution. This training will include offering classes for Faculty to learn how to assess PLA Portfolios, how to design PLA-friendly syllabi, and how to design and offer Challenge Exams, and opportunities for staff in Admissions, Advising, Career Services, Veteran Services, and Financial Aid to learn more about what PLA is, how it impacts adult students success rates, and how those offices can support PLA efforts.

Past opportunities for faculty PLA training, such as the Prior Learning Assessor workshop offered in the Summer of 2017, were well attended and resulted in a noticeable uptick of portfolio reviews; specifically, the Communications Department, with two of the twelve workshop participants, has proven to be the department most successfully able to award PLC by portfolio since. Based on past performance, this training needs to be available consistently to help faculty understand what the PLA portfolio compilation and review process entails and to provide assistance for faculty members wanting to develop materials and resources for courses that are appropriate for PLA, both portfolio review and challenge exams. Faculty training of this type will help the Center for Adult and Returning Students advise students on the classes that are conductive for PLA. Depending on demand, we suggest developing Winterim and Summer workshops with a stipend for interested faculty.

**Budget**

Salaries and Stipends

Adult Student Enrollment Counselor $ 48,318.00

Adult Student Program Manager $ 53,000.00

Faculty Assessor Stipends ($100.00 for each PLA Portfolio reviewed) $ 1,000.00

Faculty Workshop Training Stipends (2 workshops \* 10 faculty \* $250) $ 5,000.00

Marketing

Multi-platform $ 7,000.00

Training

CAEL on-campus training $ 10,000.00[[13]](#footnote-14)

CAEL training for Center Staff $ 6,000.00

**Current Budget Requests**

Salaries and Stipends

Adult Student Program Manager $ 53,000.00

Faculty Assessor Stipends ($100.00 for each PLA Portfolio reviewed) $ 1,000.00

Faculty Workshop Training Stipends (2 workshops \* 10 faculty \* $250) $ 5,000.00

Marketing

Multi-platform (additional marketing support through CE and Provost) $ 7,000.00

Training

CAEL on-campus training $ 10,000.00[[14]](#footnote-15)

**Appendix A: CARS Position Descriptions**

**Adult Student Enrollment Counselor**

**Position Summary**

University of Wisconsin –Parkside Continuing Education (CE) is committed to Inclusive Excellence through collaborative and sustainable partnerships with faculty, staff, students and the greater community. At UWP, we encourage a supportive, diverse and collaborative environment in which we learn from each other through informed and open communication, institutional practices and community outreach. UWP provides quality, relevant education that includes over 100 undergraduate, graduate and certificate programs, and a growing number of online degree-completion programs. It is a goal CE to create a centralized point of contact for adult learners that provides support from recruitment to career.

The Degree Completion Enrollment Counselor is a new position and will be responsible for proactively following up on leads generated through marketing campaigns, using various channels to recruit students to degree-completion and certificate programs such as Business, Health Information Management and Technology, Sociology, and Sustainable Management programs. This person will be the central point of contact for adult students interested in degree completion programs and is responsible for developing and advancing student relationships and assisting them through admissions and orientation and to first enrollment.

The primary audiences are prospective students with some college or associate’s degrees seeking online learning and the work is largely performed using the University’s customer relationship management tools, and other software platforms. This position will be located within CE office at UWP and report directly to the CE Director. This role requires the ability to work a flexible schedule, some evenings and an occasional weekend to accommodate program demands. This position is not offered remotely.

This position is highly collaborative and will work closely with admissions and enrollment services, as well as the four academic college advisors/coaches. Performs other duties as assigned.

