

SHARED GOVERNANCE COUNCIL (SGC) RECOMMENDATION FORM

Please submit to: Presidents-Office@stcc.edu

“Formally endorsed by Trustees, the Shared Governance Council (SGC) will serve as a high level advisory body to the STCC President on the recommendations developed by the College community that are then submitted to the Board of Trustees. The body will operate on a consensus mode rather than voting. The President will present to the Board of Trustees recommendations via consensus by the SGC with his/hers/their view as to what action the Trustees should take.”

Additional Detail/ ACCT Consultant Report (June 2022):

“Proposals may come to the SGC from any constituent group via written request.”

“The SGC considers fiscal, union, student, administrative impact of the proposal.”

“The President decides to accept, modify or reject the proposal if it is an administrative procedural matter; the President decides to recommend to the Board of Trustees any policy recommendation accompanying it with a statement of support or concern.”

This form is to be used for generating recommendations for shared governance consideration that potentially lead to changes in policy and/or practice-protocols. For an overview of topics to be considered by the STCC Shared Governance Council, please confer with your appropriate representative. The comprehensive consultant report prepared for the college (June 2022) is readily available, and a public-facing website is currently in development that will ensure information, and the availability of agendas, minutes, and decision/actions.



I: Proposed Recommendation

[The following section is to be completed by the body bringing forward the recommendation]

Name of Entity Making Recommendation:

Academic Standing Planning Committee – All Unit Congress

● **Nature of the Recommendation:**

- Academic
- Student Success/Systems of Operation
- Budget/Fiscal
- Health-Safety-Security (Students, Employees, Campus)
- Technology/Innovation
- Facilities
- Other: _____

● **Describe current policy/ protocol/ challenge:**

Background

A Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) policy allows students to earn academic credits for knowledge and skills acquired outside of traditional classroom settings. This can include work experience, military training, professional certifications, and other non-formal educational experiences. Through CPL policies, students can demonstrate their proficiency in specific subject areas and potentially receive credits that count toward their degree requirements. As such, they play a crucial role in offering a flexible and equitable pathway to higher education by recognizing and rewarding the knowledge and skills that students acquire outside of traditional academic settings. These policies support accessibility, affordability, and inclusivity, empowering students to achieve their educational and career goals more efficiently and effectively.



Credit for Prior Learning policies are strategically designed to appeal to adult learners, which is particularly important at technical colleges such as STCC due to their emphasis on career-focused education and the unique needs of non-traditional students. As outlined in Momentum: 2023-2028, one of our goals is to elevate our technical mission, so it will be important to prioritize practical skills and real-world applications, making a CPL policy especially relevant and beneficial in this educational context.

Credit for Prior Learning at STCC

The College currently awards credit-by-examination for Advanced Placement, CLEP and departmental challenge exams (the latter are available to matriculated students for a nominal fee, developed by College faculty and administered by the College’s Testing and Assessment Center, but credits earned are not counted towards a student’s residency requirement). Valor Act Academic Credit is awarded at STCC and those credits are reviewed in the Advising office by the Veterans Academic Counselor. Other credit-for-prior-learning opportunities include the awarding of credit based on industry credentials that a student may have earned (e.g., CISCO certification in an IT field), or hands-on evaluations done during a meeting with the student where they exhibit their knowledge (e.g., Introduction to Computer Systems). Each of these credit-for-prior-learning opportunities are detailed on the statewide My Experience Counts website. Additionally, some Academic Departments have agreed to grant credit based on a student’s completion of certain noncredit training (offered through our Workforce Development Office).

Current Policy

While STCC does not currently have an all-encompassing CPL policy, it does have a policy specifically for “CLEP, AP and Challenge Credit” and a “Valor Act Academic Credit Evaluation Policy.” These current policies state the following:

CLEP, AP AND CHALLENGE CREDIT (Current Policy)

The College may award up to 45 credits to persons who successfully complete examinations in specific subject areas given at the College under the aegis of the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), or a series of Challenge Exams developed by the College.

The CLEP subject examinations cover a wide range of disciplines and allow applicants to demonstrate proficiency in areas where they have acquired knowledge through non-traditional learning situations. Credits earned through CLEP examinations allow the College to waive introductory courses which the student would normally be required to take. CLEP credits will be awarded by STCC if and only if the student is currently registered in a degree or certificate program at STCC.



The College has produced challenge examinations in subject-matter areas not found in the CLEP battery so that people who wish to demonstrate competence in specialized areas may do so. Students who feel that they possess above average competence in a subject area should not hesitate to consult the STCC Testing Coordinator at 755-4689 for further information, consultation and testing. CLEP and Challenge credits cannot be used to replace or improve a grade already on a student's transcript. Only students enrolled in degree or certificate programs at STCC are eligible to take Challenge Exams. More information about CLEP exams can be found here.

