

Prior Learning Assessment in the Montana University System



Update from the PLA Council

September 15, 2016



Prior Learning Assessment

- Many potential students come to higher education with some form of college-level prior *learning*.
- PLA is a set of *established, validated methods* for assessing non-collegiate learning for college credit.
- With BOR Policy 301.19 (approved Sept. 2015), the MUS strives to standardize and make the most efficient use of PLA for our students.

PLA Council

- Per Policy 301.19, Commissioner Christian received nominations and appointed a PLA Council.
- Council is composed of faculty, and personnel from admissions, advising, veterans, registrar, and financial aid offices, and from OCHE.
- Purpose of the Council is to to aid in the implementation of the Board-approved PLA policy.

Council Timeline and Activities

- First online meeting January 2016
- Four face-to-face meetings
- Facilitated appointment of PLA Liaisons on each campus
- Organized stakeholder meetings with PLA Liaisons on each campus
- Solicited feedback from stakeholders on what aspects of PLA are working, and what needs improvement

Feedback-Guided Year 1 Priorities

- Encourage construction and vetting of unit-specific PLA Policy/Guideline documents
- Enable methods for Tracking, Transcription, and Transfer of PLA credits
- Research and recommend PLA fee structures
- Enhance visibility and outreach, especially to veterans organizations
- Explore partnerships with the Montana workforce that include apprenticeships and internships

Impact of PLA on Active and Returning Military Personnel

- Encourages military personnel to return to school
- Validates and accredits learning and training acquired in service
- Mitigates unintended consequences
- Gets vets into challenging classes appropriate for their experience level
- Initiates the relationship between faculty and students

PLA Council Year 1 Summary

- Established lines of communication with campuses
- Made measurable progress on Year 1 Priorities
 - Policies
 - Tracking, Transcription, Transfer
 - Fees
 - Outreach
 - Collaboration with workforce learning

Challenges and New Opportunities

- Raise PLA awareness on campus
- Raise PLA awareness in the community
- Provide regular PLA training to:
 - Admissions/recruitment personnel
 - Advisors
 - Veterans' offices
 - Financial aid offices
 - Faculty

2016 PLA Council



- Stephen Lodmell (Chair) - University of Montana, Missoula
- Joel Sims - Great Falls College MSU
- Bill Ryan - Highlands College of Montana Tech
- Michael Schulz - UM Western
- Katherine Williams - MSU Northern
- Ann Ellsworth - MSU Bozeman
- Garth Sleight, Miles Community College
- Dena Wagner-Fossen, Great Falls College MSU
- Ron Larsen, MSU Bozeman
- Clifford Coppersmith, City College of MSU Billings
- Ricki Jones, UM Western (vacant as of July, 2016)
- Elizabeth Engebretson, Student Representative
- Ex-Officio
- Shawn Grove, VETS Office Director
- Lexy Fisher, TAACCCT Grants (vacant as of Sept, 2016)
- Susan Jones, OCHE
- John E. Cech, OCHE