By Ashley Collins, Director of Prior Learning Assessment

Did you know that you can earn credit for the learning experiences you've had outside the college classroom? Whether you're at the beginning, somewhere in the middle, or nearing completion of your degree, you might be eligible for academic credit that will help you save time and money. The Office of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is ready to help you meet your educational goals.

There are several ways you can earn credit for your prior learning.

STANDARDIZED TESTS: Have college credits from high school? High school testing such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) can result in academic credit depending on the subject matter and your overall score.

Already knowledgeable in a subject area? We offer three kinds of computerized tests where you can demonstrate your basic knowledge. Bypass a foundational course in favor of one that puts you closer to the completion of your degree.
- CLEP – 35 exams approved for credit (offered on-site in Portland)
- DSST – 34 exams approved for credit (offered on-site in Portland)
- Excelsior – 6 exams approved for credit

LANGUAGE EXAMINATIONS: Fluent in more than one language? You can earn up to 6 general elective credits for any of 66 languages through NYU and BYU language exams. You can take one of the language tests in roughly 2.5 hours at the Portland Campus Testing Center.

COURSE CHALLENGE EXAMS: Hoping to place out of a course in an area not covered by available CLEP, DSST, or Excelsior exams? In certain cases, a faculty member might develop an individual test to assess your knowledge of course material. You can earn credit for the course if you pass the exam.
CREDENTIAL REVIEW: Have licenses or credentials from trainings associated with your job? You may be able to earn course credit for some licenses, certificates, and other credentials from organizations outside the University. We can review your license or certificate to determine whether credit is applicable. A full list of currently approved certifications is on our website.

ACADEMIC PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT: Can’t find another way to articulate what you’ve learned? If there’s no available exam to help you demonstrate what you’ve learned, we can work with faculty members to help you create an academic portfolio to reflect your knowledge. Your portfolio will include a letter of intent, resume, narrative, and any supporting materials you have (certificates, awards, letters of recommendation, etc.) to document your mastery of course learning objectives. Portfolio credit options include general electives, subject-specific electives, and individual course equivalencies.

READY TO GET STARTED? Contact your Academic Advisor or your Faculty Advisor today to determine whether PLA will fit into your degree completion plan. Not sure how this works or want to talk to someone in the PLA office for more information? We’re just a phone call (207-780-5909 or 207-780-4663), an email (priorlearningusm@maine.edu), or a click away (www.usm.maine.edu/pla).