25 Years of The National Institute on the Assessment of Adult Learning

June 20, 2013
A Brief Overview

• Originally the National Institute on the Assessment of Experiential Learning
• Produced in cooperation with CAEL and SUNY Empire State College
• Presentations were primarily lectures by National Institute Faculty, with some discussions, simulations, role-playing games
National Institute Proceedings, 1989

Topics
How Adults Learn Through Experience
Identifying College-Level Learning
Documenting Learning
Measuring Learning
Evaluating Learning
Selecting and Training Faculty Assessors
Marketing Prior Learning Assessment to Faculty, Administrators, and Potential Students
Maintaining a Quality Program
By the second year, the National Institute was organized into two tracks, for Beginners and Advanced.
Consistent Themes

- Outcomes Assessment
- What is College-Level Learning?
- Accountability and Rater Reliability
- Starting a PLA Program at Your Institution
- History and Future of PLA
- Graduate-Level PLA
Not Seen As Often Lately

- Learning Theory (with a couple of exceptions)
- Emphasis on Experiential Learning
- Yes, We Can Change the World!
- How to Explain to Others What You Are Doing
Dr. Paula Hooper Mayhew, Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 1991

Even if you have not been successful in highlighting your activities in the self-study, this newfound interest in outcomes assessment may make you and your programs the subject of interest to evaluators who are not expert in your areas, people who can give you 20 minutes or so on their way to evaluating other things. So, you have to be prepared to be reassuring about the quality and rigor of your methods, to act bright and cheerful, and to explain prior learning assessment in the simplest way possible. (Usually using a sample student portfolio heavy on direct course equivalents is the easiest way.)
Newer Developments

- Competency-Based Learning
- Online Assessment

4. I believe information technologies have great potential for PLA, and if cost were not an issue, then some of the barriers to effective learning at a distance can be pre-empted right from the beginning. First, all of the participants can be given similar hardware and software that would allow them to access and download information, as well as participate in computer-mediated conferencing (CMC). The World Wide Web can be used as a platform for presenting a portfolio development course. CMC can allow participants to pose questions and share ideas. Questions can be archived by the instructor to be accessed or re-visited anytime. With the appropriate software, privacy can be an option for those who want to share their information only with the advisor. For students residing in remote communities where Internet access can be a problem, the course could be presented on a CD-ROM.
Renamed

2009:
Renamed National Institute on the Assessment of Adult Learning

- What does the new name represent?
- Less emphasis on experience as the basis for learning?

Another question: What haven’t we covered in these 25 years?
Friday

Where do we go next?