

Student Success

Talent Development

Community Vitality

## Credit for Prior Learning

For many adult students, years of professional experience or military training go unrecognized in their pursuit of a college degree. However, some institutions use Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) as a way to value the learning obtained from work, life, and military experiences. Schoolcraft College has offered credit for prior learning (CPL) for several years and recently made improvements to its CPL processes to ensure that students' hard-earned knowledge translates directly into college credit—saving time, money, and accelerating their path to graduation.

## What is Credit for Prior Learning?

CPL offers students college credit for a variety of previous learning opportunities. This can include high school experience (e.g., Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams), work experience, military training, standardized exams (e.g., College-Level Examination Program and DANTES Subject Standardized Tests), licenses, and certifications. By granting CPL, Schoolcraft recognizes that college-level skills can be obtained outside a traditional college classroom, and students should be credited for these experiences.

## Student-Centered CPL Process

Schoolcraft shares the Michigan Sixty by 30 goal of increasing the number of working-age Michiganders with a skill certificate or college degree. The college took dedicated time to streamline its once complex and fragmented process, creating a student-centered approach that enhances communication and further incentivizes participation. The college formed a committee comprised of university-wide offices determined to remove the burden on students and increase the credits earned through CPL. Initially the process at Schoolcraft was cumbersome and involved students visiting multiple departments at the college. A student would obtain a paper form from the Records Office, submit this form to the appropriate academic department for approval by subject matter experts, pay \$25 at the Cashier's Office, and finally return to the Records Office to show evidence of payment and ensure the credit was applied.

Schoolcraft's CPL committee brought together staff from various administrative offices, including the registrar, curriculum, student relations, and admissions. Through collaborative conversations, the offices clarified their roles in the CPL process, leading to a significant reduction in barriers and a smoother experience for students.



Former CPL Process	→	Revised CPL Process
Required students to visit multiple departments (Records Office, Academic Department, Cashier's Office).		Streamlined approval and credit application process.
Charged students a \$25 fee for credit to appear on transcripts.		Eliminated the \$25 fee.
Lacked clear communication about CPL eligibility.		Created a clear Transfer In webpage for easy access to CPL information.

## Increased Student Access and Credits Awarded

This committee took one year to focus on revising its practices and to communicate to faculty, staff, and students the updated process and CPL-qualifying credentials. Students now can easily access information about transferable credits, including CPL, through Schoolcraft's course catalog and its [Transfer In](#) web page. During professional development and student orientations, staff and students learn how to use the college's webpages and to connect to state resources like the [Michigan Transfer Network](#) website, which serves as a comprehensive system to help students determine transfer equivalencies and opportunities for CPL at colleges across the state.

In addition to increasing access to information and simplifying the CPL process, Schoolcraft eliminated the \$25 transfer fee for students. Schoolcraft saw a significant impact on nursing students after removing the fee. Without this cost barrier, earned credits are now added to transcripts more efficiently, allowing CPL recipients to graduate sooner. In the 2022–23 academic year, the college awarded 80 equivalency credits to nontraditional students applying for industry-recognized credentials.

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## Expanding the CPL Reach

After Schoolcraft began its work on CPL, the Michigan Legislature passed Public Act 251 of 2022, granting authority to the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity to use Michigan Reconnect funds to reimburse institutions \$80 for each credit hour awarded through CPL. Schoolcraft continues to explore how it might use the funding to improve the experience of staff and students, for example transferring the CRM request process to a digital space. In expanding CPL, Schoolcraft College remains focused on its goal of increasing student completion of degrees and certificates. By September 30, 2025, the college aims to increase the number of students earning degrees or certificates by 5%, from a baseline of 1,207 unduplicated students in 2021–2022 to 1,268 in 2024–2025. With the wide sweeping benefits associated with CPL, administrators at Schoolcraft are continuously looking to improve the CPL process, eliminating barriers for students to earn credits and attain their degree.

**“It was an opportunity for improvement across a broad space of our college, but the focus was always on our students and how to remove barriers for them.”**

**— Associate Dean for Occupational Programs**