**Essential Duties and Responsibilities**

**Recruiting**

1. Provide excellent customer service to prospective students; respond to inquiries with accurate information about programs and execute seamless hand off to advising colleagues.
2. Plan and implement a wide range of recruitment activities such as making presentations, public speaking, exhibiting at various events and Business Expos.
3. Represent UW-Parkside at various recruitment related events as needed.
4. Maintain up-to-date knowledge in all adult serving and degree-completion programs, including Master’s Degree programs, and build relationships with appropriate college advisors overseeing assigned programs.
5. Complete unofficial transfer credit evaluations for prospective students seeking information about the online degree completion programs and other programming as it develops.
6. Work with CE Director and internal partners and lead the effort to continuously assess and improve the adult student recruitment through enrollment process for assigned programs.
7. Develop sustainable relationships with corporate partners, civic and community agencies, and other relevant groups.
8. Lead and participate on appropriate committees, collaborate with colleagues in marketing, admissions, advising, and student services to obtain up-to-date information for prospective students, and participate in regularly scheduled pre-advising meetings.
9. Work to improve the adult student experience by solving problems and engaging in the development of solutions independently and with campus partners.
10. Serve as a liaison for students between CE, Admissions, Financial Aid, Veteran Services and the Registrar’s office, as well as other designated University departments.
11. Use prescribed recruitment plan to contact and follow up with leads at various stages in the recruitment cycle and update student records accordingly.
12. Explain admission requirements and enrollment processes and procedures to interested students, review unofficial transcripts, and explore educational alternatives as needed including Prior Learning Assessment (PLA).
13. Maintain follow-up contacts and provide campus resource materials.
14. Coordinate with Marketing to maintain relevant website information.
15. Establish and maintain effective working relationships with the campus community, the public, agencies, and others.
16. Have full knowledge of transfer policies and the transferability of courses to the UW-Parkside individual majors, as well as have the ability to perform unofficial transfer credit evaluations.
17. Other duties as assigned.

**Administration**

1. Utilize the University’s Learning Management System (LMS) software to manage targeted recruitment strategies and on-going strategic communications with inquires, prospective students and applicants.
2. Maintain an up-to-date knowledge of programs, policies, procedures, and practices at UW-Parkside, within the UW System, and within the admission profession.

**Essential Knowledge And Abilities**

* Considerable knowledge of the recruitment techniques and practices.
* Ability to work with a diverse student population.
* Excellent oral and written communication skills.
* Ability to work independently.
* Proficiency in MS Office Suite (MS Word, Excel, Power Point and Outlook), and other business office software.
* Demonstrated ability using time management techniques and practices.
* Ability to participate in work groups; and coordinate, develop and implement projects.
* Ability to identify, analyze and resolve problems.
* Ability to plan, organize and prioritize multiple work assignments and projects.
* Ability to develop and maintain effective professional working relationships with individuals at all organizational levels both with the campus community and with external institutions, community leaders, agencies, and others.
* Ability to maintain confidentiality and understand FERPA requirements.
* Ability to maintain accurate and detailed records.
* Ability to relate well to both prospective and continuing students.
* Ability to work independently and with a team of colleagues.
* Ability to travel and have a valid driver’s license.
* Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing with students.
* Ability to perform work often under pressure to meet multiple customer service and operational demands while maintaining service standards.
* Physical ability to sit at a desk and/or operate a personal computer for about 2 hours at a time.
* Moderate amounts of walking, standing, and stair climbing; occasional lifting of up to 50 pounds.

**Qualifications**

**Education, Experience, Training And/or Certifications**

**Required**

* Bachelor’s degree.
* Three to Five years of professional experience in admissions, advising, or other related enrollment services.
* Demonstrated experience responding to the needs of students or customers.
* A record of success in managing and influencing multiple stakeholders—fostering cooperation, consensus and collaboration.
* Excellent critical thinking and problem solving skills.
* Excellent oral and written communication and customer service skills.
* Proficient in software applications such as Microsoft Office Suite.
* Previous experience utilizing a student information system software and/or customer relationship management software.

**Preferred**

* Master’s degree.
* Experience working with transfer, adult, and diverse student learners.
* Transcript evaluation experience.
* Demonstrated knowledge of the Adult recruitment life cycle and best practices.

