Prior Learning Assessment Demonstration Project Valdosta State University

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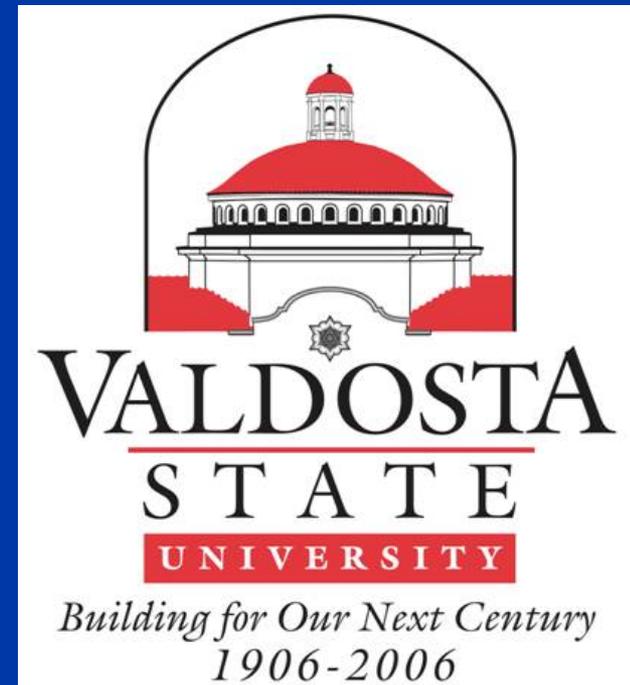
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Regents' Administrative Committees on Academic and Student Affairs

Joint Meeting

July 9, 2007

Sea Palms

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What is Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)?

"The recognition of learning gained from experiences that may be granted credit or otherwise certified… The assessment of learning attained through experiences irrespective of the time and place in which they occurred."

- From *Assessing Learning*, 2nd edition, By Morry Fiddler, Catherine Marienau, and Urban Whitaker p.12.
- The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) at http://www.cael.org/.

History of Experiential Learning at VSU

- Started with Experiential Credit for General Studies Program (1990's): emphasis on documented experience

- Concerns about quality of student portfolios: demonstrated learning?

- General Studies Advisory Committee developed to review practices

- Results--Limited to ACE & DANTES & AP

- Development of Credit through Departmental Examinations

- Destination Teaching and concerns about moving students into field without duplication of previous learning

- USG support for the PLA Project

PLA Fit with VSU Strategic Goals

- Goal 3: Excellence in Student Learning and Retention
- Goal 4: Access and Participation
- Goal 7: Engagement in Community and Region
- Goal 8: Strategic Alliances

USG Perspective
What Problems are We Trying to Solve?

1. **Teacher Quantity**

   – Georgia will need 16,379 additional teachers in 2010*

   – In FY06, 12,949 new teachers hired in Georgia; USG prepared 4,806 new teachers in FY05**

   – 4,545 mathematics and science teachers needed by 2010: USG prepared 678 in 2006.

*Status Report 2006, PSC.

**USG Educator Preparation Data Mart

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What Problems are We Trying to Solve?

2. Teacher Diversity

- 52% of the State's public school students are ethnic minorities*

- 22% of the State's teachers are minorities*

- "Minority teachers bring positive images and varied perspectives to students. They serve as role models for all students… **

*Georgia Department of Education, Certified Personnel Index

**SREB. *Spinning our Wheels, Minority Teacher Supply in SREB States. 2003*

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What Problems are We Trying to Solve?

3. **Teacher Quality**

   – Relying on hiring less than fully certified teachers is not sound policy when the evidence shows clearly that more than any other variable, high quality teachers make the most difference in student achievement*

*William Sanders, Education Commission of the States, National Commission on Teaching for America's Future, the Education Trust, etc. 1990-present

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USG Initiatives to Address the Problems

- Double the Numbers, Double the Diversity of Teachers Prepared by the USG

- USG Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Presidents' Initiative: MATH+SCIENCE=SUCCESS

PLA Project Goal: Increase number and diversity of second-career teacher candidates and accelerate time to completion

- PLA supports Double-Double and STEM Initiatives;
- PLA aligns with Board of Regents' Goals
  - Goal 1: Educate graduates…with well defined skills and knowledge…
  - Goal 2: Expand participation by increasing access, enhancing diversity, improving service to nontraditional students…
  - Goal 3: Increase academic productivity through improved recruitment, increased retention, accelerated graduation….
  - Goal 5: Help accelerate Georgia' economic development by providing needed graduates, …

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The PLA Connection: Bringing Adult Students with College-Level Prior Learning to VSU

- Prior Learning is learning gained through life or work outside of structured higher educational courses.

