

For Immediate Release
May 15, 2024

Contact: Richard Relkin
Assistant Vice President, Communications & Marketing
Richard.relkin@lehman.cuny.edu
646-369-8988

LEHMAN COLLEGE WINS RISING STARS AWARD IN INAUGURAL CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING EQUITY AWARDS FROM COUNCIL FOR ADULT AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (CAEL) AND WESTERN INTERSTATE COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (WICHE)

*Findings Offer Tools and Strategies Any Institution Can Adopt to Put CPL In Reach of
All Learners*

THE BRONX – Lehman College was named a CPL Equity Rising Star for its work in offering credit for prior learning to adult learners to help them advance their college education. The honor was given by CAEL and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) as part of their inaugural Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) Equity Awards, established to highlight and disseminate proven strategies for making CPL more accessible and commonplace among underserved adult learner populations. In an accompanying report, *Closing Equity Gaps in Credit for Prior Learning: Tools and Strategies to Recognize All Learning*, CAEL and WICHE detail the successes of all the winners, including how they closed CPL equity gaps and the outcomes they achieved. The full report is available at cael.org.

[Read the full report](#)

“At Lehman College, growing Credit for Prior Learning opportunities is a college-wide effort that serves as a crucial access point for many of our students, but perhaps its most important contribution may be as a key piece of our persistence and completion strategy,” said Lehman Vice President for Enrollment Management Richard Finger. “Being recognized for our efforts is a source of pride for the administrators making it happen and a badge of honor for the students on the road to graduation.”

Credit for Prior Learning refers to various methods that postsecondary institutions use to evaluate and award credit for learning that comes from work, military, or life experiences — CPL is also known as prior learning assessment or recognition of prior learning.

Adults who earn credit for prior learning are 17% more likely to graduate than adults who do not. Despite these benefits, only about 10% of adult college students earn credit through CPL. Moreover, while CPL drives completion for all student demographics, lower-income adults, Black adult students, and community college students are even less likely to participate in CPL. Closing this equity gap is an opportunity to further boost the benefits of CPL by ensuring that it is accessible in particular to those who have been traditionally underserved.

The 2024 CPL Equity Champion is Miami Dade College (Florida), which realized a 366% increase in credits awarded via CPL over a two-year period. The college serves a

large population of traditionally underserved students and maintained a proportional representation of these learners amid its dramatic increase in CPL.

In addition to Lehman College, West Los Angeles College (California) also received a Rising Start honor. At Lehman College, where the average age of the undergraduate population is 27, nearly 90% of students hail from underrepresented backgrounds. Since Fall 2020, the college awarded more than 16,000 CPL credits to more than 3,000 students, 93% of whom were students of color. At West Los Angeles College, driven in particular by greater use of CPL among Latino/a students, CPL usage increased 600% in the two-year period ending in June 2023 over the previous three years.

Honorable Mentions include Salt Lake Community College (Utah), Capella University (Minnesota), Metropolitan State University (Minnesota), and City University of New York School for Professional Studies (New York).

"We congratulate and thank the 2024 CPL Equity Award winners. We recognize their progress not only to honor their individual achievements but also to chart the way forward for the entire field," said Earl Buford, CAEL president. "The practices proven effective by their success offer insight and inspiration that can help any institution advance its own CPL program so that more adult learners can benefit from its powerful impact."

Decades of CAEL research confirm CPL's profound yet underutilized ability to support student success. In 2020, [The PLA Boost](#), for example, found that students with CPL save time (between nine and 14 months) and money (between \$1,500 and \$10,200) in earning their degrees, respectively.

"We know that today's adult learners are looking for efficient, workforce-relevant credentials, and the 2024 CPL Equity Award winners offer promising examples of how institutions of all types can leverage CPL to meet this need for learners we have historically struggled to serve," said Demarée Michelau, WICHE president. "As an organization dedicated to collaboration, innovation, and resource-sharing, WICHE is thrilled to join CAEL in sharing these exciting new approaches to CPL."

While the winning institutions employed a diversity of approaches to increase CPL access and participations, *Closing Equity Gaps in Credit for Prior Learning: Tools and Strategies to Recognize All Learning* has distilled common themes that emerged to highlight specific strategies that other institutions can operationalize to close their own CPL equity gaps. They include:

- Collecting data to explore the problem.
- Focusing on professional/occupational programs.
- Raising the visibility of CPL.
- Addressing policy across the institution.
- Engaging the whole enterprise.
- Defining equity specifically for the institutional context.
- Leveraging data systems to track progress and success.

- Using CPL creatively to expand access to diverse student populations.

The lessons learned in the advancements made by the CPL Equity Award winners offer insight to inspire practical innovation within any CPL approach or program size. A webinar on May 16 will explore the winning strategies and tools used by the CPL Equity Award winners highlighted in the report; the webinar is free and open to the public. Register here: <https://www.cael.org/webinars/closing-cpl-equity-gaps>.

About Lehman

A perennial national leader in promoting social mobility, Lehman College of The City University of New York serves as an intellectual, economic, and cultural center for the Bronx, New York City, and beyond. The college - which sits on a tree-lined 37-acre campus – supports more than 13,000 undergraduate and graduate students, another 14,000 students in continuing and professional programs, and over 90,000 alumni. As a federally designated Hispanic-Serving Institution in the Bronx, Lehman College educates a diverse population of students. The college offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees as well as certificate programs in the liberal arts, sciences, and professions. Named after Herbert H. Lehman, a former U.S. senator, New York State governor, and internationalist, the college is guided by Lehman's commitment to fundamental human rights and a dedication to public service.

About CAEL

Recognizing that adult learners are the backbone of the U.S. economy, CAEL helps forge a clear, viable connection between education and career success, providing solutions that promote sustainable and equitable economic growth. CAEL opens doors to opportunity in collaboration with workforce and economic developers; postsecondary educators; employers and industry groups; and foundations and other mission-aligned organizations. By engaging with these stakeholders, CAEL fosters a culture of innovative, lifelong learning that helps individuals and their communities thrive. A national membership organization established in 1974, CAEL is part of Strada Collaborative, a mission-driven nonprofit. Learn more at cael.org and stradacollaborative.org.

About WICHE

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) works collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all residents of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy, WICHE strengthens higher education's contributions to the region's social, economic, and civic life. Visit wiche.edu.