Chapter 9

CLEP: A Model of Technology and Innovation in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The cost of higher education goes beyond the price of tuition. College students often also face the burden of balancing college, family, and work. Demanding schedules and obligations often lead to putting courses on hold. Additionally, college students can be overwhelmed by course demands and pre-requisite skills that are required. Time is consistently an obstacle in degree completion. Of these struggles that so many face, CLEP exams are a common solution. The College Level Examination Program allows students to essentially test out of college courses and earn college credit, saving time and money. While students must be prepared for these exams, there are convenient ways to options including MOOCs, Khan Academy, and College Board resources.

INTRODUCTION

The intention of this chapter is to introduce and make leaders aware of the CLEP exams and provide information on how technology leaders can promote the CLEP exams and use technology to help students prepare for the CLEP exams. The CLEP exams are often underutilized. This chapter could lead to significant and valuable research through implementing new options for CLEP provided through technology. The resources discussed in this chapter provide educational leaders with the opportunity to create policies, methodologies, and utilize emerging technologies to provide equal opportunities for citizens around the world.

Future college students face increasing tuition costs with less financial aid. At the same time, the number of students required to take remedial courses and the number of students who begin, but do not complete college is growing. Those who do graduate face challenges meeting skill demands. These concerns can all be addressed with Prior Learning Assessment through the College Level Examination (CLEP) Program.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7473-6.ch009
Although the average cost of college tuition can vary based on the location and type of institution, the average four-year public tuition for in state students was $9,650, while four-year private tuition was $33,480 in 2016-2017 (Trends in Higher Education, 2018). There is an approximate 7% increase for both public and private when compared to the 2015-2016 average tuition.

Data collected from public two and four-year colleges revealed that 96% of colleges enrolled students who were required remediation; furthermore, over 20% of the colleges reported that over half of incoming students were in at least one remediation course (Butrymowicz, 2017). Remediation is estimated to cost students, colleges, and taxpayers $7 billion per year (Butrymowicz, 2017).

In 2018, CollegeAtlas.org reported that 56% of college students who started at a 4-year college drop out by year six of their college career. Seventy percent of Americans will study at a 4-year college, but only one-third will graduate with a degree. Thirty percent of freshmen college students drop out after the first year. Over 75% of students who are required to take remedial classes never graduate.

The objectives of this chapter include:

1. **CLEP Exams**: Providing an overview of the CLEP exams.
2. **Advantages of the CLEP Exams**: Providing potential advantages of the CLEP exams including saving money, earning credit, lower dropout, improving skills, and save time.
3. **Resources for Preparing for CLEP Exams**: Providing resources that are available to prepare for CLEP exams including MOOCs, Khan Academy, and College Board.
4. **Results of CLEP Exams**: Providing information and statistics on CLEP exam completion as it relates to college enrollment and completion.
5. **Limitations of Current Research**: Providing limitations of current research.

**BACKGROUND: PRIOR-LEARNING ASSESSMENTS (PLAS)**

Prior-learning assessments, PLAs are used to demonstrate knowledge equivalent to college courses. According to American Council on Education (ACE), prior learning is learning that takes place formally or informally outside of college courses (Credit for Prior Learning, 2018). Prior learning can include work, independent study, military, professional certification, volunteer services, and civic activities, that could be equivalent to college work and put towards academic credit.

According to BestColleges.com, there are four ways to take advantage of PLAs:

1. **Portfolio**: Students can submit a portfolio to the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) that demonstrates subject knowledge.
2. **Subject-Specific Exam**: Students can take a CLEP, DSST, Advanced Placement, or International Baccalaureate program exam.
3. **Course Substitution**: Students can attend a college that offers credit for course substitution.
4. **Non-Standard Learning Credit**: Students can apply for non-standard learning credits through the American Council on Education (ACE). (Earning College Credit with Prior-Learning Assessments, 2018)