**Adult Student Program Manager**

**Position Summary**

This is an adult-centered position supporting adult and non-traditional learner initiatives across campus by providing management and assessment of programs and courses designed to facilitate adult and returning student recruitment, retention, and career development. The selected candidate will report directly to the Continuing Education Director and is responsible for managing Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Portfolio and Challenge Exam efforts, developing and implementing faculty and staff training related to Prior Learning Assessment, and supporting, reviewing, and developing additional initiatives and programs targeted at adult and returning students. The selected candidate will possess broad-based skills in order to be adaptable and qualified as the programming and the position develops. This position serves as the primary internally-facing support for enrolled adult students seeking credit for prior and experiential learning and those interested in upskilling to become more marketable in the workplace.

The selected candidate will instruct the for-credit Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio course, including pre-registration student interviews, student-faculty mediation, and portfolio submission to faculty and, for successful portfolios, to the Registrar’s Office. The position will also assess and identify other opportunities for improving access and support for adult and non-traditional students and provide strategic recommendations to revise and expand adult-oriented programming. The position will serve as the primary contact for Prior Learning Assessment internally and as a representative for all adult learner efforts externally, with the local community and with other UW System campuses and offices. The ability to build relationships across disciplines and across organizational hierarchies is crucial, as is the ability to advise students and guide student work. This position will work in a team environment and use judgment and discretion while assuming office and program responsibilities.

**Responsibilities**

**Adult Student Support Program Management**

1. Supervise and manage Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) protocols for internally granted PLA credit, reviewing and recommending changes to protocol and policy as needed.
2. Review and approve student applications for Prior Learning Assessment by Portfolio and Challenge Exam.
3. Instruct Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio course, facilitating Portfolio preparation for evaluation of prior learning.
4. Implement and administer faculty training for PLA Portfolio review and course syllabus design/modification for PLA opportunities.
5. Design and deliver training about PLA and other opportunities for adult students for staff in Admissions, Advising, Career Services, Veteran Services, Financial Aid, and other offices.
6. Serve as central contact for students inquiring about PLA, Certificates, and other Career and Professional Development opportunities and serve as the key contact for faculty members who review PLA Portfolios and develop and assess Challenge Exams.
7. Monitor and assess PLA program success, identify opportunities for improvements and efficiencies, and recommend adjustments where warranted.
8. Analyze data about adult learners, PLA, and other topics, working with the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, the Colleges, and other interested parties, and prepare reports, as needed, including providing directional and policy recommendations for adult initiatives.
9. Review current Certificate, degree-completion, and adult-oriented programs and research program best-practices for the viability of these programs for non-degree and degree seeking students.
10. Work with Faculty, Staff, and Leadership to develop directional recommendations and set strategies for Certificate, degree-completion, and adult-oriented programs and implement recommendations to ensure flexible delivery options and access, as needed.
11. Monitor adult student admissions, enrollment, retention, engagement, progression, and other program and student success criteria in order to make data-driven decisions about development goals.
12. Collaborate in the development of the strategic plan for Center of Adult and Returning Students, in coordination with Center and departmental colleagues, Leadership, Faculty, and Staff.

**Stakeholder Engagement**

1. Work with Leadership, College Deans, Department Chairs, Program Directors, Faculty, and Staff for intra-institutional coordination and cooperation to benefit adult students.
2. Collaborate with colleagues to support adult learner recruitment and retention, providing assistance for degree-seeking adult students from pre-enrollment through graduation and non-degree students seeking Career and Professional Development.
3. Coordinate with Registrar’s Office to ensure PLA protocol appropriately applied and transcript credit granted when earned, including reviewing, developing, and revising protocols for awarding credit as needed.
4. Coordinate with Veteran’s Services to develop and implement veteran-friendly PLA policies and options and to optimize other adult student programming for veteran’s needs.
5. Chair and serve on committees and attend meetings, conferences, and events, as needed.
6. Promote Prior Learning Assessment within the institution and advocate for adult learners across campus.
7. Work with marketing to build awareness, create strategies, and market PLA and other adult-centered programming to the surrounding communities.
8. Coordinate activities benefitting adult students with other UW campuses, UW Extended Campus, and UW System, as needed.
9. Serve as program representative at public relations venues and in cross-system contexts. Engage in external outreach and maintain positive relationship with UW System and non-System partners.

