



2018 Academic Credit for Prior Learning (ACPL) Report Update

ACPL: Advancing Success for Washington Adult Learners

Supporting adult learners as they complete their postsecondary certificates and degrees is essential to meeting our state's educational attainment goals and meeting the employment needs of students and Washington employers.¹ Students come to college with skills and knowledge acquired through work, military, and other experiences; awarding academic credit for prior learning is an important form of support for this population of students. Academic Credit for Prior Learning (ACPL) is awarded when a student's prior learning is assessed and found to be the equivalent of specific college course outcomes, and when awarding credit is consistent with the policies of the institution.²

Awarding academic credit for prior learning accomplishes the following:

- Honors students' knowledge and skills.
- Strengthens connections between work and college.
- Accelerates students' progress toward career pathways.
- Helps Washington meet the statewide educational attainment goal of at least 70 percent of Washington adults (ages 25-44) holding a postsecondary credential.

Significant progress has been made in several areas since 2011, when legislation was enacted to increase the number of students who receive academic credit for prior learning as well as the number and type of credits earned, ensuring that credit is awarded only for college course-level competencies. That progress has included establishing an ongoing workgroup, developing and sharing policies and practices, and monitoring progress in an annual legislative report.

2018 ACPL Notable Findings

For the second consecutive year, all 34 community and technical colleges, six public baccalaureate institutions, and ten Independent Colleges of Washington member institutions submitted data for the 2018 report.³ Of these 49 institutions⁴, 42 had reported data in 2016, and 49 in 2017. This allows a limited three-year look at change over time in total number of ACPL credits awarded, and a more complete view in the two-year comparison.

2018 prior learning credits

During the 2017-18 academic year, Washington public and independent colleges awarded **56,313.5 ACPL credits** that applied toward certificates or degrees. Approximately **2,927 students** earned credits for prior learning.⁵

¹ Washington Student Achievement Council, [2017 Strategic Action Plan](#).

² The Washington State Legislature defines prior learning in RCW 28B.77.230, as "...knowledge and skills gained through work and life experience; through military training and experience; and through formal and informal education and training from in-state and out-of-state institutions including foreign institutions.

³ Data from private career colleges were not collected for this report.

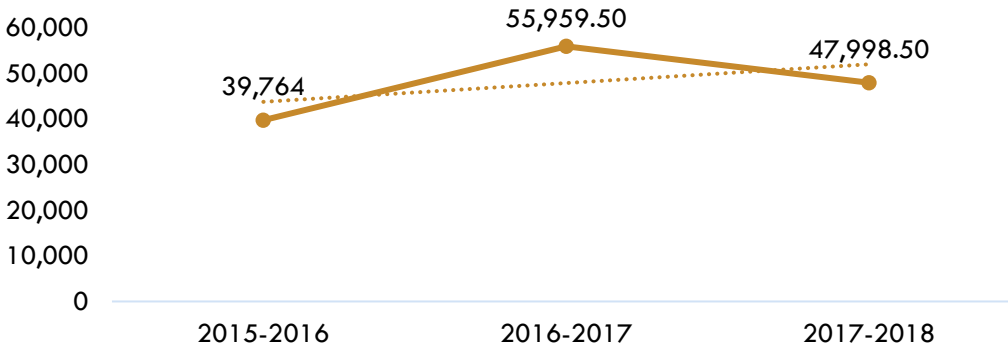
⁴ Pierce College's two campuses reported combined data in 2016-17 and 2017-18.

⁵ Students reported is approximate because some students may have received more than one type of ACPL credit.

Total credit comparisons

In a three-year view of 42 colleges reporting, a trend emerges with a 20.7 percent increase.

Figure 1: Total ACPL credits have increased since 2015-16



Note: Comparison is limited to 42 institutions reporting all three years.
 Source: WSAC staff analysis of ACPL data collected from institutions (fall 2016, fall 2017, and fall 2018).

