# CREDIT
*when it's due*

# North Carolina
## STATE PROFILE

State Funder: USA Funds

## 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 public higher education system in North Carolina consists of the University of North Carolina (UNC) system and the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS). The UNC system consists of 16 public constituent universities and the NCCCS system includes 58 public community colleges. North Carolina's CWID efforts are engaging all 58 community colleges in reverse transfer and as of June, 2015, and 11 of the 16 universities will be involved. All 16 universities will be participating by the end of 2015.

## Key Implementation Strategies

**Reverse Transfer Project Manager.** North Carolina hired a full-time project manager early in the grant period to provide grant coordination and lead the reverse transfer efforts. The project manager has been critical in developing and promoting reverse transfer around the state, meeting one-on-one with pilot institutions, building relationships, revising institutional and system policies to accommodate reverse transfer, supporting the implementation of institutional reverse transfer efforts, creating a marketing plan, ensuring FERPA compliance, and creating scenarios with community colleges to assist with the degree audit process.

**Developing Shared Technology Solution.** Given that the public community college and university systems are structurally separated in North Carolina, a core strategy of the CWID grant was to develop a degree audit and notification system for the purpose of reverse transfer. The Student Data Mart (SDM) system, the development

of which began before the CWID grant was received, is the primary mechanism whereby transcript-level information can be used to regularly determine students' eligibility for reverse transfer based on the number of credit hours that students earn. The lead college for the CWID grant, Central Piedmont Community College, developed a report to evaluate the degree audit of each student and to report by student what courses were needed in order to graduate the student. This will decrease the time needed for degree evaluation.

**Improving Course Articulation and Equivalencies.** NCCCS has an expansive statewide common course library, however, not all courses are taught at every community college. Whereas some community college student information systems include extensive course equivalencies, other systems do not. To aid in the processing of reverse transfer degrees, UNC has developed a crosswalk that articulates one university course with up to three different community college courses. Each community college receives a transcript report from UNC that includes course equivalencies for each eligible student. This will increase reverse transfer degree audit processing and allow community colleges to articulate more university courses toward associate's degree requirements.

## 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 North Carolina's process is applied to this framework. The following process is based on the implementation efforts at the pilot institutions in Spring 2014.

1. **Student Identification:** The pilot UNC campuses queried records to identify students who met the defined reverse transfer eligibility criteria.

2. **Consent:** North Carolina has implemented an opt-in policy. The pilot 15 universities contacted students by email during the first week of classes and asked them to provide consent by logging into a custom built web portal. The universities sent follow-up emails to non-responders each subsequent week for five weeks. Nearly all of the universities offered cash incentives and two universities offered students priority registration to increase participation. To maximize the proportion of students consenting to participate and ensure sustainability of reverse transfer, North Carolina developed technology that ensures both FERPA compliance and increased response rates. This technology utilizes the student services account to require all eligible students to "opt-in" or "opt-out" to the reverse transfer program, meaning that students must actively consent to participate.

3. **Transcript Exchange:** The UNC SDM collected the transcript data on the eligible students and placed it on a secure server. The individual community colleges, once authenticated, accessed the transcript data via SDM.

4. **Degree Audit:** The community colleges conduct the degree audit using existing institutional technology and the lead community college created technology processes to report what a student is

### Implementation Timeline

**2012:** The Student Data Mart (SDM) project was launched.

**February – June 2013:** Reverse transfer policies and procedures were developed, and a community college technology needs assessment was conducted.

**July – December 2013:** Various consent methods were assessed and developed. North Carolina began "mapping" course equivalencies between universities and community colleges.

**Fall 2013:** One institution tested student identification and consent processes prior to the UNC pilots.

**January 2014:** Students were identified and contacted for reverse transfer participation at pilot UNC campuses.

**June 2014 – September 2014:** The first associate's degrees were conferred.

**Summer – Fall 2014:** Statewide reverse transfer scale-up began and electronic FERPA consent was released at pilot universities.

**January 2015:** All 58 NCCCS public community colleges committed to participating in Reverse Transfer.

**March 2015:** Second set of student transcripts sent to 34 community colleges for evaluation.

**May 2015:** 11 of the 16 universities implemented a "pop-up" technology into their system student services account.

### Credentials awarded as of May 2015: **665**

**Credential Type(s):** Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Applied Associate of Science, Associate in General Education, Transfer Diploma in Arts.

missing from the degree audit in order to compare to the university courses to decrease time of evaluation. The purpose is to identify students who meet all associate's degree requirements.

5. **Degree Conferral and Advising:** Students who meet all degree requirements were conferred a degree and notified by the community college.

