

# Turning Experience Into Degrees: Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) Is Advancing Career Pathways For San Diego's Military and Greater Workforce

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More Californians than ever before are achieving their educational and career goals faster while saving money in the process with the expansion of Credit for Prior Learning (CPL). CPL enables students to earn free college credits for prior professional, military or life experiences. A key initiative under the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) [Vision 2030](#) and a central component of Governor Gavin Newsom's [Master Plan for Career Education](#), high-paying career pathways are going to be more accessible for students with or without a four-year degree.

A 2024 economic impact study estimates that CPL can save veterans up to \$26,115 in college costs and working adults up to \$14,653, while also boosting their earning potential. By recognizing real-world skills, this program creates more affordable, equitable pathways to a fulfilling career for nontraditional learners.

Thanks to Strong Workforce Funds, CPL programs at community colleges across San Diego and Imperial Counties are expanding to better serve students. MiraCosta College, Southwestern College and Grossmont College have built infrastructure to raise awareness and provide professional development opportunities for faculty and staff. Palomar College is now the state leader in CPL with over 200 eligible courses and has developed training resources for faculty that are used statewide.

A recent CPL workshop, led by San Diego & Imperial Counties Regional Consortium and Palomar College CPL Coordinator Candace Rose, brought together over 100 community college leaders from across California. This event focused on best practices for assessing military and veteran workforce training for college credit. The strong turnout reflects a deep regional and statewide commitment to supporting transitioning military and veterans as they prepare for new careers in a rapidly changing world.

With more than [110,000 military service members and nearly 200,000 veterans](#) living in San Diego, their education and career goals affect our regional economic and workforce development. CPL ensures their valuable skills and training translate into meaningful academic credit, accelerating pathways to high-demand careers.



*“I’m passionate about training fellow colleagues on how to support our military and veteran students,” said Candace Rose, CPL Coordinator at Palomar College. “In our workshop, we walked through real-world scenarios to determine how prior learning can be awarded for academic credit. For example, a military service member with specialized training as an Aviation Communication Systems Technician—who completed on-the-job training at the Marine Corps Communications Electronics School—could apply that experience toward a Computer Network Administration certificate or associate’s degree.”*

Beyond military training, CPL also helps adult learners bring industry certifications, apprenticeships and work-based learning to programs in accounting, child development, automotive technology, emergency medical education, graphic communication, welding and more. CPL is strengthening San Diego and Imperial Counties’ education-to-career pathways, growing the talent pipeline and supporting economic mobility for students of all backgrounds.

For more information and access to workshop materials, visit the [Palomar College CPL Materials & Resources webpage](#).