**Financial Duties**

1. Work with Bursar’s Office and Business Services to ensure smooth operation of PLA programs.
2. Evaluate financial progress of programs, particularly, but not limited to, PLA faculty training initiatives.
3. Develop budgets for PLA Faculty training and other adult learner-oriented programming, as needed.
4. Coordinate with the Continuing Education Contract and Accounting Specialist to assemble and review budgetary information and submit it for approval.

**Essential Knowledge And Abilities**

Ability to translate thoughts and directives from several areas into a cohesive plan of action

Ability to coordinate the activities of multiple parties to achieve desired objectives

Ability to balance multiple priorities efficiently

Knowledge of adult learning principles

Knowledge of how to write measurable learning objectives

Knowledge of methods and techniques for evaluating levels of learning

Ability to implement new programming and to provide direction for new initiatives, including ability to shape strategic initiatives and ensure successful execution against agreed-on plans and objectives

Ability to communicate effectively with faculty, staff, students, and outside stakeholders

Ability to build positive working relationships with internal and external groups

Ability to anticipate needs to improve services and provide opportunities

Proficiency in web navigation and Microsoft Office programs and ability to learn new software

Strong oral communication skills

Writing, editing and proofreading skills

Strong organizational and problem-solving skills

Excellent time management skills

Ability to manage budget processes and procedures and to track financial performance

**Qualifications**

**Education, Experience, Training And/or Certifications**

Required

* Master’s degree from an accredited college or university
* Three years or greater experience working within an educational institution
* Demonstrated success at conducting research and performing needs assessments or market analysis to improve products or services
* Ability to travel

Preferred

* Terminal degree from an accredited institution
* Teaching experience, broadly construed
* Three years or greater experience in program development
* Experience with online instructional design

