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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 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workplace™ certified and is a part of Strada Collaborative, a mission-driven nonprofit. Learn more at cael.org and stradacollaborative.org. © 2024 CAEL. All rights reserved. (026-24_10/24)

TIMELINE REFERENCE

Gamson, Z. F., 1989. *Higher Education and the Real World: The Story of CAEL*. Wolfboro: Longwood Academic.



Highlights in CAEL's History

For 50 years, CAEL (the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning) has helped create impact for our members and clients as a nonprofit focused on supporting the creation of sustainable education-to-career pathways and fueling equitable economic mobility and community prosperity for all. We are passionate about removing barriers to success for adult learners and workers in all that we do. **Here are some highlights from our history.**

1974-1983 | CAEL IS ESTABLISHED

- Begins work to develop prior learning assessment (PLA).
- Holds first annual conference.
- Becomes a 501(c)(3) with a staff of five.
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation funds \$1 million grant.

Founded with 10 institutional members and a Carnegie Corporation grant

1984-1993 | EXPANSION INTO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Publishes standard guides: Earn College Credit for What You Know, PATHWAYS to the Future, Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, and Procedures.
- Receives first U.S. Food and Drug Administration grant and Joyce Foundation award grant.
- Headquarters relocation from Maryland to Chicago, IL; Pam Tate becomes president.
- Launches first national survey of PLA practices with U.S. institutions and releases *Prior Learning Assessment: Results of a Nationwide Institutional Survey*.
- Expands PLA work internationally, including Asia and Canada.

UAW-Ford union program, Mountain Bell Telephone and CWA/IBEW, and Scott Paper workforce development projects

1994-2003 | EXPANDING INDUSTRY-EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

- Initiates public policy work with Pew Charitable Trust, the U.S. Department of Education, and the MacArthur Foundation.
- Designs one-stop career centers in Massachusetts, Chicago, IL, and Colorado.
- Launches "Partnership for a Smarter Workforce," funded by the National Association of Manufacturers, the National Institute of Standards (NAM) and Technology (NIST), and others.
- W. K. Kellogg Foundation funding helps create a Commission for a Nation of Lifelong Learners.
- Begins adult advising services for Bell Atlantic, Chase Manhattan Bank, and Target Group, Inc.
- Receives grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, partners with GTE Government, Systems Corporation, and the MA Industrial Services Program.



Creates industry coalition NACTEL with AT&T and Verizon, labor unions, and Pace University; creates EPCE, an energy industry-education partnership coalition

Via a \$1.4 million U.S. Department of Agriculture SNAP Partnership Grant, establishes the ALCEF Network

Awarded grant in support of Lumina Foundation's HBCU Adult Learner



CAEL builds the Regional Upskilling Alliance in Pittsburgh; receives SkillsFWD grant to create learner employment record (LER) infrastructure



With 150-plus additional grant partners and celebrating 50 years, CAEL's membership spans all 50 states plus Puerto Rico, Canada, Jamaica, Singapore, and Ireland — and 5,000-plus members nationwide

Receives support from Henry L. Hillman Foundation and Richard King Mellon Foundation to expand work in Pennsylvania.

Joins the Higher Learning Advocates' Widen the Path pledge.

Launches [second LASS Academy](#).

Co-hosts the Learning Summit for Postsecondary Education and Workforce Development Professionals with the San Diego Workforce Partnership.

Receives U.S. Department of Labor grant of nearly \$1.4 million to improve equity in high-demand career pathways in the Mississippi River Delta Region.

Receives Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workplace™ Certification, and confers first-ever CPL Equity Awards in partnership with WICHE.

Partners with the Delaware Department of Education to inform its CPL Policy Framework.

Partners with the National Association of Workforce Boards to launch Equity Leadership Academy.

CAEL adds The Workforce Ecosystem: Building Partnerships for Community Growth, its newest professional development offering.

