



# CREDIT

*when it's due*

# Michigan

## STATE PROFILE



State Funder: The Kresge 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

In 2012, Michigan House Bill 5372 (H-1) CR-1 required that community colleges collaborate with Michigan's public universities to establish reverse transfer agreements with at least three community colleges by January 2013 in order for institutions to receive performance funding. As of April 2015, nearly 160 agreements have been developed among Michigan's 28 community colleges and 15 4-year public institutions. Some of the agreements are consortia arrangements and others are single institution partnerships, but all are locally created. Each subsequent state appropriations bill, including FY2016, has included this requirement in the boilerplate reports.

### Key Implementation Strategies

**State-Level Coordination.** Michigan's institutions are largely autonomous in crafting reverse transfer agreements and implementing them; however, the state's grant-funded efforts are coordinated by the Michigan Center for Student Success (MCSS), housed in the Michigan Community College Association. The Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan (PCSUM). MCSS and PCSUM view the implementation of reverse transfer agreements continuing beyond the 2-year grant process.

### Implementation Timeline

**January 2013–Present:** Reverse transfer agreements were created between community colleges and universities or regional consortia of institutions.

**March 2013:** A statewide reverse transfer survey was disseminated and analyzed.

**April 2013–September 2013:** Statewide meetings and webinars were conducted to discuss the implementation of local agreements.

**Winter 2014:** The first reverse transfer degrees were conferred and a pilot data collection was conducted statewide.

**Spring–Summer 2014:** An iterative process of reviewing initial data and revisiting local agreements was implemented to move toward a more common approach statewide.

**Fall 2014:** A second data collection was conducted on the number of eligible students, the number that opted to go through the degree audit process, and the number that were awarded a degree.

**Winter–Spring 2015:** With data in hand and the experience of working through disparate local processes, the state partners are working with the institutions to finalize a set of common statewide reverse transfer principles.

MCSS and PCSUM conducted a statewide baseline survey of institutions in March 2013 and repeated the survey in May 2014 to understand: (a) student eligibility and degree requirements, (b) institutions' communications with students about reverse transfer, and (c) elements of university/community college partnerships. MCSS and PCSUM also provide leadership of statewide meetings and conference sessions and webinars on reverse transfer.

**State-Level Data Gathering on Reverse Transfer.** MCSS and PCSUM, in partnership with OCCRL, created an aggregate reporting template to track CWID outcomes in Michigan. The pilot data were gathered in early 2014 and the template was revised for the fall to reflect feedback from the institutions and lessons learned from the national initiative. MCSS and PCSUM are also working with the state's Center for Educational Performance and Information to add data elements to the emerging state longitudinal data system to support tracking of reverse transfer students moving forward. Lastly, MCSS and PCSUM have partnered with researchers at Michigan State University to conduct qualitative research with students to learn about their motivation and feedback and opinions about pursuing reverse transfer degrees. This research has helped to refine messaging and revise implementation processes.

**Development of Statewide Reverse Transfer Principles.** Based on the experience of CWID over the past two years, the colleges and universities have expressed a desire to move toward a more common approach to reverse transfer statewide. While the steps in the reverse transfer process described below are fairly similar, the varying eligibility requirements in local agreements have diminished the impact of CWID initially. The state has been working through early 2015 to establish a common set of principles and a more common process that will streamline reverse transfer and simplify the messages that are communicated to students.

**State Workgroup on Student Messaging.** A statewide workgroup was created in 2014 to develop common messaging and communications materials to be used by institutions to market reverse transfer opportunities to students. This group reviewed the initial statewide data and results of qualitative research conducted by Michigan State University to determine messaging that motivates students to pursue reverse transfer. One of the impediments to clearer messaging has been the lack of clear eligibility requirements. Once the statewide principles are finalized the messaging group will continue its work on messaging.

### 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, and Michigan's process is



Credentials awarded as of May 2015: **979**

**Credential Type(s):** Approximately half of the 28 community colleges award degrees for whatever the student is eligible and satisfied requirements. The rest only award Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, and/or Associate of General Studies for reverse transfer students.