**Appendix B: Three-Year Timeline for CARS**

* Immediate Next Steps
  + Summer 2019
    - Deliver report on Adult Support Services Recommendations
    - Approve creation of Center for Adult and Returning Students (CARS) and its staffing
    - Approve position and hire internally-facing position for PLA and adult-oriented programming review and support
    - Review and report on schedule consistency of online General Education classes
    - Develop strategic three-year plan for CARS
    - Complete development of one-credit online PLA Portfolio Development Class and seek Course and Curriculum Committee approval of changes
* Year 1
  + Fall 2019
    - Offer PLA Portfolio Course online and support students in-persons, if needed
    - Design and offer staff training to raise visibility of PLA as a resource for adult student recruitment and retention
    - Within CARS, coordinate efforts in order to streamline interaction between external and internal facing positions, especially student hand-off as they enroll and transition from prospective students to current students
    - Outreach to Admissions, Advising and Career Services, Financial Aid, and Veteran Services staff
    - Outreach to Departments
  + Winterim 2020
    - Wrap up PLA Portfolio work with any lagging students
    - Offer faculty training for PLA review and for designing PLA-friendly syllabi
    - Begin research and review of Certificate Programs
  + Spring 2020
    - Roll out online Student Orientation for adult and online students
    - Offer PLA Portfolio Course online
    - Offer Staff PLA training
    - Continue research and review of Certificate Programs
    - (late) Assess CARS development, revisiting goals, planning, and staffing
  + Summer 2020
    - Wrap up PLA Portfolio work with any lagging students
    - Offer faculty training for PLA review and for designing PLA-friendly syllabi
    - Assess PLA program to date and develop plans to adjust as needed
    - Create report on Certificate Programs and develop phased action plan for recommended revisions to Certificate Program
* Year 2
  + Fall 2020
    - Offer PLA Portfolio Course and staff training
    - Implement Phase I of Certificates action plan
    - Begin research and review of other adult-oriented programming
  + Winterim 2021
    - Wrap up PLA Portfolio work with any lagging students
    - Offer faculty training for PLA review and for designing PLA-friendly syllabi
    - Implement Phase II of Certificates action plan
    - Continue research and review of other adult-oriented programming
  + Spring 2021
    - Offer PLA Portfolio Course online
    - Offer Staff training
    - Continue implementation of Phase II of Certificates action plan
    - (late) Create report on adult-oriented programing and develop phased action plan for recommendations
    - (late) Assess CARS development, revisiting goals, planning, and staffing
  + Summer 2021
    - Wrap up PLA Portfolio work with any lagging students
    - Offer faculty training for PLA review and for designing PLA-friendly syllabi
    - Assess PLA program to date and develop plans to adjust as needed
    - Create report on adult-oriented programming and develop phased action plan for recommended revisions to Certificate Program
* Year 3
  + Fall 2021
    - Offer PLA Portfolio Course and staff training
    - Implement Phase III of Certificates action plan
    - Implement Phase I of adult-oriented programming action plan
    - Begin research and review of other adult-oriented programming
  + Winterim 2022
    - Wrap up PLA Portfolio work with any lagging students
    - Offer faculty training for PLA review and for designing PLA-friendly syllabi
    - Implement Phase IV of Certificates action plan
    - Implement Phase II of adult-oriented programming action plan
    - Continue research and review of other adult-oriented programming
  + Spring 2022
    - Offer PLA Portfolio Course online
    - Offer Staff training
    - Continue implementation of Phase IV of Certificates action plan
    - Continue implementation of Phase II of adult-oriented action plan
    - (late) Create report on adult-oriented programing and develop phased action plan for recommendations
    - (late) Assess CARS development, revisiting goals, planning, and staffing
  + Summer 2022
    - Wrap up PLA Portfolio work with any lagging students
    - Offer faculty training for PLA review and for designing PLA-friendly syllabi
    - Assess PLA program to date and develop plans to adjust as needed
    - Review and revise strategic three-year plan for CARS

**CARS Strategic Plan 2019-2021**

* Goal 1: Become the information hub on campus for prospective and enrolled adult students.
  + Objective 1: Become the first stop for potential adult students.
    - Lead: Stacy
  + Objective 2: Provide targeted information for adult students via the University’s website.
    - Lead: Stacy
  + Objective 3: Support adult students through the enrollment process by providing unofficial transfer credit evaluation and aligning that with adult student education and career goals and other needs.
    - Lead: Stacy
  + Objective 4: Advocate for enrolled adult students across campus.
    - Lead: Stacy and Ginger
  + Objective 5: Provide pathways for experiential learning credit.
    - Lead: Ginger
* Goal 2: Serve as a source of information for Faculty and Staff questions relating to adult students and improving service to adult students.
  + Objective 1: Become logical first-stop for internal questions relating to adult students.
    - Lead: Stacy and Ginger
  + Objective 2: Provide information via the University’s website about adult students.
    - Lead: Stacy
  + Objective 3: Train staff in the Admissions, Advising and Career Center, Financial Aid, Veterans Services, and other relevant offices about best practices for serving adult students, including options for Prior Learning Assessment.
    - Lead: Ginger
  + Objective 4: Train Faculty to serve as PLA assessors, to write PLA-friendly syllabi, and to develop Challenge Exams.
    - Lead: Ginger
  + Objective 5: Collect, consolidate, and analyze enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates for adult students, along with data like popular class times, delivery methods, and student satisfaction.
    - Lead: Stacy and Ginger
* Goal 3: Raise awareness of measures taken to support adult students at UW – Parkside.
  + Objective 1: Foster relationships across Academic and Student Life sides of campus in order to provide connections for adult students with questions, concerns, or problems.
    - Lead: Stacy and Ginger
  + Objective 2: Market to and engage community to raise awareness of adult support options.
    - Lead: Stacy and Ginger
* Goal 4: Collaborate to improve adult-oriented programming.
  + Objective 1: Advocate for a range of delivery and scheduling options to accommodate adult students’ schedules and responsibilities.
    - Lead: Stacy and Ginger
  + Objective 2: Analyze existing adult-oriented programs and provide recommendations for improvements as an expert in adult student needs.
    - Lead: Ginger
  + Objective 3: Study market data and trends and offer recommendations for new adult-friendly programs.
    - Lead: Ginger

