CREDIT
when it's due

Texas
STATE PROFILE

State Funders: Lumina Foundation, Greater Texas Foundation, Houston Endowment, and Meadows 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 Texas Reverse Transfer Initiative (TRTI) was developed to address Texas House Bill 3025, which requires higher education to create a process to award associate's degrees through reverse credit transfer. HB 3025 applied to students who attended a 2-year institution prior to enrollment at a 4-year institution; who have earned at least 30 credit hours at a 2-year institution; and who have earned a cumulative total of at least 66 credit hours after enrolling at a 4-year institution.

Key Implementation Strategies

State Leadership and Advisory Group. Lone Star College and the University of Texas at Austin are providing leadership for TRTI. The CWID grant provided reverse transfer project managers to coordinate and lead the project during the CWID grant period. The state held a reverse transfer kickoff meeting in Austin in June 2014 to launch TRTI. This event was successful and included opening a dialogue among partner institutions as well as the creating an advisory group for the project. The advisory group includes funders, institutional leadership, and key partners, and the group has been helpful for guidance and decision-making on the large-scale project. The state has coordinated regular webinars and meetings

with the advisory group to receive regular input and direction on the project, and a day-long meeting is planned in early June 2015.

Institutional Partner Engagement and Commitment. During the first year of the project, several efforts were dedicated to engaging stakeholders and garnering commitment to participate in reverse transfer. To date, TRTI has secured 33 reverse transfer agreements and is pushing towards a statewide scale-up. One unanticipated and positive occurrence over the past year has been broad interest in TRTI as a result of participation on Texas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (TACRAO) conference calls and presentations at the TACRAO and Texas Association of College & University Student Personnel Administrators (TACUSPA) conferences, as well as a number of national and state conferences/meetings.

Streamline Reverse Transfer Processes and Leverage Technology. TRTI is collaborating with National Student Clearinghouse to support two technology pathways for community colleges and universities to automate processes related to reverse transfer. The first technology pathway is to leverage the SPEEDE network that allows 4-year institutions and 2-year community colleges to exchange transcript data electronically via SPEEDE. The transcript data is received by the 2-year community college and then processed by their degree audit system to determine which students can be awarded an associate's degree. This is one area where 2-year community colleges need technology assistance, bringing data into their degree audit systems to automatically award associate's degrees for eligible students. The second technology pathway is to leverage the NSC course/grade data exchange solution. NSC is building the course/grade data exchange solution to enable a national platform for awarding reverse transfer degrees that can handle the 40% of transfers that cross state lines, which the SPEEDE solution won't be able to process. The combined power of SPEEDE and the NSC platform will improve efficiency, increase the number of potential reverse transfer degrees awarded, and reduce costs for institutions.

Increase Awareness. A primary goal and strategy of TRTI is to raise community and public awareness about the value of reverse transfer, the impact of an associate's degree on the workforce, and available statewide transfer options. TRTI has presented on reverse transfer at several state and national meetings, including TACUSPA, TACRAO, National Policy Summit on Reverse Transfer, National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students (NISTS), and Achieving the Dream. Also, TRTI has facilitated conference calls, meetings, and webinars to discuss challenges and successes when implementing reverse transfer among institutions throughout the state. This outreach builds and expands faculty, staff, and professional development opportunities, which increases support and understanding of reverse transfer.

Implementation Timeline

June 2014: Statewide kick-off meeting and launching of reverse transfer. Monthly meetings began with Advisory Group. The first TRTI partnership agreements were signed.

Fall 2014: Conference Calls with TACRAO Members and launching of the Feasibility Study.

October 2014: TACUPSA and TACRAO Annual Conference Presentation

January – February 2015: National Policy Summit on Reverse Transfer Presentation, NISTS Annual Conference Presentation, and Achieving the Dream Annual Conference Presentation.

Spring 2015: Implementation Survey and data collection initiated to understand how reverse transfer is being implemented and how many students have been awarded degrees.