- People acquire learning through their life experiences with careers, community, family, travel, military service or non-college-sponsored educational opportunities.

- Nearly 40% of postsecondary students are self-supporting adults age 24 and up.

- Nontraditional populations are a rich source of potential teachers.

- Recognizing prior learning will encourage adult students with creditable experience to enter teaching and will accelerate their time to completion.

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Why do we need PLA?

- Recognizing prior learning
  - Respects adult learning and appeals to nontraditional students;
  - Reduces redundancies and inefficiencies;
  - Is a significant application of assessment standards and principles.

- The Demonstration Project can be used as a basis for PLA programs in other fields and at other USG institutions.

What are the National Criteria for Quality Assurance in Assessing Learning for Credit?

- Credit will be awarded only for learning, and not for experience.

- Assessment should be based on agreed-upon and public standards and criteria for college-level learning.

- Assessment should be treated as an integral part of learning and should be based on an understanding of learning processes.

Adapted from Fiddler, Marienau, & Whitaker (2006). Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, & Procedures, 2nd edition,

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What are the National Criteria for Quality Assurance in Assessing Learning for Credit?

- The determination of competence levels and of credit awards must be made by appropriate academic or credentialing experts.

- Credit will be appropriate to the academic context in which it is awarded and accepted.
  - The academic context includes the program of study and the student's major, i.e., the core, upper-division, or graduate-level courses.

Adapted from Fiddler, Marienau, & Whitaker (2006). Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, & Procedures, 2nd edition,

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Demonstration Project Process

Working Group
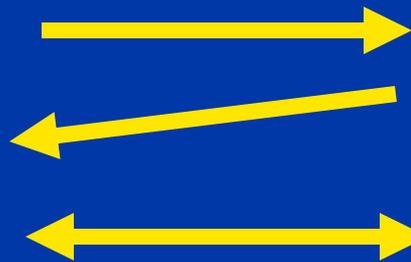
Planning

Key Decision Points

Revisions

Implementation

Supporting Leadership Group

Green, Yellow, and Red Lights

Supporting Actions

Demonstration Project Process

Working Group

Sheri Gravett, Chair
4 A&S faculty
4 COE faculty
Registrar's Representative
BOR Liaison
PLA Consultants

Supporting Leadership Group

Louis Levy
Sheri Gravett
Linda Calendrillo
Phil Gunter
Brian Adler
Kurt Keppler
Walter Peacock
John Gaston
Martha Krotseng
Chuck Hudson
Maggie Roberts

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What Is The PLA Process?

- The Office of Admissions and other entry points would make new students aware of PLA opportunities.

- The student would then meet with the PLA Counselor for advising and options.

- Depending on the prior learning the student has, the process will vary.

- The following slides will further explain the options and process.

What Students Are Eligible To Participate In The PLA Pilot?

- Students hoping to pursue a degree, endorsement or certification that will lead to a teaching career in Middle Grades and who:

  - are adults

  - are non-traditional students

  - have other learning experiences outside of a traditional college curriculum

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What options are currently available for receiving credit for prior learning?

- **CLEP** (The College-Level Examination Program®)

- AP (Advanced Placement) and IB (International Bac)

- **DANTES** Testing (Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Educational Support)

- **ACE** Credits

- **Departmental Examinations**
  A maximum of 30 semester hours can be earned through any combination of CLEP, credit by departmental examination, correspondence courses, extension work and advanced placement (AP)

PLA Documentation Development

- PLA Documentation Development is a process in which students provide documentation of their learning.

    – The students prepare and submit documentation which provides a clear description of competencies attained.

    – They will also offer a critical self-assessment of what college-level learning has been acquired through selected nontraditional experience.

    – This experience might include work, training, reading and research, civil and military service, or life.

For how many courses may students apply for prior learning credit?

- Within the:
  - parameters of the 30 hours limit*,
  - requirements of the degree program,
  - requirements of residency,
  - requirements of certification, etc.

* A maximum of 30 semester hours can be earned through any combination of CLEP, credit by departmental examination, correspondence courses, extension work and advanced placement (AP) (see page 70 of the catalog 2006-2007).