Advanced Placement (AP) Examination scores range from 1 to 5 points. At STCC, AP scores of 3, 4, and 5 are acceptable as the equivalent of college-level course work. Official College Board scores must be submitted to the Admissions Office for review in order for credit to be considered.

VALOR ACT ACADEMIC CREDIT EVALUATION POLICY (Current Policy)

Applicants with previous military experience or coursework seeking transfer credit should supply the Admissions Office with related documentation. Awarding of credit for military training, coursework and experience is evaluated via the American Council of Education

Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services or by CLEP testing. Credits would need to be required within a student's academic program in order to be awarded. The campus contact person for information about the VALOR Act Academic Credit Evaluation Policy is Kimberly Reese, Veterans Academic Counselor (who may be contacted at 413-755-5343 or at kareese2201@stcc.edu)

Although this is a start, STCC needs a policy that is updated and broadened to recognize other forms of prior learning beyond these three options. Additionally, the current policy does not provide any guiding principles or standards, nor does it speak to components such as transferability.

The following note was also made about credit for prior learning in our 2021 comprehensive self-study:

Particularly in light of the fact that STCC is the only technical community college in the state system (and technical programs are concerned with just the sorts of competencies and skills that lend themselves well to prior learning assessment), it is clear that the College needs to expand its capacity in this area by developing both policy and process, as well as identifying courses for which portfolio or demonstration assessments can be conducted, training advisors who can assist students through the process of seeking credit-for-prior-learning, and engaging faculty in developing rubrics that can be applied consistently across



evaluators. (Recent changes to the MCCC DAY CBA acknowledge the burgeoning need for these forms of PLA by providing compensation parameters for faculty who evaluate portfolios for prior learning assessment.)

Describe recommended policy/protocol change, and the benefit/impact:

RECOMMENDATION: We recommend removing the two separate “CLEP, AP and Challenge Credit” and “Valor Act Academic Credit Evaluation” policies, instead replacing it with a broader “Credit for Prior Learning Policy” which is outlined below:

Credit for Prior Learning Policy Statement

Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) recognizes that students may possess knowledge and skills acquired through various non-traditional learning experiences outside of our academic programs including but not limited to work experience, professional training, military training, and other educational domains. As part of our commitment to supporting diverse learning pathways and facilitating student success, STCC offers opportunities for students to earn academic credit through the various options defined in Alternative Sources of Credit (Appendix A). Qualified faculty in each discipline will define the course criteria and assess fulfillment to determine the credit awarded.

Credit Limitation

Students may earn a maximum of 30 credits through CPL towards their associate degree at STCC. No more than 50% of credits required for a certificate program may be earned through CPL.

Transferability Disclaimer

It is important to note that the transferability of CPL credits awarded at STCC to other institutions is not guaranteed. Acceptance of CPL credits is subject to the policies and requirements of the receiving institution. It is the student’s responsibility to consult with their intended transfer institutions regarding the acceptance and applicability of CPL credits.

Availability of CPL

While STCC strives to offer CPL opportunities across a range of disciplines and programs, CPL is not universally available across all disciplines or programs. Availability of CPL options may vary based on program requirements, faculty expertise, and accreditation standards.



Alternative Sources of Credit (Appendix A)

- **Advanced Placement (AP)** examination scores range from 1 to 5 points. At STCC, AP scores of 3, 4, and 5 are acceptable as the equivalent of college-level course work. Official College Board scores must be submitted to the Admissions Office for review in order for credit to be considered.
- **College Level Examination Program (CLEP)** examinations cover a wide range of disciplines and allow applicants to demonstrate proficiency in areas where they have acquired knowledge through non-traditional learning situations. Credits earned through CLEP examinations allow the College to waive introductory courses which the student would normally be required to take. CLEP credits will be awarded by STCC if and only if the student is currently registered in a degree or certificate program at STCC. CLEP credits cannot be used to replace or improve a grade already on a student's transcript.
- **Challenge Examinations** produced by departments may be available in subject-matter areas not found in the CLEP battery so that people who wish to demonstrate competence in specialized areas may do so. Students who feel that they possess above average competence in a subject area should not hesitate to consult the STCC Testing Coordinator at 755-4689 for further information, consultation, and testing. Only students enrolled in degree or certificate programs at STCC are eligible to take Challenge Exams. Challenge Exam credits cannot be used to replace or improve a grade already on a student's transcript.
- **Professional Certifications** may provide evidence of a student's knowledge, skills, and competencies in a specific field or subject area. If a student feels that their professional certification demonstrates alignment with the learning outcomes, competencies, and criteria of the academic course(s) for which they are seeking credit, they may submit their credentials for review. Faculty experts within the discipline will assess the certification and evaluate its content, rigor, and alignment with academic course objectives. The number of credits awarded will depend on the depth, breadth, and relevance of the certification content to the academic course or program.
- **Portfolio** is a structured collection of documentation and evidence that students compile to demonstrate their prior learning experiences, knowledge, and skills relevant to specific academic courses or competencies. The portfolio serves as a comprehensive record that showcases how a student's prior experiences align with the learning outcomes and criteria established for particular courses or disciplines. Content experts would evaluate the relevance, depth, and breadth of the student's



knowledge and skills in relation to academic course requirements. This assessment process enables students to potentially earn academic credits for their prior learning experiences, contributing to their progress toward degree completion and career advancement.

