

Military Prior Learning Assessment (MPLA) Task Force  
Meeting of August 3, 2016  
1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Illinois Board of Higher Education  
1 N. Old State Capitol Plaza  
Suite 333  
Springfield, Illinois 62701-1377

Welcome and review of March 30, 2016 meeting notes:  
Task Force Chair welcomed the members of the MPLA Task Force for the start of the meeting.

Members Present:

Kim Eck, Illinois Student Assistance Commission  
Janet Fontenot, Southwestern Illinois College  
Jeff Newell, Illinois Community College Board  
Cynthia Rathunde, City Colleges of Chicago  
Jess Ray, Illinois State University  
Dan Wellman, Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs  
Arthur Sutton, Task Force Chair, IBHE

Members attending by teleconference:

Representative Jeanne M. Ives  
Amy Sherman, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning

Illinois Board of Higher Education Staff:

James Applegate, Executive Director  
Dan Cullen, Deputy Director for Academic Affairs  
Amanda Winters, Assistant Director for Academic Affairs  
Malinda Aiello, Assistant Director for Academic Affairs

Others:

MacKenzie Montgomery, Illinois Community College Board  
Meeghan Dugan Bassett, Lumina Foundation  
Ashley Becker, Illinois Community College Board

Arthur welcomed everyone and reported that because of audio/video problems at the June 1, 2016 meeting, he pushed the meeting back to 1:30 p.m. instead of 1:00 p.m. so we could be sure everything was working properly and we could have an IT person available if any problems arose.

The recommendations for the MPLA Task Force are not be shared with the general public until the final recommendations are available.

The meeting notes from the June 1, 2016 meeting were read and discussed. It was recommended the following changes/additions to the notes be made:

The addition of Cynthia Rathunde's name as present at the meeting.

Jeff made a motion that with the addition of Cynthia's name, the minutes be approved as presented. Motion carried. The June 1, 2016 minutes are approved.

Discussion of the draft MPLA Recommendations:

It was reported we do have committees working on these recommendations. With this we have some other things that will need to be included. We can talk about the other points of inclusions at this time as far as recommendations from public universities, recommendations from IBHE staff and other things that should be addressed as we move forward.

Review of MPLA Recommendations:

The Task Force reviewed the draft for the MPLA Recommendations.

Dan Wellman brought a section about what other states are doing and how they are applying these recommendations. Dan Cullen brought update from MCMC

As we talk about MCMC, today, we have been working with CAEL for an online resource guide, particularly for veterans. That was just posted today. Something everyone might want to check out. Very useful tool for your advising staff. Just to get an overview. There is a listing of financial aid, colleges listing of bridge programs and resources in each of the 13 MCMC states.

It was suggested that a resource section needs to be added to the report. The question was asked if the list from Illinois can be used.

Policy Recommendations

After looking at Washington State handouts, it was noticed an outcome they are looking for that we don't talk about is developing an online handbook for training to include accreditation issues. That might be an additional recommendation to think about. It may go into some of the concerns that some have about training and the cost. Some people think that a recommendation means "Thou shalt" but that's not how I was reading it. That may be an opportunity and might be a cost-effective way to help people get an understanding what they need to know.

Concern was expressed regarding the IAI recommendations regarding transfers. It is a wonderful idea but we shouldn't really this on at this time. This should not be through the IAI panel.

Concerning the second bullet point on the second page addressing excess credits—a meeting was held in Chicago to address this. Discussion was held regarding general elective credits but what is trying to be avoided here is having people put it on their transcripts. Language needs to be added to clarify the phrase or sentence to specify what we are hoping not to happen.

Amy will e-mail this language it to Arthur and then will e-mail the document to everyone.

If there are any recommendations, please e-mail these to Arthur:

Cynthia, Jess and Kim will collaborate on the section regarding financial issues and send recommendations to Arthur.

Discussion followed regarding the CCAF. Cynthia said she knows it is regionally accredited but some don't recognize it or treat it as an accredited institution, they treat it as a credit recommendation, like a joint services and if we are going to say they need to be trained, they should be trained in all of it. Need to add CCAF into that section.

Here is the language that we used for SS credit. "The general assembly can pass legislation requiring that Illinois public universities and colleges work credit for prior military learning, joint services transcripts, credit recommendations, the CCAF transcripts and DD214 only when the credit will be applied to the students' program of study at the time of the credit evaluation." This came out of the regional group meeting two weeks' ago and this is the language they were going to put in their recommendations.

There was discussion was held on who would collaborate on the different recommendations.

Under the support paragraph where it mentions DANTES, CLEP and it talks about scores, there is a lot of confusion on that one. Maybe that needs to be deleted. We need to be equitable. If you do CLEP a certain way, you want to be sure your scores align correctly. Maybe that's not set well.

One of the members said they would hate to see that taken out. There are some that will not recognize DANTES test taken that will recognize CLEP. My concern with the paragraph that we use the proper name. Is it DSST formerly DANTES? If the name has changed, we should have it correct. It is confusing what name we should use.

It was suggested that maybe we can put in parentheses what is the most common and then what is used.

Jess: We do what we do with transfer work and say, "in the spirit of equitable treatment you should try to award DANTES and DSST in the same manner as you would CLEP."

Cynthia: I think we need to say it because there are some who would not recognize a DANTES DSST test at all.

Lengthy discussion followed regarding the recommendations and who will work with each one. Arthur will send each section to everyone who will continue to work on them. Task Force members will e-mail their edits back to Arthur. Arthur also will follow up with the Fire Marshall regarding about appointing someone to replace Kevin Schott.