What is the PLA Documentation Course?

- Documentation, as used at Valdosta State University, includes an organized set of verifiable evidence and reflections of prior learning experiences (e.g., skills, letters, recognitions, certifications and experiences) for which one seeks credit.

- The student and the documentation course professor and/or counselor must agree upon the content and prior learning outcomes achieved as presented in the documentation set.

More on the PLA Documentation Course

- This course is the method by which a student will bring together her/his first documentation set, regarding only the first course for which she/he hopes to gain PLA credit using the documentation method.

- How does a student enroll in this course?
    - The same way she/he would enroll in any other course at VSU, but with prior consultation, self-screening, and discussion with the PLA counselor.

What are the documentation course requirements?

- In the documentation course, the outcomes set the requirements and include the following:

  - Acquire knowledge about defining documentation assessment as well as information on the format, length, content and structure of documentation

  - Determine sources (e.g., military, work and community involvement) of prior learning

What are the documentation course requirements?

- Course outcomes:
  - Identify the format for use in different parts of the documentation set
  - Ascertain the length and structure of the documentation construction
  - Articulate educational goals and plans as a context for the assessment of one's experiential learning
  - Identify events and experiences that have contributed to one's learning as an individual or as a member of a group

What are the documentation course requirements?

- Course outcomes:
    - Understand the system by which experiential learning is assessed in one's program
    - Apply one or more models of how adults learn from experience to the analysis of events and experiences in one's life
    - Identify possible and appropriate forms of evidence to document one's claims of creditable learning

What are the documentation course requirements?

- Course outcomes:
  - Collect and organize materials from past learning experience (e.g. letters, sample presentations, sample projects)
  - Produce evidence of one's learning that is acceptable to the institution or program and amenable to assessment
  - Provide reflections on prior learning.
  - Apply criteria for determining the college-level qualities of one's learning

What are the documentation course requirements?

- Course outcomes:
  - Know and use the program–specific forms and formalities for submitting evidence of learning for assessment
  - Use the outcomes of a learning assessment process to plan future educational and/or professional activities

What are the documentation course requirements?

- Course outcomes:
  - After working with the PLA counselor/ documentation course professor, the student will establish a working relationship with an advisor (staff, faculty) for ongoing identification and development of evidence for the assessment of one's learning.
  - Develop and submit one's documentation for which one is seeking credit.

- How long will it take to complete?
  - One full semester.

More details on the documentation course

- What are the charges for the course?
  - The same tuition rate as any other 3 credit hour course at VSU.
  - Included in the course is one assessment of one documentation set, with comments for review, and one resubmission within the semester immediately after the student takes the documentation course.

Evaluation of PLA Documentation

- Who are the assessors?
  - Content area specialists.

- What standards are they using to evaluate the students' work?
  - Previously determined content area standards, such as learning outcomes, objectives, and criteria as outlined in documents such as those used in SACS review.

Evaluation of PLA Documentation

- Is there a charge for the assessment?
  - The first assessment of the first course for which a student hopes to gain PLA credit is included in the tuition of the course.
  - Any further assessments must be for different courses, and will have fees attached.

Evaluation of PLA Documentation

- What type of feedback will students receive from the assessors?
  - The assessors will work in teams of two, creating one comprehensive report that will give specific feedback as to how the documentation set might be improved and could be resubmitted during the next semester.
  - Any lacunae in the document set will be explicitly mentioned and the student will be encouraged to resubmit their documentation one time during the next semester.

Evaluation of PLA Documentation

- When will students learn if they have received credit for their documented prior learning?

  - By the end of the final examination week of the same semester in which she/he submits her/his documentation for assessment.

  - Documentation will be due to the assessors with adequate time for assessment (for example, in a fall semester, documentation would be due on approximately November 15 and the assessments would be completed by approximately December 5.)

Evaluation of PLA Documentation

- If credit is denied, is there a process for resubmission?
  - Students can resubmit the material for assessment, with a revision of the documentation set and inclusion of any noted lacunae, in the semester immediately after the documentation course and/or the original assessment of that particular documentation set.

PLA Launch

- Products developed for Summer 07
    - Faculty and Student Handbook
    - Course Outline
    - Marketing Materials
- Students recruited in Summer 07
- PLA Documentation Course starts Fall 07

Demonstration Project Scale-Up

- Applicability to other programs
- PLA Products
- VSU Faculty Expertise
- Roadmap of the Process