BEST PRACTICES FOR DISCUSSING TAWC PLA PROGRAM WITH STUDENTS

General Points to Convey to Students:

The challenges...

*Students might be a good fit for PLA if they*: have more than 5+ years of work and/or volunteer experience, have solid documentation that supports that experience, have 5-6 credits of general elective space available, have taken ENG 114 and 124 with a grade of C- or above (preferably a B- or higher), have at least six months left before anticipated graduation, and their experience must be translatable to an accredited college-level academic course.

*PLA credit is not automatically granted* based on experience, training, or certifications. **Students will enroll in a 3-credit class that teaches them how to create a detailed academic portfolio that documents how college level learning happened as part of their experience/training/certification.** They are being evaluated on the college level learning, NOT the experience. They must be able to tie their experience to appropriate theory in the discipline. The knowledge must be applicable in multiple situations, not just the situation described. This portfolio will be assessed by faculty with subject matter expertise and credit may be denied if it does not successfully meet the criteria.

*Students can also earn PLA credit through computer challenge exams and CLEP exams.* For more information about this, they can view the PLA handbook.

*The PLA process that TAWC uses is not unique; it meets the standards and follows the guidelines developed by the Council on Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).* These are the same standards and guidelines that other colleges and universities with reputable PLA programs use. For more information about the CAEL standards and guidelines, students can visit: [http://www.cael.org/ten-standards-for-assessing-learning](http://www.cael.org/ten-standards-for-assessing-learning)

*PLA 250 is a writing intensive course and students will need strong academic writing skills and be willing and able to dedicate sufficient time to work on their claims in order to be successful.*

The opportunities...

*Students who complete PLA coursework tend to have higher persistence and graduation rates, as well as better academic outcomes.*

*In addition to earning academic credit for professional experience outside of the classroom, taking the PLA class will train you to construct a compelling narrative about your work/life experience that will be helpful when applying for future jobs.* It can also help you feel more confident about your professional skills and give you a feeling of accomplishment. (“Students who complete the portfolio speak of satisfaction, pride, a new perspective, a feeling of accomplishment, and appreciation of the process for saving time and money (Boornazian, 1994; Dagavarian & Walters, 1993; Fisher, 1991; Freers, 1994”).

*The PLA class is an excellent way to further develop your professional writing skills.*

*We are building extensive support structures for PLA students into the process, so that they have plenty of resources and advice when writing their claims.*
*We have several TAWC students who have completed multiple successful claims and have saved significant time and money as they progress toward graduation because of it.*

**Our Process:**

When we receive a general student inquiry about PLA, coaches/admissions staff should check the “PLA Inquiry” box in Salesforce. Students will receive an automatic email from Gretchen, with contact information and useful PLA documents.

When a student is ready to take PLA 250 (has met the basic requirements), coaches should check the “PLA Seeking” box in Salesforce. Gretchen will receive an automatic task message to contact students. After speaking with the students, Gretchen will approve the student’s participation in PLA250 or determine that it is not a good fit for them. She will approve or deny them in the “PLA 250 Approval” box in Salesforce; coaches will then receive an automatic notification that a decision has been made. If students have been approved, advisors should work with students to fit PLA 250 into their future schedule.

After students register for PLA 250, Gretchen will contact them again to make sure that they are prepared to take the course and answer any questions that they have. Before this conversation, they should already be thinking about which of their experiences might be appropriate for PLA claims, gathering documentation to support those claims, and updating their resume.

Students will take the PLA course and be guided through every step of creating their first claim. There is no charge for submitting the first claim. Any additional claims will cost $400 each. Students will not be charged for the review of any claims in which credit is denied.

Upon completion of PLA 250, students are responsible for submitting their properly formatted claims via email to Gretchen. Gretchen will acknowledge receipt of the claim(s) via email and will assign a qualified academic assessor to review the claim(s) and create a case in Salesforce. All important documents will be archived in this case on Salesforce. Students are not permitted to know the name(s) of their assessor(s). Generally, the claim(s) will be reviewed within three weeks of receipt and students will be notified via email at that time whether or not they are being granted credit. The college registrar is also notified at that time so that the credit will appear on their transcript, as applicable.

Students have the opportunity to submit one revised claim if credit is denied. There is also an appeals process if students wish to dispute the results of the assessment.

Students will be billed after the assessor finishes reviewing their claim. Students can continue to write and submit additional claims after they have completed PLA250, if they wish. They can contact Gretchen with questions or concerns at any time.

**PLA Credit Breakdown:**

Students can earn a total of 36 credits in all forms of PLA.

They can earn:

- Up to 12 credits through CLEP
- Up to 6 credits through Challenge exams (only option that can meet residency requirements)
- Up to 36 credits through portfolio claims (The PLA250 class does not count as part of those credits)

**ACE Credits:**

We generally cannot accept ACE credits for transfer, but students should speak to Gretchen about their specific situation.