1. Goldie Blumenstock, “The Adult Student,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2018, p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Goldie Blumenstock, “The Adult Student,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2018, p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. University of Wisconsin – Parkside, Adult Student Success Recommendations based on ALFI Results, p. 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Mikey McPhail, “Workforce Dynamics and Insights,” presented at 2019 Greater Racine County Talent Summit, 6 June 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Mikey McPhail, “Workforce Dynamics and Insights,” presented at 2019 Greater Racine County Talent Summit, 6 June 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. University of Wisconsin – Parkside CAEL Adult Learner 360 Report, Student and Institutional Responses, Life and Career Planning, accessed with permission from portal.adultlearner360.org. For PLA, the most important question was **“**Q9. This institution provides a process to establish whether my life and work experiences qualify for college credit.” In addition to the “poor” and “mediocre” ratings, 25% of faculty and staff and 18% of students indicated “neutral” performance, which means that 75% of students feel their prior learning experience is not being adequately recognized by the school, where only 52% of faculty and staff recognized the same thing. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. University of Wisconsin – Parkside CAEL Adult Learner 360 Report, Student and Institutional Responses, Life and Career Planning, accessed with permission from portal.adultlearner360.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. This matches historic national trends, which indicate that, on average and regardless of ethnicity, students who receive Prior Learning Credit are three times as likely to earn a Bachelor’s Degree and twice as likely to earn an Associate’s Degree, increasing the graduation rate from twenty-one percent to fifty-seven percent. Because of PLA’s impact on persistence, students who received PLA credit from an institution registered for 10 more credits at that institution, on average, than students who did not. (CAEL *Fueling the Race to Success*, available at <https://www.cael.org/pla/publication/fueling-the-race-to-postsecondary-success>, p. 34, 40-41) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. C. Hagelskamp, D. Schleifer, and C. DiStasi (2013). “Is college worth it for me? How adults without degrees think about going (back) to school.” Retrieved from Public Agenda website: http://www.publicagenda.org/pages/ is-college-worth-it-for-me [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. And perhaps also amongst the respondents. The responses to Q3 of the survey are illuminating, as 53.8% of 13 respondents indicated that they were “moderately familiar” with PLA in general, though their responses to their familiarity with specific types of PLA—proficiency exams, challenge exams, military training and service credit evaluation, language testing and retroactive credit, and PLA Portfolio—do not bear out that level of familiarity, all falling below 53% of “moderately familiar” (the highest was 38.4% responding “moderately familiar” with Proficiency Exams), suggesting the potential for influence due to social desirability bias. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. We thank Charlie Hill from UW – Oshkosh and Lauren White from UW – Whitewater for their taking the time to talk to us about the structure of PLA Portfolio classes on their campuses. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Ohio Department of Education (2015). “Student Success for Adult Learners: 8th Report on Higher Education in Ohio.” Retrieved from https://completecollege.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2015-Conditions-Report\_Ohio\_Adult\_Learners.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Cost may be offset by technical intervention on CAEL HSI Grant. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Cost may be offset by technical intervention on CAEL HSI Grant. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)