



MEMORANDUM

February 7, 2023

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: Dr. John B. King, Jr., Chancellor

**SUBJECT: State University of New York Award of Academic Credit by
Evaluation Policy**

Action Requested

The proposed resolution regulates the award of academic credit by evaluation within the State University of New York, superseding existing policy and guidance. This revised policy assists campuses in amending or developing local policy and practice.

Resolution

I recommend that the Board of Trustees adopt the following resolution:

Whereas the State University of New York was an early adopter of the concept that learning outside of the traditional classroom could be evaluated for the award of academic credit; and

Whereas SUNY's 1976 policy, Award of Academic Credit by Evaluation, communicated via Memorandum to Presidents Vol. 76, No. 11, focused largely on the award of credit by examination and addressed related operational and administrative issues including transfer and fees; and

Whereas since the implementation of SUNY's 1976 policy, SUNY campuses have, to varying degrees, instituted local award of academic credit policies to address standardized exams, faculty developed exams, and to a lesser extent other types of evaluation; and

Whereas over time, this evaluation process has become a frequent practice among public and private institutions of higher education nationally, more commonly known as Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) or Credit for Prior Learning (CPL); and the methods of evaluation commonly recognized have grown to include the following general categories: nationally recognized or faculty developed examinations; military education, training and service as recommended by the American Council on Education (ACE) via the enhanced Military Guide and via the Joint Military Services Transcript and with appropriate student advising; faculty, national organization or content expert review; and portfolio review; and

Whereas research by leading organizations such as CAEL (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning) and WICHE (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education), have consistently shown the benefits of awarding credit by evaluation to include improved persistence, higher rates of completion, shorter time-to-degree, and cost savings, and further, that such benefits, when there is a high level of awareness of the program, are shown across individuals of all races and income levels; and

Whereas Recommendation A3. of SUNY's 2021 SUNY Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan calls for a robust policy to expand college credit for life and work experience; and

Whereas ongoing efforts to update SUNY's award of credit by evaluation policy concluding most recently with a work-group convened by the Office of the Provost to review the latest recommendations in collaboration with the respective Presidents of the University Faculty Senate and Faculty Council of Community College, representatives of the SUNY Registrars, SUNY Veterans Coordinators, and others, including feedback from two System-wide calls for comment which served to strengthen the proposed policy revision; and

Whereas the proposed policy revision further expands the types of verifiable college-level learning that may be evaluated in the general categories identified above, including, but not limited to: military education, training and experience, performance on standardized published exams, professional and industry certifications and

licenses or other credentials, non-credit and continuing education study, on-the-job training/education and work experience (portfolio review); and

Whereas the proposed policy revision adds flexibility around fee structure with appropriate approvals, emphasizes the importance of marketing and communication efforts to raise awareness of the availability of such evaluation, continues to recognize faculty oversight as a core tenet, and supports an implementation plan that will include training and education; and

Whereas the SUNY Trustees support increased use of the award of academic credit by evaluation in support of SUNY's commitments to access and student success; now, therefore be it

Resolved that the Chancellor or designee be, and hereby is, directed to implement the revised policy on Award of Academic Credit by Evaluation as detailed in Attachment A and provide related guidance; and, be it further

Resolved that Provost or designee will work with campuses to ensure that faculty and staff have the training necessary to support effective implementation of the award of academic credit by evaluation that go beyond performance on standardized published exams and that prioritize opportunities for collaboration and consistency; and, be it further

Resolved that this policy on the Award of Academic Credit by Evaluation will be regularly assessed and that periodic reports of such activity are provided to the SUNY Trustees; and be it further.

Resolved that campuses are strongly encouraged to maximize opportunities for the Award of Academic Credit by Evaluation under this policy in order to further completion, economic mobility, and other measures of student success, and SUNY will promote outreach, communication, and data collection and transparency aligned to achieving this objective.

Background

SUNY first issued the *Award of Academic Credit by Evaluation* policy in 1976, one of the first university systems in the country to formally adopt this type of assessment. This proposed policy revision supersedes the original policy and expands the types of verifiable college-level learning to be recognized, including, but not limited to: performance on standardized published exams; military education and training; professional and industry certifications and licenses or other credentials; non-credit and continuing education study; on-the-job training/education; and work experience.

This policy revision is informed by research demonstrating that the award of credit by evaluation can increase access to, and success in, higher education by decreasing time to degree completion that results in cost savings. Credit received for prior learning can also help faculty advisors properly place students in their programs of study and can contribute to institutional goals for student retention and graduation success if learners are aware of its availability and avail themselves of the opportunity. Many students, particularly those who self-identify as low income or under-represented minority, have reported not being aware of opportunities to have their prior learning assessed or of the related benefits such a review can provide; this revision addresses related outreach and communication.

