

National Institute on the Assessment of Adult Learning

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On 19-21 June 2013, Thomas Edison State College (of New Jersey, USA) sponsored the 25th annual National Institute on the Assessment of Adult Learning. During a one-day preconference and three days of talks and workshops, about 125 participants discussed a range of topics, questions and directions relevant to assessment, particularly to the evaluation of prior experiential learning.

In one session, “Doing Research on PLA: Keeping Our Ideas Flowing,” facilitators Nan Travers and Alan Mandell asked the 30 participants to identify areas of PLA-related research they believe would be useful to their ongoing thinking and practice. Among the possible research topics identified were:

- 1) following the experiences of students who had earned credit via PLA through their careers;
- 2) the effects of PLA programs in attracting new students to college programs;
- 3) the economic impact of PLA on institutions (costs, benefits);
- 4) describing and analyzing practices of PLA at the graduate level;
- 5) examining the strengths and limitations of portfolio models of evaluation in comparison to evaluation based on standardized testing;
- 6) the use of PLA at the two-year college level and its effectiveness in providing transitions for students from a two-year to a four-year degree program;
- 7) tracking those who begin to engage in the PLA process and fail;
- 8) the connections between PLA and students who have been home-schooled;
- 9) the uses of PLA in “extension programs”;
- 10) bringing PLA to scale (the experiences of institutions that have sought to make PLA available to large numbers of students);
- 11) critically evaluating some of the ways in which PLA programs that claim access and openness create their own systems of unfairness.

We encourage you to join in the discussion by posting your comments. What are the topics that you would think would be useful for your ongoing thinking and practice? What topics would you like to see published in *PLAIO*?

To join the discussion, please log into the *PLAIO* site. After you have signed in, you will see a link to “Add comment.” We look forward to your input.