

PURDUE GLOBAL LEARNING RECOGNITION

We believe that every adult student is, in a broad sense, a transfer student. Every one, being predominantly adults in their mid-thirties or older, already *knows things*. We don't always know how they learned it—nor does that in itself really matter to us—but we are absolutely committed to making sure they do not need to learn it again during their time with us. Our job is to assess what they know, identify and fill the gaps, and help them get ready for their careers.

Many adults go back to school with an academic record from an attempt at college 15 or so years ago. We honor each student for being learned in some way and in each her own way. She has learning acquired through work, military service, volunteering, or any combination thereof. Maybe she has noncollege learning as attested by open courses and certifications. Maybe she even has some transfer credit.

Regardless of what the last “institution” of learning was, we hold that these students *are transferring* to us; they are learners, shifting from a perhaps random path of learning to a more focused degree-centered path. They want us to help assess and contextualize what they already know, plot a course forward, and put a graduation date in their future (and the sooner that is, the better).

To maintain our focus and ability to serve this remarkable student population, we hold the following tenets:

Transfer student success is founded in and protected by institutional unanimity of vision and purpose. Our academic leadership and faculty rally around the adult learner. Beginning always with the assumption that each adult learner has some learning of some kind, everything naturally builds from there. We frequently challenge and improve our methods, policies, and processes, but we never question the fundamental value of serving the transfer student. This is how we have been able to award almost 1.5 million credits in transfer over the last two years, saving students over \$400 million in tuition.

Transfer student success begins with curriculum design. An institution that sincerely wants students to optimize the value of their prior learning credit will not build curriculum that hinders this goal. Therefore, we maintain:

- Curriculum designed by expert faculty, offering relevant outcomes, rewarding courses, straightforward degree requirements, no superfluous prerequisites, and ample elective space.
- A core of general education courses that is common to all programs.
- A single set of transfer rules for all programs, with only the rarest exceptions as demanded by academic necessity.
- Curriculum development teams open to finding creative solutions for specific problems, like associate's degree completion programs built on military occupational training and collaborating with companies and professional organizations.
- between our traditional and competency-based education (CBE) programs. Because *all* of our curriculum is competency based, this leads to unprecedented flexibility in the award of credit for prior learning.

Academic prejudice is not academic rigor. Despite the rhetoric, there is still elitism out there. Faculty who expect their own courses to be universally accepted by others will accept nothing from the same in lieu of their own. Placing enormous value on our own academic rigor, we naturally demand it of others. And, where that other—whoever they are—demonstrates rigor in keeping with our own, we will seek to honor their assessments of student learning.

We know that there are excellent faculty and teachers other than our own. We also know that there are sound assessments of learning beyond our own, many beyond our areas of subject matter expertise, and so we welcome the opportunity to collaborate with and rely upon this community of scholarship.

- We do not limit our view to regional accreditation, but remain open to reputable accreditation and oversight of many varieties.
- We articulate thoughtfully with many types of learning providers, from the military to StraighterLine to open courses, and our minds will be open to whatever the future presents.
- We are open to award credit to third-party credit-by-examination providers such as CollegeBoard and others.
- We are active in explorations like the ACE Alternative Credit Project to promote greater openness, seeking to contribute to the body of knowledge about transfer student success.

Learning happens in lots of ways. No two students will have the same history of learning nor the same needs when they come to us. Setting limits on credit awards by learning type is arbitrary and handicaps many students. Someone unusually adept at learning while on the job may legitimately have learned the equivalent of 135 quarter credit hours of material. Someone else may have an unusual propensity for passing CLEP exams. Therefore, we:

- Do not cap credit by source. We allow up to 75% of any undergraduate program to be filled by prior learning, in any combination. This reflects the real world of adult learning.
- Are working to prevent making transfer credit an all-or-nothing proposition at the course level. A student who has mastered 80% of the course should get credit for 80% of the course, and only take the *remainder* with us. We are able to do this with more than 100 courses for which credit can be granted at the module (1 credit) level.
- Are fully committed to competency-based curriculum (and *all* of our curriculum is this), but know that it is the uncommon student who will excel in a pure CBE format. Therefore, we can articulate prior learning into either standard courses or course (CBE) modules, but we can also deliver the rest of the program to each student in the mix of these that best suits her learning needs and preferences.

Promises matter. If a potential student asks “how will my courses transfer?” we give an answer that we will stand by to the last quarter credit hour when she enrolls. If a student reads our Catalog, she should be certain that there isn’t a second set of rules we keep hidden in our desks.

- For more than a decade now, we have offered an unofficial evaluation service to students, allowing them to know exactly how their prior learning will apply to the degree of interest. This is not an abstract “these courses are transferrable in some general sense” but rather “this is what you will get when you enroll in this program with this prior learning.” It’s a promise and we keep it. We also do this fast: turning around these requests in 1 to 3 days, depending on the level of detail requested.
- Our Catalog is the single reference point for degree requirements, and is clearly laid out. There is no fine print.
- Earlier in 2018, we began to make our course equivalencies available publicly by means of the Transferology tool. This transparency is important to us, as we seek to become more widely known as the transfer-friendly institution we are. This is only a beginning step, though, as we build custom toolsets over the coming year.

Some students will transfer *from* our institution. We believe that our obligation to transfer students extends beyond their time with us. As best we can, we must ensure that their time spent with us can advance their academic career elsewhere. Therefore, we:

- Intentionally designed our ExcelTrack™ modules as graded, credit-bearing courses. This, of course, also facilitates the hybrid delivery of courses and modules internally and also enhances the application of prior learning. But, it was also a conscious decision aimed at making these courses easily applicable elsewhere, having ourselves struggled repeatedly to make sense of more traditional CBE coursework and transcripts students presented to us for transfer.
- Recognize our ability to help bridge gaps in learning that, taken in sum with other learning, will allow *someone else* to assess and even certify. For instance, we have a strategic corporate partnership in which we developed a custom “bundle” of learning that, when completed here, is added to a body of learning gained at that company, the sum of which permits their employees to sit for important licensure exams. In short, we do not necessarily need to be the final aggregator of learning, but are also proud to contribute to student’s larger store of learning.

Innovation is an imperative. Students will develop new needs, make new demands of us, and we must respond if we are to honor our role as specialists in the needs of adult learners and transfer students. To that end, we are eager to:

- Expand on our deep dives into military learning. ACE recommendations only go so far and there are a number of extremely robust military training experiences we can credential. Partnering with the various branches of service and engaging our faculty experts, we will continue to develop truly custom, unprecedented mappings to credit for many more military learning programs.
- Build what may be the most comprehensive and dynamic prior learning self-service tool available. Unlike any others currently available, it will reflect the full spectrum of our extensive investments in the review of institutional, military, corporate, and other types of learning and make these available to the general public. The user of this tool will be able to explore degrees of best fit (however they define that), then enroll and see the same degree plan through the course of their time with us. This system will be common to all student-facing staff at the institution, and so will provide an unusual yet imperative level of consistency for the student.