In a comparison of 49 colleges reporting in the last two years, the overall number of ACPL credits has had a slight dip of 8.2 percent (Figure 2). Examining ACPL credits by sector shows a more detailed view of change (Figure 3. See Appendix A for a three-year view of 42 institutions). While it is difficult to determine exact factors that might have caused these ACPL changes, internal and external factors correlated with ACPL do merit further research in the ACPL workgroup in 2019. While no significant policy changes have been reported by institutions, external factors may have a role. For example, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges reports that enrollments in their sector have decreased every year since 2013, with over 10,000 fewer enrollments from 2015-2016 to 2017-2018. Enrolled veterans receiving benefits are often a strong proportion of students receiving ACPL, and SBCTC reports decreasing enrollment in this population mirroring the overall enrollment changes as the post-recession Washington job market has improved (see Appendix B).

Figure 2: Comparison of ACPL Credits Awarded 2016-17 to 2017-18

Institutions Reporting	Credits Awarded 2016-17	Credits Awarded 2017-18	Difference 2016-17 to 2017-18	% Change 2016-17 to 2017-18
49	61,340.5	56,313.5	-5,027	-8.20%

Source: WSAC staff analysis of ACPL data collected from institutions (fall 2017 and fall 2018)

Figure 3: Comparison of ACPL Credit by Educational Sector, 2016-17 to 2017-18

Sector Type	Number of Quarter Credits Awarded in 2016-2017	Number of Quarter Credits Awarded in 2017-2018	Difference in Number of Credits from 2016-2017 to 2017-2018	Percentage Change in Number of Credits from 2016-2017 to 2017-2018
Community and Technical Colleges	33,486.00	35,054.00	1,568.00	4.68%
Private Not-for-Profit Baccalaureates	3,229.00	2,024.50	-1,204.50	-37.30%
Public Baccalaureates	23,432.50	19,235.00	-4,197.50	-17.91%

Source: WSAC staff analysis of ACPL data collected from all 49 institutions (fall 2017 and fall 2018)

Types of credit comparison

A detailed look at the types of prior learning credits over a two-year period provides a more nuanced comparison (Figure 4). While there has been a recent dip in the overall number of ACPL credits, statewide credit amounts in some categories of prior learning assessments have increased:

- Students receiving academic credits for prior learning increased in the assessment areas of College Level Exam Program (CLEP), Occupational Crosswalks (military and other), and Individual Industry Certifications.
- Credits awarded increased in the areas of DANTES Subject Standardized tests (DSST), CLEP, and Occupational Crosswalks.

Figure 4: Comparison of ACPL Credit by Category, 2016-17 to 2017-18

Category	Assessment Examples	2018 Total Students	% Change Students 2016-17 to 2017-18	2018 Total Quarter Credits	% Change Quarter Credits 2016-17 to 2017-18
Credit by Testing	DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST)	13	-18.8%	170.5	31.7%
	College Level Exam Program (CLEP)	332	28.2%	3,844.5	29.8%
Prior Experiential Learning	Portfolio Review (college-level credits)	238	-15%	2,370	-36.5%
Extra-Institutional Learning	American Council of Education (ACE) (military training and education)	870	-25.4%	20,778	-25.2%
	Occupational Crosswalks (Military MOS, other)	527	26.4%	14,818	40.9%
	Individual Industry Cert (e.g. NCLEX-RN)	549	14.6%	11,512	-6%
Course Challenges	Credit by Exam (generally a faculty or department-created course-specific assessment)	398	-33.7%	2,820	-29.1%
Totals students and credits		2,927	-9%	56,313	-8.2%

Source: WSAC staff analysis of ACPL data submitted by 49 institutions (fall 2017 and fall 2018).

Additional ACPL Updates

Steady advancement continues in all areas of the ACPL goals outlined in statute (see Appendix C). Effective practices, policies, and updated information on ACPL have been shared in a variety of ways this year, including the handbook updates, an email distribution list, and a webinar meeting.

