



# CREDIT

*when it's due*

# Florida

## STATE PROFILE



State Funder: Helios Education Foundation

### About Credit When It's Due

The Credit When It's Due (CWID) initiative is funded by six foundations and is supporting 15 states to develop reverse transfer programs and policies. Reverse transfer enables students to receive an associate's degree when students meet associate's degree requirements after transfer to a 4-year college or university.

### State Implementation Context

The Florida College system includes 28 community colleges and state colleges, and the Florida State University System has twelve member universities. The Florida College system invited state colleges and public universities to participate in the reverse transfer process, and nine Florida colleges and four universities chose to participate as pilot institutions. Memoranda of Understanding outline roles and responsibilities of the institutions in the partnerships. Many Florida colleges have implemented auto-graduation processes (before students transfer), as well as completion initiatives with currently enrolled students, which further limits how many students eventually transfer without associate's degrees and become eligible for reverse transfer. Even though most transfer students in Florida already have associate's degrees, pilot institutions are working to identify eligible students and to systemize reverse transfer processes for an estimated pool of 5,000 currently enrolled students in an average term (across pilot institutions).

### Implementation Timeline

**January – February 2013:** Florida Board of Governors legal counsel recommends opt-in consent for all participating consortia.

**February – March 2013:** Memoranda of Agreements (MOUs) were developed and signed among reverse transfer consortia.

**Late Spring 2013:** Universities identified lists of students who were potentially eligible students for reverse transfer.

**Summer – Fall 2013:** Degree audits conducted and the first reverse transfer degrees were awarded

**November 2013:** Presentation given on reverse transfer at the Association of Florida Colleges conference.

**December 2013:** Meeting with Helios Foundation to determine next steps.

**November 21, 2014:** Florida reverse transfer convening held at Hillsborough Community College.

**Spring 2015:** MOU amendments and final disbursements distributed to participating institutions.

### Key Implementation Strategies

**Regional Memoranda of Agreements (MOUs) for RT.** Leaders of all participating institutions signed MOUs to support reverse transfer degrees to students meeting the established eligibility criteria. In the memoranda, universities agreed to provide a list of potentially eligible students to each partner college and establish timelines for the process at their institution. Participating Florida colleges agreed to conduct degree audits for students on the lists, award the associate's degree to eligible students, and report awardees to the Florida College System and the partner university.

**Decentralized Approach.** The Florida College system office serves as the coordinating entity for Florida's reverse transfer initiative. Implementation is guided by the MOUs and each pilot college received approximately \$30,000 and each University partner received \$15,000 to support staff time on reverse transfer processes.

### Reverse Transfer Process

Based on a review of implementation across CWID states, OCCRL developed a framework for the reverse transfer process that consists of five broad processes. Because reverse transfer processes vary among partnerships in Florida, one partnership was selected to illustrate the reverse transfer process. The University of South Florida's process is applied to this framework below.

- 1. Student Identification:** The five partner state and community colleges identify students who transferred to USF using the National Student Clearinghouse, and send a list of these students to USF. Using the list of names received from the five state and community colleges, USF reviews the students' USF and transfer academic work to determine whether the student has met the requirements to be awarded an associate's degree.
- 2. Consent:** USF emails the eligible students to seek student consent using an opt-in model. In Fall 2014, all incoming transfer students consent to reverse transfer as a condition of admission to USF.
- 3. Transcript Exchange:** USF sends each of the five state and community colleges a list of students who consented from the original list received, and the state



Credentials awarded as of May 2015: **275**

Credential Type: Associate of Arts



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and community colleges use the Florida Automated System for Transferring Educational Records (FASTER) to access electronic transcript data.

4. **Degree Audit:** USF uses various means to audit the student records, one of which is the degree audit system. State and colleges audit degrees using their existing technology and processes.
5. **Degree Conferral and Advising:** If students meet all degree requirements, the state and community colleges confer the degree and communicate the degree conferral to the students. Once the state and community college award the degrees, official transcripts are forwarded to USF for posting of the A.A. degrees.

### Implementation Successes and Challenges

**Successes:** Florida's regional partnership approach resulted in early implementation of reverse transfer during the grant period, and all of the partnerships reported that reverse transfer associate's degrees have been conferred. While the number of reverse transfer associate's degree is lower than expected, this is an indicator that Florida's articulation policies and local graduation procedures are working well. A second success involves identifying enhancements to existing transfer and articulation policies that have implications beyond reverse transfer. Since implementation was locally driven through college-university partnerships, the successes were particular to a given partnership. For example, the USF regional partnership has worked on identifying opportunities for streamlining verification of students' completion of general education requirements, enhancing general education degree audit processes at FCS institutions, and identifying course substitutions and equivalencies for college-specific requirements for associate's degree conferral. Many institutions are incorporating the National Student Clearinghouse into their process of transcript exchange. Colleges and universities also use the

Florida Automated System for Transferring Educational Records (FASTER) to exchange student transcripts which has helped to streamline the process.

**Challenges:** Florida determined that an opt-in consent process complies with FERPA, but the opt-in policy has contributed to lower than optimal numbers of students who consent to participate in reverse transfer. Institutions are exploring ways to improve consent rates, however. For example, USF embedded student consent for reverse transfer in the transfer student admission application beginning in Fall 2014. A second significant challenge is the low number of students who meet eligibility requirements due, in part, to Florida policies that incentivize student completion of an associate's degree prior to transfer to a public, state university. Florida's 2+2 Statewide Articulation Agreement and process rewards associate's degree completion by guaranteeing the transfer of 60 credits earned as part of the Associate in Arts degree. Additionally, many FCS institutions have auto-graduation policies that automatically confer associate's degrees when students meet degree requirements. Both of these initiatives contribute to increased number of associate's degree holders prior to transfer, and reduce the number of students then eligible for reverse transfer.

### Sustainability

As a component of the MOU amendments with partnering institutions, each institution receiving second-year disbursements will provide a toolkit or guide to implementing a reverse transfer protocol. These guides will be compiled and shared widely with the Florida College System and State University System institutions in Florida so other institutions can adopt reverse transfer.

## Institutions Participating in Credit When It's Due

Florida Atlantic University  
Broward College  
Indian River State College  
Palm Beach State College

Florida International University\*  
Broward College  
Miami Dade College\*

University of North Florida\*  
Florida State College at Jacksonville

University of South Florida  
Hillsborough Community College\*  
Pasco-Hernando Community College  
Polk State College\*  
St. Petersburg College  
State College of Florida,  
Manatee-Sarasota\*

\*MOU amendment signed

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