



CREDIT

when it's due

Tennessee

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

Public Chapter 662, passed in the 2012 session of the Tennessee General Assembly, allows and encourages higher education institutions to develop reverse articulation agreements. All public institutions are expected to participate whereas private institutions may choose to participate. Participating institutions include: all institutions in the Tennessee Board of Regents system (13 community colleges and 6 universities); all 3 undergraduate universities in the University of Tennessee system; and 8 four-year Tennessee Independent College and University Association institutions.

Key Implementation Strategies

Reverse Transfer Taskforce and Workgroups. The development of reverse transfer policy, guidelines, and processes is led by

a taskforce comprised of representatives from the three systems of higher education and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. The taskforce's workgroups include policy, marketing/training, technology, research design, and cost groups. A policy document was developed and adopted in 2013, with subsequent revisions in 2014, and additional revisions slated for review in summer 2015. The state Transfer and Articulation Council oversees the reverse transfer initiative, including the adoption of recommended policy and guidelines. The marketing/training workgroup developed the content for a public website including FAQs for students/families and registrars/advisors, list of contacts for each participating institution, and a contact email address for additional questions. Additionally, the University of Tennessee is providing the staff to develop a comprehensive marketing plan across the state. Technology and cost workgroups also collaborated and determined the most feasible way to develop and implement reverse transfer on a statewide basis was to solicit RFPs for a semi-automated approach.

Semi-Automated Degree Audit Process. An RFP was issued in December 2013 and in May 2014, and the University of Tennessee awarded a contract to AcademyOne to develop the software for a semi-automated process that is institution-initiated, the Reverse Transfer System (RTS). Course inventories, course equivalencies, and program requirements are uploaded by the sending and receiving institutions. Twice yearly, the RTS is used to run simulated degree audits using 2-year and 4-year course histories for eligible students who opted-in to participate in reverse transfer. The degree audit runs against 40 associate degree programs and rank orders the results in descending order based on "closeness" to degree completion. Results are then available within the web-based solution for community colleges to review, verify degree audits, and confer degrees where appropriate.

Two Phases of Implementation. Tennessee elected to implement the reverse transfer process in two cycles with half the participating schools awarding degrees in Spring 2015 and all awarding degrees in Fall 2015. In the first cycle, 7 four-year institutions identified eligible students and 7 community colleges will award degrees. In the second cycle, 3 public 4-year institutions, 7 TICUA institutions and 6 community colleges will begin implementation.

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 Tennessee's process is applied to this framework. The process is run twice a year and degrees are awarded in the fall and spring.

Implementation Timeline

December 2013 – March 2014: The software RFP issued and AcademyOne was selected as software vendor. Pilot schools and Cycle 1 schools identified and the core implementation team selected.

April – July 2014: RTS software developed and several policy documents updated. Training for Cycle 1 institutions developed. Content for student communications developed and vetted by the Family Policy Compliance Office. Scripts to upload data written. A small pilot test of the software initiated.

August – October 2014: The pilot test of RTS completed and refinements incorporated. Training provided to four-year academic advisors. Program plans, courses and course equivalency tables uploaded into RTS.

October – December 2014: System refinements continued and course history data loaded. Public website developed. Simulated Degree Audit webinar training offered to Cycle 1 registrars and graduation audit analysts; user roles and user access established for each participating institution.

January – February 2015: Cycle 1 began and eligible students identified and student consent emails sent.

March 2015: Community college data uploaded to RTS for students who opted-in and simulated degree audits conducted and available to community colleges for May 2015 degrees.

April 2015 – May 2015: Simulated degree audit review and transcript exchange continues at community college level.

May 2015: First degrees awarded.



Credential Type(s): Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate of Applied Science, Associate of Science in Teaching.



Credit When It's Due: Tennessee Profile



1. **Student Identification:** Participating universities query institutional records to identify those early transfer students meeting the criteria for eligibility established in the Tennessee reverse transfer policy document.
2. **Consent:** The RTS sends an email to eligible students to participate in the reverse transfer process, and the student must consent to the sharing of 2- and 4-year course histories. Tennessee uses an opt-in process.
3. **Transcript Exchange:** Course histories for consenting students are uploaded into the RTS system by the 2- and 4-year institutions.
4. **Degree Audit:** The RTS runs simulated degree audits on all consenting students, and the simulated degree audits are run against 40 common Tennessee Transfer Pathway programs; students who are “close” to meeting program requirements are identified and their simulated degree audits are available to the former community college. Community colleges may also consider students for the AA or AS General degrees. The community college is responsible for the official degree audit.
5. **Degree Conferral and Advising:** Students meeting all degree requirements, as determined by the former community college, are conferred a degree and notified by the community college. Students who do not meet degree requirements may be contacted by the community college and advised of course deficiencies for degree completion.

has appropriated additional funding that will help extend and refine the process. Opt-In Rate: The opt-in rate for the first cycle was 20%. This opt-in rate percentage is actually higher due to the fact that several students identified as “eligible” already had an associate degree.

Challenges: Although the opt-in process and the course history workflow is FERPA compliant, there is still concern from some institutions about the exchange of information for reverse transfer degree awards. Additional revision of the opt-in process and language for opt-in is necessary to improve the opt-in rate and alleviate FERPA concerns.

A second challenge is that the RTS limits the simulated degree audits to the 40 Tennessee Transfer Pathway degrees which may not capture degree eligibility for many students. Loading additional associate degree requirements will help meet this challenge, so the state intends to explore this possibility in future implementation efforts. A third challenge is the lack of a state-wide electronic transcript exchange process needed to facilitate the exchange of final transcripts for this project and beyond the project. Institutions still need to send transcripts prior to degree conferral. Finally, 4-year state institutions do not currently receive credit for their contributions to students who earn a reverse transfer degree. Until an anticipated adjustment in the state’s performance-based funding formula is finalized, the uncertainty of formula credit may hamper buy-in from some 4-year institutions.

Implementation Successes and Challenges

Successes: One of the successes of CWID in Tennessee has been the development of the AcademyOne software. The AcademyOne software allows for the sharing of course and credit data across institutions, in a secure, reliable, efficient, and sustainable manner; data can be accessed and used for academic research purposes. In addition, although only one private institution elected to participate in the first cycle, seven additional private institutions will participate in the second cycle. Another notable success is the state legislature appropriated \$300,000.00 in 2014 to help facilitate the development and implementation of reverse transfer and

Sustainability

Tennessee Reverse Transfer is but one higher education initiative supported by the current Governor. As such, support for reverse transfer will continue for several years as part of the long-term “Drive to 55” set of initiatives aimed to increase the number of adults with some postsecondary degree attainment. Tennessee Promise and Tennessee Reconnect are high profile initiatives that will bring additional students into technical colleges and community colleges; dual admissions and fluid transfer processes are codified by the Complete College Act (2010). UT and institutional staff are committed through 2016 to coordinate reverse transfer efforts.

Institutions Participating in Credit When It's Due

Community Colleges

Chattanooga State
Cleveland State
Columbia State
Dyersburg State
Jackson State
Motlow State
Nashville State
Northeast State
Pellissippi State
Roane State
Southwest Tennessee
Volunteer State
Walters State

Public Universities

Austin Peay State University
East Tennessee State University
Middle Tennessee State University
Tennessee State University
Tennessee Technological University
University of Memphis
University of Tennessee Chattanooga
University of Tennessee-Knoxville
University of Tennessee-Martin

Private Four-Year Institutions

Carson-Newman University
Christian Brothers University
Freed-Hardeman University
Lipscomb University
Maryville College
Memphis College of Art
Milligan College
Tusculum College

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