ACPL workgroup meeting

WSAC convened a workgroup meeting via webinar in October 2018, which included 65 participants from the ACPL workgroup and interested practitioners. The meeting provided ACPL background, updated the workgroup on the data collection and report process, and sought comments, suggestions, and recommendations for the 2018 report, professional development, future workgroup goals, and potential projects.

Adult reengagement initiative highlight

WSAC has developed a statewide framework to reengage stopped-out adult learners in credential completion, and has highlighted ACPL as a best practice for adults in academic policy. At the Washington Adult Reengagement Summit hosted by WSAC in November 2018, national expert Joel Simon of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning shared ACPL rationale and successes with the audience of almost 200 higher education leaders and practitioners.

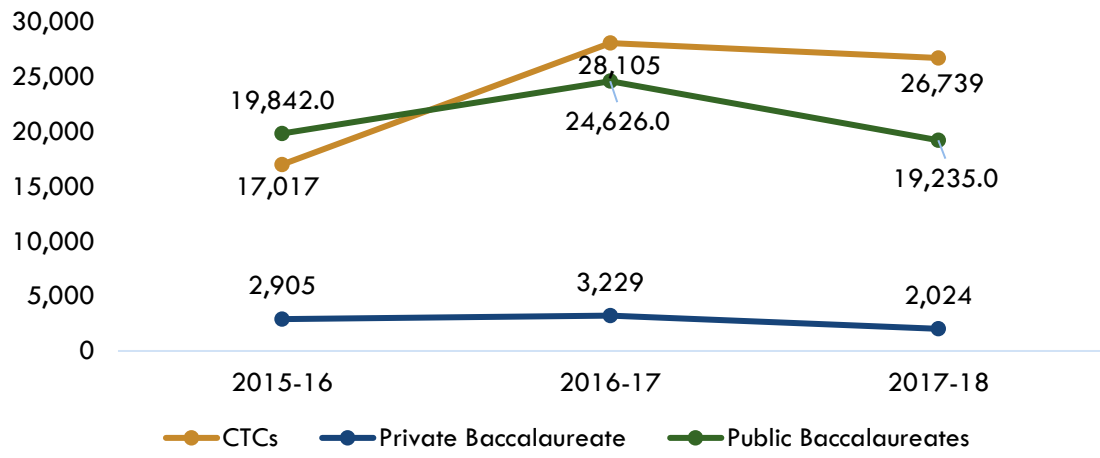
Next Steps

Within a three-year trend of ACPL credit increases, the 2018 ACPL data survey finding of a two-year decrease in some types of ACPL credits merits further research by the ACPL Workgroup and stakeholders. It will be important to better understand any internal factors in institutions that may be influencing change, as well as external factors, such as veteran and adult student enrollment levels. WSAC has initiated conversations about the findings with sector leaders and the workgroup in order to gather more information, and will continue research in 2019.

ACPL Resources

- **ACPL handbook:** Updated in 2018, the handbook provides sample policies and examples of crosswalks and other assessment models.
- **ACPL web page:** This WSAC web page houses ACPL Workgroup meeting notes, workshop information, annual legislative reports, and the ACPL handbook.
- **Adult Reengagement Initiative web page:** As a policy tool related to adult learners' progress, ACPL fits in the WSAC Adult Reengagement Framework's completion component. This web page includes statistics, reports, resources, and 2018 Summit materials referenced in this report update.
- **Updated policy links:** Appendix D includes policy links for ACPL and military credit from all institutions.