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applied to this framework below. Given Michigan's decentralized implementation of reverse transfer processes, the collaboration between Grand Valley State University (GVSU) and Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) is featured as one example of how reverse transfer operates locally. GVSU and GRCC had one of the first reverse transfer agreements in the state and many others follow a similar process.

- 1. Student Identification:** GVSU runs reports in their system to identify eligible students based on the parameters of the local agreement.
- 2. Consent:** GVSU sends a letter and the reverse transfer/ FERPA waiver form to eligible students, and interested students return the completed form to the GVSU registrar.
- 3. Transcript Exchange:** If students consent, GVSU sends the form and an official transcript to the GRCC registrar's office. Currently, these paper transcripts are exchanged via email or fax.
- 4. Degree Audit:** Appropriate GRCC staff evaluates the student files for graduation requirements and applies transfer credit, as needed. If the student's requirements are met, the degree is posted. If requirements are missing, the student and the GVSU registrar are sent an email stating the missing requirements.
- 5. Degree Conferral and Advising:** Students who meet degree requirements receive an email informing them (and the GVSU registrar) of the credential conferred from GRCC. GRCC sends official transcripts to GVSU to update their records, and a GRCC diploma is created and mailed to the student.

### Implementation Successes and Challenges

**Successes:** The state legislative requirement spurred a significant amount of activity on reverse transfer, and the CWID grant provided a timely framework for statewide collaboration for what could have been a disjointed implementation process. With nearly 160 agreements in place, most universities have established agreements with more than three community colleges required by the legislature, with some having agreements with all 28 community colleges. Another key success is that the CWID grant, along with other transfer and articulation dialogues in the state, are

pushing institutions to reconsider long-standing policies such as residency requirements, general education curriculum, and graduation requirements that create unnecessary barriers for degree completion in a context where students are increasingly mobile. In addition, based on the interest from Michigan institutions, the state invested some of the remaining CWID grant funds to support the National Student Clearinghouse project which will more efficiently facilitate the exchange of electronic transcripts.

**Challenges:** Given the decentralized implementation approach in Michigan, the need for better statewide facilitation of reverse transfer was identified as a challenge. Discussions about statewide facilitation have centered on such policies as: (a) a shared, statewide reverse transfer agreement; (b) centralized electronic transfer of transcript information; and (c) a statewide, coordinated messaging system about reverse transfer. The largest challenge to the development of a statewide, common reverse transfer agreement is that each community college has its own residency requirement and reverse transfer agreements are locally driven. Also, the challenge of having a single e-transcript system is that colleges and universities have different student information systems, and some institutions have established relationships with vendors to exchange electronic transcripts.

### Sustainability

Michigan's participation in CWID was always intended to leverage the opening created by the legislative language to create a sustained dialogue between and among the colleges and universities in the state about reverse transfer. The longer-term goal of this effort is to create a discourse relating to broader issues of student transitions between the 2- and 4-year education institutions, beyond reverse transfer. The grant collaboration between all the colleges and universities represents a significant level of cooperation in a decentralized state and has helped to foster a level of trust and collaboration that has been historically absent statewide. The legislative language that served as a catalyst in these efforts will be key to sustaining the dialogue moving forward. In addition, the policy conditions in Michigan are such that all the higher education institutions have the incentives to promote improved degree completion on an ongoing basis.

## Institutions Participating in Credit When It's Due

Alpena Community College	Kalamazoo Valley Community College	Monroe County Community College	St. Clair County Community College
Bay de Noc Community College	Kellogg Community College	Montcalm Community College	University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
Central Michigan University	Kirtland Community College	Mott Community College	University of Michigan-Dearborn
Delta College	Lake Michigan College	Muskegon Community College	University of Michigan-Flint
Eastern Michigan University	Lake Superior State University	North Central Michigan College	Washtenaw Community College
Ferris State University	Lansing Community College	Northern Michigan University	Wayne County Community College District
Glen Oaks Community College	Macomb Community College	Northwestern Michigan College	Wayne State University
Gogebic Community College	Michigan State University	Oakland Community College	West Shore Community College
Grand Rapids Community College	Michigan Technological University	Oakland University	Western Michigan University
Grand Valley State University	Mid Michigan Community College	Saginaw Valley State University	
Henry Ford College		Schoolcraft College	
Jackson College		Southwestern Michigan College	

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