

The Adult Learner.org

The Adult Learner Portal at TheAdultLearner.org is a clearinghouse of degree completion programs from regionally accredited colleges and universities, supported by services and information that adults can use when returning to college. It will provide a single entry point, crucial to adults seeking a degree completion program that best meets their needs. The portal is developed based upon SREB principles of sharing resources and increasing access, leveling playing fields for learners and promoting access to quality learning opportunities.

These initiatives and state efforts will support the Adult Learner Portal (the Portal).

- **LearningCounts.org**, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)
- Online Learning Consortium (The Sloan Consortium)
- The SREB Go Alliance
- The Rutgers Center for Women and Work

Adult students are encouraged to visit TheAdultLearner.org to:

- Learn more about returning to college and degree completion programs
- Search for available degree completion programs
- Financial aid information and resources
- Credit transfer policies
- Prior learning assessment information
- Career information and services

Institutions that bring degree completion programs into the Portal must subscribe to four guiding principles.

- Programs must be delivered online or in a blended format
- Programs must be accelerated or compressed to shorten time to degree completion
- Institutions must provide services designed to meet the needs of adults
- Institutions must provide and promote forms of prior learning assessment.

States and policy leaders will benefit from developing policies related to:

- Best practices for developing and launching adult degree-completion programs
- Policies and procedures for state-level changes needed to support the adult and online learner
- Campaign or promotional strategies for reaching adult learners
- Prior learning assessment and other credit recognition strategies, including greater articulation of credits
- Reports and updates to states, institutions and organizations about the progress towards meeting the larger goals of SREB's broad degree completion initiative

Adult Degree Program Completion

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

SREB has outlined four “Guiding Principles” for the Adult Degree Completion Strategy:

1. Programs must be offered in an online or blended (hybrid) format
2. Program courses must be offered in an flexible academic format
 - o accelerated course format
3. Institutions offering degree completion programs must be “adult-friendly” (ALFI Principles)
 - a. Outreach
 - b. Life and Career Planning
 - c. Financing (Financial Aid)
 - d. Assessment of Learning Outcomes
 - e. Teaching-Learning Process
 - f. Student Support Systems
 - For example, registrar, bursar, financial assistance, and student technology services
 - g. Technology
 - h. Strategic Partnerships
 - i. Others?
4. Institutions must provide options for Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and should recognize and apply previously earned credits toward eligible degree programs.
 - o Prior Learning Assessment is not just one method or tool. It includes methods such as:
 - **individualized student portfolios** or portfolio assessments, conducted by individual colleges or CAEL’s LearningCounts.org, a national online prior learning assessment service;
 - **evaluation of corporate and military training** by the American Council on Education (ACE); ACE publishes credit recommendations for formal instructional programs offered by noncollegiate agencies, or the ACE Guides;
 - **program evaluations** done by individual colleges of noncollegiate instructional programs that award credit for those who achieve recognized proficiencies, or the Evaluation of Local Training;
 - **challenge exams**, or customized exams offered by some colleges to verify learning achievement; these may be current course final exams or may be other tests developed at the department level for assessing general disciplinary knowledge and skill; and
 - **standardized exams** such as Advanced Placement Examination Program, or AP Exams, offered by the College Board; College Level Examination Program, or CLEP Exams, also offered by the College Board; Excelsior College Exams (formerly Regents College Exams or ACT/PEP Exams); and The DANTES Subject Standardized Tests, or DSST Exams, conducted by the Chauncey Group International, a division of Thomson Prometric. (*From CAEL.org*)
 - o Prior Learning Assessment is more than the acceptance of transferable credits.