Partners with the National League of Cities to create [Municipal Action Cohort: Connecting Adults to Postsecondary and Workforce Success](#).

Plays key role in Indiana's launch of statewide policy guidance for CPL.

Hosts SNAP Employment & Training National Partnership Summit and the 2024 Thriving Communities and Economic Mobility Regional Summit.

'Virtual mentors' bring career pathways mapping to life in south central Pennsylvania's IT sector.

Launches new workgroups focused on military-connected learners and credit mobility.

Collaborates with [SCPa Works](#) (South Central Workforce Development Board) and supports the [South Central Pennsylvania NextGen Information Technology Industry Partnership](#) (TechConnect).

Releases an updated [policy priority overview](#) and makes significant [upgrades](#) to Adult Learner 360.

Named partner to develop career pathways for Great Lakes ReNEW Initiative.

Hosts first annual membership appreciation month.

Partners with AACRAO on a [member survey](#).

Connecting Adults to Postsecondary and Workforce Success initiative launches with the National League of Cities.

Enters a reciprocal partnership agreement with Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE).

Launches new CPL Database Network to guide prospective students seeking CPL provider institutions.



Receives \$2 million from U.S. Department of Labor to develop a health care career ladder and program to increase the number of CNAs, LPNs, and RNs, including a "groundbreaking apprenticeship program"

CAEL celebrates 25 years

Membership reaches 539 organizations; Al Gore speaks at annual conference



Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success: A 48-Institution Study of Prior Learning Assessment and Adult Student Outcomes shows that adult undergraduate student PLA users two-and-a-half times more likely to persist to graduation



CAEL debuts Adult Learner 360

Receives John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and BankAmerica Foundation funding for workforce education services for underserved firms.

Launches public *Returning to Learning*® workshops.

Manages Partnership for a Smarter Workforce, with NAM, the Corporation for Business, Work and Learning, and NIST to support training needs in Indiana.

Begins work to manage employer's tuition reimbursement programs with BetzDearborn, Inc., Chase Manhattan Bank, Media One Group, and BlueCross BlueShield of IL.

Administers learning program for Six Flags Over Texas.

Publishes principles of best practices for "Adult Learner Focused Institutions."

Advocates for Individual Learning Accounts (LILAs).

Implements transition program for Levi Strauss & Co. displaced workers; adds seven transition centers.

ALFI (now Adult Learner 360™) launches; ALFI Principles of Effectiveness framework emerges.

AACRAO, ACE, and CHEA reendorse CAEL's PLA principles in *The Principles of Good Practice in the Assessment of Experiential Learning*.

Organizes WorkforceChicago 2.0, with chairs of Boeing Co. and Exelon Corp.

Launches ALFI toolkit with support from Lumina Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trusts to develop the Principles for Effectively Serving Adult Learners. 200 institutions provide input.

2004-2013 | GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH POWERS CPL POLICY

Releases second edition of *Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles & Procedures* with updated standards.

Partners with NCHEMS to release *Adult Learning in Focus: National and State-by-State Data*.

Releases *Prior Learning Portfolios: A Representative Collection*, a higher education reference tool.

Launches online PLA program for adult learners: *LearningCounts*.

Releases *Underserved Students Who Earn Credit Through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Have Higher Degree Completion Rates and Shorter Time-to-Degree* research.

Supports creation of the Veterans Higher Education Affinity Group (VHEAG).

The Learning That Maturity Brings: An Analysis of the Value of Prior Learning Assessment for Mature Learners research brief shows mature learners earned more PLA credits than did younger age groups.

Publishes *Competency-Based Education*, summarizing white papers, summits, new program development, and public policy movement on CBE.

2014 to NOW | SCALING IMPACT TO BENEFIT ENTIRE ECOSYSTEMS

Develops *Business Champions for Adult Degree Completion*, representing employer leaders from diverse industries.

Launches Veterans Healthcare Career Pathways (VHCP) initiative and website.

Partners with HCM to unveil state policy approaches to support prior learning assessment.