- **Military Experience** - Applicants with previous military experience or coursework seeking transfer credit should supply the Admissions Office with related documentation. Awarding of credit for military training, coursework and experience is evaluated via the American Council of Education Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services or by CLEP testing. Credits would need to be required within a student's academic program in order to be awarded. The campus contact person for information about the VALOR Act Academic Credit Evaluation Policy is Kimberly Reese, Veterans Academic Counselor (who may be contacted at 413-755-5343 or at kareese2201@stcc.edu).

**Please Note – The section labeled “Alternative Sources of Credit (Appendix A)” is recommended to be an informational extension of the CPL Policy, rather than a piece of the policy itself. In this way, the information provided as part of Appendix A can be updated as needed without having to go through the SGC process for every change. However, these definitions are still meant to be forward facing and listed along with the policy.*

BENEFITS OF A CPL POLICY:

1. **Recognizing Professional Experience:** Adult learners often come to colleges with valuable work experience and skills gained through their careers. CPL policies acknowledge and validate this prior learning, allowing students to translate their professional expertise into academic credits. This recognition can expedite their educational journey and provide a pathway to further career advancement.
2. **Flexibility and Acceleration:** CPL policies offer adult learners the flexibility to accelerate their educational progress by earning credits for their prior knowledge and skills. This can be particularly appealing to working adults who are balancing multiple responsibilities and seek more efficient pathways to completing their degree or certification programs.
3. **Cost-Efficiency:** For many adult learners, cost is a significant factor when considering higher education. CPL policies can help reduce the overall cost of education by allowing students to earn credits without enrolling in additional courses. This affordability can make college programs more accessible and appealing to adult learners, especially those with financial constraints.

4. Relevance to Career Goals: Technical colleges focus on preparing students for specific careers and industries. CPL policies align with this career-oriented approach by allowing adult learners to earn credits for relevant skills and knowledge acquired through their professional experiences. This connection to real-world applications can enhance the practicality and relevance of technical education for adult learners.
5. Motivation and Engagement: Recognizing and rewarding prior learning through CPL policies can boost adult learners' motivation and engagement in their educational journey. It acknowledges their achievements, builds confidence, and encourages them to continue pursuing their academic and career goals.
6. Support for Diverse Learners: CPL policies support a diverse student body by acknowledging and valuing the unique backgrounds, experiences, and skills that students bring to the educational environment. This inclusivity contributes to a more equitable and enriching learning community.

Describe background and rationale for how the recommendation was generated (involvement of staff-faculty-students-governance bodies), include any supporting data, reports, survey results, research, et al.:

This recommendation was developed with input from the following stakeholders:

- The AUC Academic Planning Standing Committee
- Faculty from various disciplines/programs
- Staff from various departments
- The Registrar
- The Senior Director of Assessment
- The Dean of Academic Initiatives
- The Vice President of Academic Affairs

Supporting Data

In a fiscal year 2018 statewide study of credit-for-prior-learning activity at each of the 15 Massachusetts Community Colleges, data revealed that STCC was in “the middle of the pack” with respect to the numbers of students (208) to whom it awarded credit for prior learning. In FY 2018, Advanced Placement credits represented 37% of STCC’s 1,134 credit-for-prior-learning credits, followed by Departmental Challenge Exams (21%) and credits articulated from vocational high schools (18%). The comparative data showed that some sister colleges were doing remarkable work with other forms of prior learning assessment, including local evaluation of student learning outcomes, portfolio assessments, etc.. While 13% of STCC’s 2018 graduating class had earned some credit-for-prior-learning during their



time at the College, most other institutions had broader PLA impact among their graduates (in some cases, as high as 23%, even at institutions larger than STCC).

In fiscal year 2023, the College awarded credit for prior learning to 126 (2%) of its students. Demographically, Hispanic students and females were overrepresented in participation, while White and African American students, and males, were underrepresented. The majority of credits (78%) were awarded through examination (with AP credit leading the other forms of credit-by-examination by a wide margin). Credits based on articulation agreements with Chapter 74 schools were awarded to 12 students. Military credit was awarded to only 1 student in FY23. Only 12% of the FY2023 graduating class earned credit for prior learning during their time at the College.

Date submitted:

II: Recommendation Review

Shared Governance Council Review and Consideration (Date):

Generated Consensus (minutes made available):

Next Steps (as needed):

III: Presidential Action

Decision on the Recommendation:

Rationale/Summary:



Date of Presentation to STCC Trustees:

(Signature)

(Date)