Adult Learner Study
October 15th, 2020
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  - Over 2,000 respondents who meet adult learner demographics

- Awareness and Access to Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)
  - What do people know about PLA?
  - Who has experience with PLA?

- PLA as a completion strategy
  - How do students leverage PLA to help complete their degree

- Industry Recognized Credentials
  - Which industries rely on these most?
  - Who has these credentials?
METHODOLOGY AND GENERAL RESPONDENT INFO
Survey Methodology

Maguire Associates and NEBHE engaged survey takers who met each of the following criteria:

◊ Currently living in one of the six New England states;
◊ Over the age of 25; and
◊ Have achieved a minimum educational level of a High School diploma or GED, but do not hold a Bachelor’s degree.

Survey deployed beginning 5/7/20 and closed on 5/18/20

Total valid responses: 2,031; margin of error at 95% confidence is 2%

Median survey completion time: 12 minutes
# Current Course-taking Behavior of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you currently taking classes as part of a degree, certificate, or diploma program?</th>
<th>Number of Respondents (%)</th>
<th>Are you taking those courses as part of a full-time or part-time program?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, taking courses for a degree program</td>
<td>135 (6.6%)</td>
<td>54.1% Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, taking courses for a certificate program</td>
<td>74 (3.6%)</td>
<td>16.2% Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, taking courses for a diploma program</td>
<td>24 (1.2%)</td>
<td>20.8% Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, taking courses, but not for a degree certificate or diploma program</td>
<td>55 (2.7%)</td>
<td>10.9% Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, not taking courses</td>
<td>1743 (85.8%)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total of 288 (14.2%) respondents currently taking courses
AWARENESS AND ACCESS TO CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING
Respondent Experience in Higher Education

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Some College: 41%
- High School Diploma or GED: 35%
- Associate's Degree: 24%

How many prior college or university credits have you earned?

- 0 credits: 29%
- 1-11 credits: 21%
- 12-29 credits: 12%
- 30 or more credits: 22%
- Not sure: 16%
Respondent Experience with Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) by State

Have you ever received credit from a college or university through PLA?
% Answering Yes by State

- Connecticut: 7.3% (n=490)
- Maine: 8.7% (n=173)
- Massachusetts: 8.3% (n=959)
- New Hampshire: 8.5% (n=176)
- Rhode Island: 10.3% (n=146)
- Vermont: 10.3% (n=87)

Higher in VT and RI, but sample sizes are small, and differences are not statistically significant.
Participants without PLA experience still place value on schools offering Recognition of Learning (ROL) (though people with PLA value this more)

Based on what you read, if a college or university in your state offered Recognition of Learning (ROL), how would that influence your future college decision? (n=1861)

- I would be more likely to consider a college or university in my state: 54%
- It would have no impact on my interest in a college or university in my state: 23%
- I would be less likely to consider a college or university in my state: 20%
- I’m not sure: 3%

Based on your experience with Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), if a college or university in your state offered Recognition of Learning (ROL), how would that influence your future college decision? (n=170)

- I would be more likely to consider a college or university in my state: 69%
- It would have no impact on my interest in a college or university in my state: 21%
- I would be less likely to consider a college or university in my state: 2%
- I’m not sure: 8%
People with PLA Experience leverage the same resources as those without

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>No PLA Experience</th>
<th>PLA Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Google search</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites for educational institutions</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations from family members or friends</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General college/university guidebooks</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer recommendations</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One exception: People with PLA Experience more often seek out employer recommendations.
PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT (PLA) AS A COMPLETION STRATEGY
Less than 10% of respondents reported experience with PLA. Over half of those with experience report fewer than 12 Credits.

Have you ever received credit from a college or university through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)? (n=2031)

- Yes: 78%
- No: 14%
- Not Sure: 8%

*+14% for people with Associate’s degree

Over half (52%) have earned fewer than 12 Credits.

How many credits have you received through Prior Learning Assessment? (n=170)

- 60 credits or more: 4%
- At least 30 credits, but fewer than 60 credits: 5%
- At least 12 credits, but fewer than 30 credits: 19%
- At least 6 credits, but fewer than 12 credits: 26%
- At least 1 credit, but fewer than 6 credits: 26%
- I'm not sure: 20%
People with PLA Experience have different reasons for pursuing a degree in the future

What are the main reasons why you are considering taking college courses in the future? You may select all that apply. Top 5 are listed.

- Will make my family and myself more financially secure
- Want to finish what I started
- Will make me eligible for new job opportunities
- Will help me advance in my current job
- I enjoy learning new things

People with PLA Experience are **more** focused on Financial Security
Need for Financial Aid Differs by PLA Experience

In pursuing your college program, will you need financial aid to help pay for your college studies?

- **No PLA Experience**
  - Yes: 67%
  - No: 10%
  - I'm not sure: 23%

- **PLA Experience**
  - Yes: 79%
  - No: 10%
  - I'm not sure: 11%

32% of people with PLA Experience will pursue financial aid from their employer, compared to 25% for people with no PLA Experience.
People with PLA Experience had different reasons for stopping out of school

What were the main reasons you decided to stop taking college courses in the past? You may select all that apply. (Top 5 are listed)

- Could not afford to attend
- Too hard to balance school work with other obligations
- Started a family
- Had to deal with a family issue/emergency
- Classes were too challenging

No PLA Experience: 45.4% have dependents
PLA Experience: 56.5% have dependents
PLA Experience – Profile

170

Respondents have PLA experience

Have you ever received credit from a college or university through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)?