Begins partnership with KC Scholars.

Offers support for graduate-level PLA.

THE THIRD DECADE

Begins working with the Workers' Higher Education Project in South Africa and implements Workforce Development Model with Ford Foundation support



Co-authors *Building (IT) Together* report for the Birmingham region.

Joins *New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board* in a U.S. Department of Labor grant toward improving CPL practices with nine of Virginia's community colleges.

Joins *Strada Education Network*.

Introduces Academy model with the launch of *Latino Adult Student Success (LASS) Academy*.

Aids in the development of the plan for *I-86 Innovation Corridor Workforce Development*.

Debuts work-learn-earn (WLE) branded site for state of Tennessee; announces plan to scale the WLE model.

Forms five-city *Inclusive Development Network*.

Forms partnership with *The EvoLLution*.

Partners with *Hampton Roads* on workforce gap and talent alignment study.

Launches *iDesign* initiative.

Crafts child care career ladders for Santa Cruz county.

The Council for Accelerated Programs joins CAEL and enters strategic operating partnership with The Graduate! Network.

Partners with IMS Global Learning Consortium and Education Design Lab on *Wellspring project* to develop shared educator-employer competency frameworks.

Collaborates on comprehensive talent alignment strategy for the Toledo Regional Chamber.

Forms the *Alliance for Veterans in Higher Education (AVHE)*.

Partners with the *League for Innovation in the Community College*.

With the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), co-releases a brief on CPL and its potential as a time- and money-saving resource for learners and displaced workers.

Hosts virtual Regional Workforce Assemblies with Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

Presents results of *Pathways to the American Dream* project in southwest Virginia, supported by an America's Promise grant from the U.S. Department of Labor.

Partners with Emsi on dislocated workforce study for the Tulsa Regional Chamber.

Receives U.S. Department of Education funding for *Connected Pathways*, a national career-exploration system; announces pilot sites in Indiana, Wisconsin, Maryland, Arizona, Ohio, and Rhode Island.

Earl Buford joins CAEL as president.

Partners with Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership on broadening internships.

Launches national grassroots campaign to encourage increased use of credit for prior learning (CPL); confirms CPL as umbrella term to refer to recognition of prior learning.

Joins National Governors Association Workforce Innovation Network as an advisory member.

Partners with *XPRIZE Rapid Reskilling*.

With Emsi, releases *Analysis on Workforce Preparedness and Early Career Outcomes for Underrepresented Minority and Low-Income Status Students* in Kentucky; and publishes *Never Too Late*.



CAEL PUBLICATIONS

- *Comprehensive Learner Records: Empowering Lifelong Learning in the Digital Age*
- *Speed, Value, and Economic Mobility — How Community Colleges Are Developing Short-Term, High-Value Credentials*
- *How They Pay: The Voices of Adult Learners on College Affordability*
- *How Institutions Are Responding, and Attracting Adult Learners with Credit for Prior Learning*
- *The PLA Boost: Results from a 72-Institution Targeted Study of Prior Learning Assessment and Adult Student Outcomes*
- *Stopping Out: It's Not About Academics*
- *Equity Paradoxes in The PLA Boost: Opportunity Unrealized for Some Students Despite the Potential for Improved Credit Completion*
- *Closing Equity Gaps in Credit for Prior Learning: Tools and Strategies to Recognize All Learning*



Partners with McDonald's Corporation on new Archways to Opportunity initiative

Announces *BankingOnMyCareer.com* and launches *petrochemworks.com*



Launches *PLA Accelerator*; later becomes *Credit Predictor Pro*



SEMI Foundation funding supports talent development for SEMI, representing semiconductor and global electronics manufacturing industry; launches *SEMI Career Exploration Platform*

Receives \$15.7 million grant from *Truist Foundation* to strengthen financial services career pathways through the *Build Better Careers* initiative

Releases the *Adult Learner Leaders for Institutional Effectiveness (ALLIES) Framework*