### Implementation Successes and Challenges

**Successes:** The first year of the grant period was extremely important—consensus was built among NCCCS institutions and consistent reverse transfer policies and procedures were developed, including a common residency requirement and waiving readmission and graduation fees. At the beginning of the second year of the grant, a marketing strategy was developed and launched. Similarly, the state experimented with consent methods with a relatively high proportion of students agreeing to participate. For example, the "pop-up" technology integrated into the student registration system resulted in a response rate of 91% responding yes/no and 9% deferring decision. Further, most pilot institutions have collected data on students who opted-out and these data have pointed North Carolina to specific areas of needed improvement, namely better communication regarding what reverse transfer is and how it benefits students. Another critical success was the improvement of course equivalencies between UNC courses and community college courses so more UNC courses transfer back to community colleges and eventually apply to associate's degrees. Finally, several technology enhancements were made at the state and local levels to support reverse transfer. At the state level, the SDM will allow efficient transcript exchange among institutions. At the local level, community colleges have collaborated to share technology related to degree audit and data conversion for reverse transfer that will improve not only the overall efficiency of reverse transfer but the normal degree audit processes in the registrar offices. This collaboration prompted sister community colleges to develop procedures to audit degrees of all current community college students to identify potential degree candidates, and the lead community college has developed training videos and manuals to communicate these shared practices.

**Challenges:** The most significant implementation challenge has been building state and local technology infrastructure that is critical to both large-scale and long-term reverse transfer implementation. Given the complexity of the project and need for technology development, the full implementation of the reverse transfer was planned for the last 9 months of the grant period when the SDM was fully operational. With 58 community colleges and students swirling among these institutions, a second significant challenge was developing a policy to determine the community college that would confer the degree if students attended multiple community colleges. This required meetings of key constituents to develop policies and procedures to comply with both regional accreditation and state and local regulations. Additional technology solutions were also needed to overcome this challenge. Third, despite improvements in the mechanism used to request student consent, 41% of the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 potentially eligible students actively opted-out of the program. Fourth, of the 3,000 eligible transcripts reviewed in the Fall of 2014, only 665 credentials were awarded. We found that many eligible students were missing their associate's degree because of one or two courses, and in the majority of cases at least one of those missing courses was college-level math. Encouraging transfer students to complete their math requirements earlier should help improve degree completion. Finally, many students who missed receiving their credential wanted to know which classes they were missing. Proper advising is a challenge for the program moving forward. It is imperative that reverse transfer students are first advised to complete their bachelor's degree, but instructed that reaching the associate's degree milestone might improve 4-year graduation rates, the state is considering how to advise for both. Working with university and community college advisors will be an important priority for the state moving forward.

### Sustainability

North Carolina's CWID grant supported the initial pilot, but the UNC system has continued to fully fund the project through the end of calendar year 2015 to ensure full scale-up by North Carolina's public postsecondary institutions. North Carolina has developed the Reverse Transfer Program to be as automated as possible and include technologies such as automated reminder emails to participating campuses, web-based training materials, and comprehensive FAQ sheets. Despite these efforts, the program will require some level of system oversight.

## Institutions Participating in Credit When It's Due

Alamance Community College
Appalachian State University
Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College
Beaufort County Community College
Bladen Community College
Blue Ridge Community College
Brunswick Community College
Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute
Cape Fear Community College
Carteret Community College
Catawba Valley Community College
Central Carolina Community College
Central Piedmont Community College
Cleveland Community College
Coastal Carolina Community College
College of the Albemarle
Craven Community College
Davidson County Community College

Durham Technical Community College
East Carolina University
Edgecombe Community College
Fayetteville State University
Fayetteville Technical Community College
Forsyth Technical Community College
Gaston Community College
Guilford Technical Community College
Halifax Community College
Haywood Community College
Isothermal Community College
James Sprunt Community College
Johnston Community College
Lenoir Community College
Martin Community College
Mayland Community College
McDowell Technical Community College

Mitchell Community College
Montgomery Community College
Nash Community College
North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University
North Carolina State University
Pamlico Community College
Piedmont Community College
Pitt Community College
Randolph Community College
Richmond Community College
Roanoke-Chowan Community College
Robeson Community College
Rockingham Community College
Rowan-Cabarrus Community College
Sampson Community College
Sandhills Community College
South Piedmont Community College
Southeastern Community College
Southwestern Community College

Stanly Community College
Surry Community College
Tri-County Community College
University of North Carolina Asheville
University of North Carolina Charlotte
University of North Carolina Greensboro
University of North Carolina Penbroke
University of North Carolina Wilmington
Vance-Granville Community College
Wake Technical Community College
Wayne Community College
Western Piedmont Community College
Wilkes Community College
Wilson Community College