Appendix A: ACPL credits by sector, 42 institutions 2015-2016 to 2017-2018



Appendix B: Enrolled veterans receiving benefits and total enrollments at Community and Technical Colleges

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Veterans receiving benefits	11,245	10,676	10,100	10,041	9,671
Percent of enrollments	4.0%	3.9%	3.7%	3.8%	3.7%
Total Enrollments	283,408	275,695	271,010	265,936	260,912

Source: State Board for Community and Technical Colleges staff analysis of enrollment, 2018

Appendix C: Summary of Progress on ACPL Workgroup Goals

Summary		Progress
Goal 1	Increase number of students who receive academic credit for prior learning.	Ongoing.
Goal 2	Increase number and type of credits awarded.	Ongoing.
Goal 3	Develop transparent policies and practices.	Sample policies included in the ACPL handbook. All institutions submit links to ACPL and military credit policies annually.
Goal 4	Improve prior learning assessment practices.	Training and sharing of practices through ACPL workgroup meetings and workshops.
Goal 5	Create tools to develop faculty and staff expertise and to share exemplary policies and practices.	ACPL handbook updates, annual workshop, and online resources available on the WSAC web page.
Goal 6	Develop articulation agreements when patterns of credit for prior learning are identified for particular programs and pathways.	Select crosswalks available in handbook.
Goal 7	Develop outcome measures to track progress on the goals outlined in this section.	Progress on Goals 1-6 will continue to be monitored through annual ACPL report updates. ACPL Workgroup in 2017 determined that there were too many variables to create statewide numeric outcome goals.*

* For example, institutions with a higher percentage of student veterans might be expected to award higher levels of ACPL. Also, as economic changes occur, institutions may enroll more or fewer older students with previous on-the-job training and experience, which might equate to more or less ACPL credit awarded through assessments of portfolios.

Appendix D: 2018 Prior Learning and Military Policy Links Submitted by Institutions

Sector	Institution	Prior Learning: General Policies	Prior Learning: Military Policies
Community and Technical Colleges	Bates Technical College	https://batestech.edu/transferring-to-bates/	https://batestech.edu/transferring-to-bates/
	Bellevue College	https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/transfer/awarding-non-traditional-credit/	https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/veterans/academic-credit-for-military-training-and-coursework/
	Bellingham Technical College	http://www.btc.edu/FutureStudents/PriorLearning/indexPriorLearning.aspx	http://www.btc.edu/FutureStudents/Veterans/indexVeterans.aspx
	Big Bend Community College	https://www.bigbend.edu/admissions/	https://www.bigbend.edu/wp-content/uploads/admissions/Credit-for-Military-Service.pdf
	Cascadia College	http://www.cascadia.edu/programs/pla.aspx	http://www.cascadia.edu/enrollment/transferrcredit.aspx
	Centralia College	https://www.centralia.edu/students/policies/nontraditional.pdf	www.centralia.edu/admissions/pdfs/Military_Credit_Acceptance_Procedure.pdf
	Clark College	http://www.clark.edu/enroll/advising-services/credential-evaluation/nontraditional_programs.php	http://www.clark.edu/enroll/advising-services/credential-evaluation/military.php
	Clover Park Technical College	http://www.cptc.edu/policies/credit-for-non-traditional-learning	http://www.cptc.edu/policies/veterans-transfer-credit
	Columbia Basin College	https://www.columbiabasin.edu/PLA	https://www.columbiabasin.edu/index.aspx?page=1475
	Edmonds Community College	http://catalog.edcc.edu/content.php?catid=52&navoid=15532&hl=additional+ways+to+earn&returnto=search	http://catalog.edcc.edu/content.php?catid=52&navoid=15532&hl=additional+ways+to+earn&returnto=search
	Everett Community College	https://www.everettcc.edu/enrollment/transfer/transfer-credit	https://www.everettcc.edu/enrollment/transfer/transfer-credit
	Grays Harbor College	https://www.ghc.edu/admissions/credit-prior-learning	https://www.ghc.edu/admissions/credit-prior-learning
	Green River College	https://www.greenriver.edu/students/academics/alternative-options-for-earning-credit/	https://www.greenriver.edu/media/content-assets/documents/student-affairs/JST-transcript-evaluation-procedures.pdf
Highline College	https://pla.highline.edu/	http://catalog.highline.edu/content.php?catid=19&navoid=1015#military-credit-acceptance	

Appendix D, cont.

