



# CREDIT

*when it's due*

# New York

## STATE PROFILE



State Funder: Lumina 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 State University of New York (SUNY) includes 30 community college campuses and 29 universities, and the system's goal is to develop a system and process for institutions to handle reverse transfer degree conferral on students' path to the baccalaureate. SUNY's strategy includes the design, development, and utilization of a new software tool (DegreeWorks) that will automate degree audits using information on course equivalencies across SUNY's campuses and enable greater efficiency in reverse transfer associate's degree conferral.

### Key Implementation Strategies

**Field Visits to Community Colleges by SUNY's Reverse Transfer Coordinator.** Early in the grant, SUNY's Reverse Transfer Coordinator conducted field visits to all 30 SUNY community colleges to obtain baseline understanding of how and where transcript-level information is stored and retrieved. Gaps and needs that were identified include: (a) most community colleges

did not have course articulations recorded in online systems; (b) course equivalencies were not always updated when conducting degree audits; and (c) manual degree audits required more capacity than currently existed. A result of the fieldwork was the creation of a new process for entering course equivalencies from 2-year to 4-year institutions in the SUNY system to automate degree audits.

**Automated Degree Audit System.** DegreeWorks was redesigned with a new degree audit and planning tool, as well as a new Transfer Finder feature (i.e. a transfer audit and planning tool) such that staff and students could determine degree conferral readiness and assess transfer options. This degree audit infrastructure was foundational to scaling up reverse transfer across all SUNY institutions.

**Pilot Initiative.** Mohawk Valley Community College and SUNY Polytechnic Institute (formerly SUNY IT) and SUNY Morrisville piloted the reverse transfer process in fall 2013. Results showed one main reason students were ineligible for reverse transfer was that they did not meet the residency requirement at a single institution (i.e. student swirl). In addition, Erie Community College began working with Buffalo State College on reverse transfer separate from the centralized process, and lessons learned from both pilots have contributed to the statewide efforts.

**Student Focus Groups.** During visits to the SUNY campuses, the Reverse Transfer Coordinator conducted focus group interviews to learn about students' perspectives on reverse transfer. Students offered insights into their motivations for transferring without an associate's degree, their perception of the value of associate's degrees, their desire to participate in a reverse transfer degree conferral process, their recommendations for the process (consent, fees, etc.), their preferences for associate's degree types (relative to major field of study), and the potential impact of receiving the associate's degree on their path to the baccalaureate. The focus group data were also used to improve 4-year campus engagement in reverse transfer.

### 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 New York's process is applied to this framework below.

1. **Student Identification:** SUNY identifies eligible students based on credits earned and whether students met the residency requirements. Community colleges review the list of eligible students to ensure there are no academic or financial holds.

### Implementation Timeline

**November 2012:** SUNY hired a Reverse Transfer Coordinator.

**December 2012 – May 2013:** Approximately four to five field visits were conducted with community colleges per month, and focus groups were held during these visits.

**Spring 2013:** The Degree Audit and Planning Tool was released to most community colleges and universities, allowing students to assess progress in degree planning at any point in time at a single institution.

**Summer 2013 – March 2014:** The transfer audit tool called Transfer Finder was developed, allowing students to examine course transferability within the SUNY system. Transfer Finder has been beta tested with two campuses. Five pilot sites were selected, and reverse transfer processes developed.

**Summer 2014 – February 2015:** The student data collection process was developed for identification of eligible students. Policy language regarding FERPA was developed.

**February – March 2015:** Eligible students were identified, and student email addresses were collected.

**April 2015:** Webpage was developed to collect student information and consent.

**May 2015:** Review of approximately 300 transcripts began.

**June – July 2015:** First reverse transfer degrees to be conferred.



Credentials awarded as of May 2015:

0

**Credential Type(s):** Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, and Associate of Applied Science



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2. **Consent:** SUNY adopted an opt-in process for consent wherein the SUNY central office sends students an email that directs them to a website to provide contact information and consent to transcript exchange and reverse transfer.
3. **Transcript Exchange:** 4-year institutions send unofficial transcripts to community college via electronic exchange (E-Transcript technology) or electronic PDF.
4. **Degree Audit:** Community colleges conduct a preliminary degree audit manually or through DegreeWorks if available and students are contacted by SUNY and provided further instructions if they meet all degree requirements. Students then request an official university transcript be sent to the community college.
5. **Degree Conferral and Advising:** Upon receipt of official transcripts, community colleges re-verify that degree requirements were met and contact students concerning next steps to receive the degree.