Yes: 170
No: 1575
Not Sure: 286

47%

Have a currently active professional certification or a state or industry license

Do you have a currently active professional certification or a state or industry license? (% Answering Yes)

No PLA Experience: 21%
PLA Experience: 47%
INDUSTRY RECOGNIZED CREDENTIALS
1 in 4 respondents hold a current active professional certification or state/industry license. About the same proportion received this without it being required.

Do you have a currently active professional certification or a state or industry license? Do not include business licenses, such as a liquor license or vending license. (n=2031)

- 77% Yes
- 23% No

Examples that do not require an Associates or Bachelors:
- Certified Medical Assistant
- Certified Professional Coder
- Registered Medical Assistant
- Electrical License
- LEED Certification
- Hoisting License

Is your certification required for your job (either current or past job)? (n=470)

- 1% Other (please specify)
- 25% No, it is not required
- 74% Yes, it is required
% of Respondents with Recognized Credentials

Do you have a currently active professional certification or a state or industry license? (% Answering Yes by State)

- Connecticut: 22%
- Maine: 19%
- Massachusetts: 24%
- New Hampshire: 25%
- Rhode Island: 25%
- Vermont: 21%

Respondents with Credentials:
- Intend to start or continue taking courses in the next three years: 21.3%

Respondents w/out Credentials:
- Intend to start or continue taking courses in the next three years: 18.4%
Active licenses were reported as more prevalent in Architecture & Construction, as well as Health Care where at least half of participants held some certification.

Do you have a currently active professional certification or a state or industry license? Do not include business licenses, such as a liquor license or vending license. (n=2031)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation, Distribution, &amp; Logistics</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>*11%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality &amp; Tourism</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>*50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government, Law, &amp; Public Safety</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Training</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Services</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture &amp; Construction</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*"Healthcare" is significantly different from “Business Services” and “Manufacturing”

*"Manufacturing” is significantly different from “Education and Training”, “Government, Law & Public Safety”, and “Architecture”
Interest in 2-year institutions was strongest in Connecticut with 36% willing to pay at least $1,100 for a year of part-time study.

The approximate tuition and fees for one year of a part-time program at a 2-year institution in your state is $x. Which category best describes your interest in attending a 2-year institution?

- Would definitely attend regardless of the cost
- Would attend if offered a scholarship or grant that covered 25% of tuition
- Would attend if offered a scholarship or grant that covered 50% of tuition
- Would attend if offered a scholarship or grant that covered 75% of tuition
- Would attend only if offered a scholarship or grant that covered all of tuition
- Would not attend even if offered a scholarship or grant
- Not sure

Rhode Island $2,300: 12% | 9% | 12% | 13% | 19% | 12% | 23%
Connecticut $2,200: 14% | 10% | 12% | 14% | 19% | 12% | 19%
Massachusetts $2,650: 10% | 9% | 14% | 15% | 20% | 12% | 21%
New Hampshire $3,800: 9% | 8% | 10% | 11% | 27% | 13% | 22%
Vermont $3,550: 5% | 8% | 12% | 8% | 23% | 14% | 31%
Maine $1,850: 9% | 10% | 13% | 10% | 28% | 15% | 15%
Potential adult learners in MA, NH, and VT were more sensitive to the price of 4-year public education with less than 12% considering options below a 25% discount.

The approximate tuition and fees for one year of a part-time program at a public 4-year institution in your state is $x. Which category best describes your interest in attending a public 4-year institution?

- Would definitely attend regardless of the cost
- Would attend if offered a scholarship or grant that covered 25% of tuition
- Would attend if offered a scholarship or grant that covered 50% of tuition
- Would attend if offered a scholarship or grant that covered 75% of tuition
- Would attend only if offered a scholarship or grant that covered all of tuition
- Would not attend even if offered a scholarship or grant
- Not sure
Those from New Hampshire held strong negative opinions about paying for 4-year private education, despite the average being the lowest of all 6 New England states.

The approximate tuition and fees for one year of a part-time program at a private non-profit 4-year institution in your state is $x. Which category best describes your interest in attending a private non-profit 4-year institution?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Tuition</th>
<th>Would definitely attend regardless of the cost</th>
<th>Would attend if offered a scholarship or grant that covered 25% of tuition</th>
<th>Would attend if offered a scholarship or grant that covered 50% of tuition</th>
<th>Would attend if offered a scholarship or grant that covered 75% of tuition</th>
<th>Would attend only if offered a scholarship or grant that covered all of tuition</th>
<th>Would not attend even if offered a scholarship or grant</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>$19,500</td>
<td>4% 5% 4% 8% 32% 27% 21%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>$20,100</td>
<td>5% 4% 6% 15% 34% 21% 16%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>$20,250</td>
<td>3% 3% 5% 13% 36% 22% 18%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>$17,550</td>
<td>2% 1% 9% 10% 38% 21% 21%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>$19,500</td>
<td>2% 5% 3% 8% 29% 23% 30%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>$18,250</td>
<td>5% 3% 6% 9% 33% 30% 14%</td>
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</table>
TAKEAWAYS
Summary and Takeaways

◊ There is significant interest in PLA, even in those who have no prior experience with it.
  ◊ 54% would be more likely to consider a college in their state that offers credit for prior learning.
◊ People with PLA experience more often stop out of school because they are starting a family.
  ◊ They also list this as a reason for wanting to go back to school, but often with some level of financial need.
◊ 75% of credential holders work in industries where it is required
  ◊ Healthcare is the field in which the largest percentage of respondents hold an industry recognized credential.
◊ People with PLA Experience more often intend to start or pursue an education in the next three years.
  ◊ 28.8% for people with PLA vs 18.2% for people without.