April 2015 – May 2015: NSC Platform Solution Demonstrated at the AACRAO Annual Conference, Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee Meeting Presentation under THECB, and NISOD Annual Conference Presentation

June 2015: Advisory Group and statewide Workgroup Meetings

Credential Type(s): Associate of Arts and Associate of Science

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Feasibility Study. To assess institutional partners' technological abilities to implement reverse transfer, TRTI administered a Feasibility Study during the first year of the grant. A total of 51 institutions participated in the Feasibility Study, representing approximately one-third of Texas public 4-year institutions and half of Texas public 2-year community colleges. Several important lessons were learned from this study that are informing continuing development and implementation of reverse transfer. For example, 53% use the ApplyTexas Opt-Out Question to obtain student consent; some institutions provide additional opportunities to opt-out or remove consent. 4-year institutions use a query or filter to identify potentially eligible students, and send lists and corresponding transcripts to 2-year community colleges; 75% of 4-year institutions reported a capacity to transfer large "batches" of transcripts to 2-year partners. This information has been critical in identifying institutional needs and capacity to implement reverse transfer.
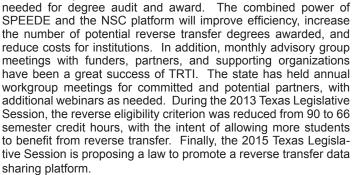
Reverse Transfer Process

OCCRL developed a framework for the reverse transfer process that consists of five broad processes, and Texas' process is applied to this framework below. The University of Texas at Austin has worked with Austin Community College to develop a structure and pilot a reverse transfer program to award degrees to eligible students.

1. **Student Identification:** 4-year institutions identify transfer students who have earned at least 30 credit hours at a 2-year institution, and who have earned a cumulative total of at least 66 credit hours after enrolling that their institution.

2. **Consent:** Consent for reverse transfer is integrated into the Texas Common Application, an opt-in consent model whereby the student automatically participates in reverse transfer or unchecks a box to opt-out of reverse transfer. If eligible students consented to participate in reverse transfer, student names are provided to the 2-year institution.

3. **Transcript Exchange:** Transcript exchange to and from the 4-year and 2-year institutions will occur via SPEEDE or the NSC platform.

4. **Degree Audit:** 2-year institutions will conduct the degree audit using existing institutional degree audit software.

5. **Degree Conferral and Advising:** Students who meet all degree requirements will be awarded their associate's degree. Advising for students who are close to meeting degree requirements is at the discretion of the 2-year community college.

Implementation Successes and Challenges

Successes: Several technology advances have been made by investment in the NSC solution. The current SPEEDE technology and NSC solution under development will address human resources needed for degree audit and award. The combined power of SPEEDE and the NSC platform will improve efficiency, increase the number of potential reverse transfer degrees awarded, and reduce costs for institutions. In addition, monthly advisory group meetings with funders, partners, and supporting organizations have been a great success of TRTI. The state has held annual workgroup meetings for committed and potential partners, with additional webinars as needed. During the 2013 Texas Legislative Session, the reverse eligibility criterion was reduced from 90 to 66 semester credit hours, with the intent of allowing more students to benefit from reverse transfer. Finally, the 2015 Texas Legislative Session is proposing a law to promote a reverse transfer data sharing platform.

Challenges: Timing has been a challenge for the initiative. The NSC software solution represents a big step forward – but will not be completed quickly enough to meet current and anticipated demand for reverse transfer; human and fiscal resources will remain a challenge for two to three years. Tracking students and collecting data on reverse transfer is also a challenge. Currently, there is not a common mechanism across the state for tracking or reporting reverse transfer degrees awarded. In addition, no standard procedure or deadlines are in place that would allow for consistency in processes across institutions within the state. There is no mechanism for file and audit notes and student communication is challenging for systems and institutions with many partners.

Sustainability

The sustainability plan for TRTI is in progress and builds off of an initiative previously implemented, so troubleshooting can be accomplished on a smaller, lower-cost scale before statewide expansion. TRTI is now supporting two technology pathways (SPEEDE and NSC national platform) for community colleges and universities to automate processes related to reverse transfer. Sustainablity will be addressed through institutionalization of improved practices, expanded relationships between community colleges and four year institutions, and the advacment of technology without the need of additional funds or human resources. The proposed project will provide Texas the much needed support to ensure that reverse transfer is efficient and seamless to reduce the barriers for students and institutions both state and nationwide.

Institutions Participating in Credit When It's Due

Alamo Community College District
Alvin Community College
Amarillo College
Austin Community College
Blinn College
Collin County Community College District
Dallas County Community College District
Del Mar College
El Paso Community College

Galveston College
Howard College
Kilgore College
Lamar University
Lone Star College System (Lead Partner)
McLennan Community College
Midland College
Paris Junior College
Sam Houston State University
San Jacinto Community College

South Texas College
Tarrant County College District
Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi
Texas State University
University of Houston – Clear Lake
University of North Texas
University of Texas – Pan American
University of Texas at Arlington
University of Texas at Austin (Co-Lead Partner)

University of Texas at Dallas
University of Texas at El Paso
Weatherford College
West Texas College
Western Texas College

* Partners are joining weekly, as TRTI moves toward a statewide scale-up in the second year of the grant.