### Implementation Successes and Challenges

**Successes:** SUNY completed the development of course articulation tables for 17 community colleges and 2 agriculture-technology colleges, leading to approximately 95,000 articulated courses across the system, as part of the development of the Degree Audit and Planning Tool and TransferFinder in DegreeWorks. Collaboration with SUNY institutions has resulted in considerable understanding about existing resources, resource limitations, and additional technological capacity needed for reverse transfer. SUNY identified promising practices in transcript review through the pilot process and determined some next steps for marketing reverse transfer to students.

**Challenges:** SUNY community colleges have expressed more willingness to volunteer to participate in reverse transfer than 4-year campuses. One explanation is that SUNY 4-year institutions have concentrated their time and attention on baccalaureate

degree conferral with DegreeWorks. Another challenge is the labor-intensive nature of inputting course equivalencies for automation of degree audits, liberal arts associate's degrees, and major-specific area associate's degrees. Campus constraints include limited staffing in registrar offices and competing campus priorities. The main campus-level constraints include limited staffing in registrar offices and numerous initiatives that demand campus attention. While the automated system for degree audits with course equivalencies is being built, the degree audit process involves manual review and sending students' transcript via scan and email. Finally, conflicting interpretations of FERPA in the context of reverse transfer was a barrier to implementation, but after discussion among the system and with federal authorities, a document providing a clearer understanding of FERPA as it relates to reverse transfer in SUNY was developed.

### Sustainability

SUNY intends to develop a batch/data mining process for automated degree audits that will be scaled system-wide. Once this technology is automated and operational, SUNY plans to combine data sources (on students' course-taking, grades, and completion data) to run degree audits every term. This process requires training for about 500,000 system users who must electronically upload information from all the course catalogs across clusters of campuses. SUNY also plans to formalize a process for students to request degree audits for reverse transfer, since campuses respond to student requests for degree audit and conferral. DegreeWorks will conduct degree audits each term, and an email will be sent automatically to students who are eligible for reverse transfer. The SUNY system also plans to provide all campuses with data mining to identify eligible students, to access course articulation equivalencies, to access cross-campus information, and to support official degree audits so degree conferrals can be made across campuses with accuracy and confidence.

## Institutions Participating in Credit When It's Due

Adirondack Community College	Erie Community College	NYS College of Human Ecology at Cornell	State University College at Plattsburgh
University at Albany	Farmingdale State College	NYS School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell	State University College at Potsdam
Alfred State College	Finger Lakes Community College	Onondaga Community College	State University College at Purchase
Binghamton University	Fulton-Montgomery Community College	Orange County Community College	Rockland Community College
State University College at Brockport	Genesee Community College	State University College at Cortland	Schenectady County Community College
Broome Community College	Herkimer County Community College	State University College at Fredonia	Stony Brook University
Buffalo State College	Hudson Valley Community College	State University College at Geneseo	Suffolk County Community College
University at Buffalo	Jamestown Community College	State University College at New Paltz	Sullivan County Community College
College of Technology at Canton	Jefferson Community College	State University College at Old Westbury	SUNY Polytechnic Institute
College of Technology at Delhi	Maritime College	State University College at Oneonta	Tompkins Cortland Community College
Cayuga Community College	Mohawk Valley Community College	State University College at Oswego	Ulster County Community College
Clinton Community College	Monroe Community College		Westchester Community College
College of Environmental Science and Forestry	Morrisville State College		
College of Optometry	Nassau Community College		
Columbia-Greene Community College	Niagara County Community College		
Corning Community College	North Country Community College		
Dutchess Community College			
Empire State College			

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