Sector	Institution	Prior Learning: General Policies	Prior Learning: Military Policies
Community and Technical Colleges	Lake Washington Institute of Technology	https://www.lwtech.edu/admissions/prior-learning/	https://www.lwtech.edu/admissions/veterans-services/military-training/
	Lower Columbia College	https://lowercolumbia.edu/credit-prior-learning/policy.php	https://lowercolumbia.edu/credit-prior-learning/policy.php
	North Seattle College	https://northseattle.edu/credentials/credit-prior-learning	https://northseattle.edu/credentials/military-credit
	Olympic College	https://www.olympic.edu/programs-classes/transfer-oc/transfer-credits-and-award-credit	https://www.olympic.edu/services/military-and-veteran-programs
	Peninsula College	http://pencol.edu/academic-resources/prior-learning-assessment	http://pencol.edu/academic-resources/prior-learning-assessment
	Pierce College (Ft Steila & Puyallup)	www.pierce.ctc.edu/hsem-pla ;	www.pierce.ctc.edu/jblm
	Renton Technical College	https://www.rtc.edu/Admissions-Entry-Services	https://www.rtc.edu/Admissions-Entry-Services
	Seattle Central College	https://seattlecentral.edu/enrollment-and-funding/enrollment-and-admissions/registration/records-and-transcripts/incoming-transcript-evaluation	http://seattlecentral.edu/student-records/transcript-evaluation.php
	Shoreline Community College	https://www.shoreline.edu/about-shoreline/policies-procedures/	https://www.shoreline.edu/about-shoreline/policies-procedures/
	Skagit Valley College	http://www.mysvc.skagit.edu/news.asp?pagenumber=3126	https://www.skagit.edu/veterans-outreach/
	South Puget Sound Community College	https://spscc.edu/start/transfer	https://spscc.edu/policy/inst710
	South Seattle College	https://www.seattlecolleges.edu/district/policies/policies.aspx?policyID=pro515	http://www.southseattle.edu/registration/transfer-and-other.aspx
Spokane Community College	https://scc.spokane.edu/Become-a-Student/Prior-Learning-Assessment	https://scc.spokane.edu/Become-a-Student/Prior-Learning-Assessment	

Appendix D, cont.

Sector	Institution	Prior Learning: General Policies	Prior Learning: Military Policies
Community and Technical Colleges	Spokane Falls Community College	https://sfcc.spokane.edu/Become-a-Student/Prior-Learning-Assessment	http://catalog.spokane.edu/PriorLearning.aspx?page=PV5
	Tacoma Community College	http://www.tacomacc.edu/ attachments/ academics- programs/catalog/4Instruction2018.pdf	http://www.tacomacc.edu/ attachments/ academics- programs/catalog/4Instruction2018.pdf
	Walla Walla Community College	https://www.wbcc.edu/admissions/acpl/	https://www.wbcc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/academic-credit-military-training-policy.pdf
	Wenatchee Valley College	https://www.wvc.edu/students/access/registration/prior-learning-assessment/	https://www.wvc.edu/students/access/registration/prior-learning-assessment/military-education-experience.html
	Whatcom Community College	http://whatcom.edu/academics/learning-options/credit-for-prior-learning	http://whatcom.edu/student-services/registration-student-records/transferring-credits
	Yakima Valley College	https://www.yvcc.edu/admissions/get-credit-for-what-you-know/	https://yvcc.instructure.com/courses/1142101
Private Baccalaureates	Gonzaga University	https://www.gonzaga.edu/undergraduate-admission/apply/how-to-apply/first-year-students	https://www.gonzaga.edu/student-life/student-services/transfer-veteran-returning-adult-services/student-veteran-information#33
	Heritage University	http://catalog.heritage.edu/preview_entity.php?catoid=11&ent_oid=1638&hl=link&returnto=search	http://catalog.heritage.edu/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=849#veterans_admission
	Pacific Lutheran University	https://www.plu.edu/admission-first-year/apply/advanced-credit-policies/	https://www.plu.edu/student-financial-services/military-benefits/
	Saint Martin's University	Please reference our 2016-17 catalog. Military credit page 20. FOCUS program pages 53-54. https://www.stmartin.edu	Please reference our 2016-17 catalog. Military credit page 20. FOCUS program pages 53-54. https://www.stmartin.edu
	Seattle Pacific University	http://spu.edu/catalog/undergraduate/20189/academic-policies-procedures/limitations-on-credit; http://spu.edu/catalog/undergraduate/20189/admissions/transfer-credits	http://spu.edu/catalog/undergraduate/20189/academic-policies-procedures/limitations-on-credit; http://spu.edu/catalog/undergraduate/20189/admissions/transfer-credits
Seattle University	https://www.seattleu.edu/registrar/transfer-tools/credit-earned-in-high-school/	https://www.seattleu.edu/media/redhawk-axis/registrar/registrar-policies/Credit-for-Military-75-26.pdf	