It was discussed that in the institutional responses, where it mentions the need for staff training, there is some resistance. We shouldn't need to hire new staff but provide the opportunity for training and support to institutions where the staff can come and get the technical support needed. They can then go back and make sure they are the correct staff receives right training and it is presented and done correctly. Maybe that is an answer to that particular reaction received from one institution about hiring more staff. The recommendation would be to create training opportunities.

It was suggested that adequate staff is needed so one person is not the only one familiar with the material and case that person leaves you will have other staff familiar with the information.

Amy said she would send an email to CAEL planning group asking if they know of any policies that either recommended or require trained PLA staff.

It was suggested that a group is needed to follow-up on these recommendations. All members will then be provided an update on this follow up.

#### Review of Public University Responses:

The Task Force reviewed the comments from the public universities regarding the MPLA recommendations.

Comments have been received from the institutions and will be integrated into the recommendations. It was agreed to integrate the MCMC document that Dr. Cullen provided and the group thanked him for providing that information and implementing it into the report.

Discussion was held regarding the questions and responses from each institution. SIUE had a question regarding DD214 and what to use. Does this need to be designated? Some institutions say “honorable” and others are not necessarily going to use that terminology. Should it be included on the transcripts that someone was dismissed from an institution even though their competencies are still good? Most places only take those that were honorable and maybe that’s not necessarily the best thing. That is a conversation that people need to have and think broader.

No matter the status under which service members are discharged, coordinators acknowledge that we are trying to help them complete a degree, so it is important to look at PLA in this because we are looking from the experiential point for saying how to complete a degree. We want to help them complete a degree and move on to a functional life.

There seems to be numerous copies and they mimic each other. There’s a short version and a long version... There are two copies of the short version and two of the long version and they are the same. Which copy do I? Is copy two the same as copy 4, just a different carbon?

Discussion was held regarding DD214. What exactly is valuable on the DD214? A question was asked if that would be a good subsection for the online training.

#### Funding:

It was asked if there should be something in recommendation for the Task Force to continue the implementation of this. Are we close to be able to provide them with the funding to continue beyond December? Or can we find a way to keep it running through end of fiscal year?

The question was asked as to how many institutions only use the military portion? If the present budget issues continue, where do we stand in one of two years from now?

The IBHE has worked hard with the University of Illinois to figure out a way to provide enough funds in the hope that we will someday have a budget. This will be an item in the budget, including staff and licensing. There are 186,000 unique users on that site. It isn’t known what the breakout is for military. But it might be useful to think about having something in the recommendation from this Task Force to speak to the importance of this--to be able to say that supporting the continuation of this is important to our students and speak to our

veterans and hopefully be able to get funding for the program. As of now we don't know what to expect after December. We need to have something from this Task Force saying it is an important resource for all of our students, especially our veterans.

Discussion was held regarding the different types of initiatives. The College Credit for Heroes is a voluntary articulation. Some initiative funding has been done to help institutions create bridge programs and then to really try to replicate those and share the curriculum; and then to try and work this network to create articulation transfer of those classes.

Task Force members agreed that it would be helpful for Amy will be willing to contact the manager or director of the Initiative and see if he is willing to do a Webinar for us to get more information to us about what the model to see if this is the model we want to be using.

It was suggested that something needs to be added to recommendations regarding transferology: we have been able to accomplish to date. Need to be explicit in recommendation to the point of providing financial support.

The question was asked if transferology for military free? It's free to the students but we have to pay for the licensing and staff.

There was a recommendation – Share resources for transferology based on funding for services for all students.

It could be stated, “technology systems like....” Because a couple of years from now, transferology may not be an option. A different solution needs to be identified that would work better.

It was mentioned that if you are thinking about cost related to some of these panels in the spirit of IAI that will be grafted around military, there are costs. To run just a panel in IAI, you are talking about \$50,000. You will need to have some financial support.

Illinois has been a great model for other states. According to a National student claim house recent national debt analysis, Illinois ranks third in the country for students going from a community college to four years and getting their baccalaureate degrees.

Janet Fontenot said that she has lived in a number of states and Illinois has one of the most well-organized community college systems in the country. A lot of states have community colleges but they are not really organized into a system.

#### Concluding Comments:

Dr. Sutton recapped that he will be sending out sections of the recommendations to those Task Force members who have agreed to work on further. I will see that the appropriate items are incorporated.

It needs to be decided if we are going to send recommendations out prior to October 19 meeting. How would we like to structure the October 19 meeting as we are looking at having the final document by that meeting? Will October 19 be the final meeting or will a follow-up meeting or event need to be decided upon?

What would be an action item for a follow-up meeting? Do we check to see if all recommendations have been implemented? Do we possible have an implementation council like Montana?

They first had a group to put recommendations out and then followed up to be sure things were done to implement the recommendations.

Should the IBHE recommend that a panel or group be formed to follow up on the recommendations of the MPLA Task Force?

The question was asked that when the final report is prepared and presented December 1, what happens from that point on? Where does this report go and what does it take to move the recommendations forward? When does this reach the point where it is communicated to the colleges and universities to make them aware of these recommendations?

By legislation, we will take our final recommendations to the Governor's Office and Legislators; however, where and how they implement this is not addressed.

We are not only talking about implementation but a communication plan. That will be a very important conversation to have in October. We will need to discuss funding.

Perhaps we need to spend October and December talking about implementation and communication plans.

Meeting adjourned at 3:06 p.m.