Appendix D, cont.

Sector	Institution	Prior Learning: General Policies	Prior Learning: Military Policies
Private Baccalaureates	University of Puget Sound	https://www.pugetsound.edu/academics/advising-registrar/transfer-credits/advanced-placement/ ; https://www.pugetsound.edu/academics/advising-registrar/transfer-credits/international-baccalaureate/	https://www.pugetsound.edu/academics/advising-registrar/veterans-policy/
	Walla Walla University	http://bulletin.wallawalla.edu/en/2016-2017/2016-2017-Undergraduate-Bulletin	http://bulletin.wallawalla.edu/
	Whitman College	https://www.whitman.edu/registrar/services-for-students-and-alumni/transfer-credit	https://www.whitman.edu/registrar/services-for-students-and-alumni/transfer-credit
	Whitworth University	https://www.whitworth.edu/cms/administration/registrar/transfer-info/acceptance-of-transfer-credits/	https://www.whitworth.edu/cms/administration/registrar/veteran-education-benefits/frequently-asked-questions/
Public Baccalaureates	Central Washington University	https://www.cwu.edu/registrar/transfer-equivalencies-policies	http://catalog.acalog.cwu.edu/content.php?catoid=51&navoid=2825&hl=%22transfer+credit%22&returnto=search#cred for mili
	Eastern Washington University	www.ewu.edu/itds	www.ewu.edu/itds
	The Evergreen State College	https://www.evergreen.edu/eveningweekend/ple	http://www.evergreen.edu/admissions/priorlearningassessment
	University of Washington	https://admit.washington.edu/apply/transfer/policies/#prior-learning-assessment	https://admit.washington.edu/apply/transfer/policies/#military-credit
	Washington State University	https://transfercredit.wsu.edu/types-of-credit/credit-by-exam/	https://transfercredit.wsu.edu/types-of-credit/credit-by-exam/ https://transfercredit.wsu.edu/types-of-credit/military-credit/
	Western Washington University	https://admissions.wwu.edu/transfer/transfer-credit-policies	https://admissions.wwu.edu/transfer/transfer-credit-policies

About the Washington Student Achievement Council

The Washington Student Achievement Council is committed to increasing educational opportunities and attainment in Washington. The Council has three main functions:

- Lead statewide strategic planning to increase educational attainment.
- Administer programs that help people access and pay for college.
- Advocate for the economic, social, and civic benefits of higher education.

The Council has nine members. Four members represent each of Washington's major education sectors: four-year public baccalaureates, four-year private colleges, public community and technical colleges, and K-12 public schools. Five are citizen members, including one current student.