

Arkansas Credit When It's Due (CWID) Initiative

Phase 2: Degree Matters



Information Kit for
Arkansas Public Higher Education Institutions
June 2014

www.degree matters.org

About

Credit When It's Due (CWID) is a 15 state initiative to increase the number of people with Associate's Degrees and to develop automated, sustainable reverse transfer systems (the transfer of credits from a four-year institution back to a two-year institution for the purpose of granting an Associate's Degree). Participating states include Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, and Texas. Arkansas' efforts are funded by the Kresge Foundation.

Degree Matters is an Arkansas specific campaign funded by the Credit When It's Due (CWID) initiative to promote Associate's Degree completion. Approximately 6,000 Arkansans who attended a public college or university between 1994 and 2013 have been identified as having completed at least 75% of the coursework required for an Associate's Degree. The goal is to review their transcripts to determine degree eligibility, and to encourage those who are not eligible to take the necessary steps to complete.

Partners:

- The Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) is a state government agency that advocates for higher education, promotes a coordinated system of higher education in the State, and provides for the orderly and effective development of each of the publicly and locally supported institutions of higher education in the state.
- The Arkansas Research Center (ARC) is governed by the Arkansas Commission for the Coordination of Educational Efforts and works in cooperation with various state agencies. ARC staff works as a cross agency team to link data for education related research.
- The Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges (AATYC) is a private, non-profit higher education membership organization serving the educational needs of two-year college students and the business/industry needs of the state.



www.degree matters.org

Frequently Asked Questions for Students

Q: What is Degree Matters?

A: Degree Matters is an initiative to increase the number of Arkansans with Associate's Degrees. There are approximately 6,000 Arkansans that have completed at least 75% of the courses required to earn an Associate's Degree. Degree Matters is reaching out to these Arkansans in order to gain consent to collect all transcripts and complete a thorough review of coursework. Those who have completed the required coursework will be awarded an Associate's Degree. Those who have not will be given information on the steps needed to complete the degree.

Q: What is an Associate's Degree?

A: This two-year degree is an Associate of Arts (A.A.) or Associate of Science (A.S.). Some students who earn this degree transfer to a four-year program to earn a Bachelor's Degree. Others complete Associate's Degrees to prepare to go straight to work. In Arkansas, all community colleges and most four-year universities offer these degrees.

Q: Why should I get an Associate's Degree?

A: There are many benefits to having an Associate's Degree including increased salary and career opportunities. Arkansans with Associate's Degrees earn on average \$27,600 annually, compared to \$12,500 for those with a high school diploma or less. That adds up to more than \$400,000 additional dollars over a lifetime. Also, Associate's Degree completers are not required to take additional freshmen or sophomore level general education courses after transferring to a four-year university. This means you can complete your Bachelor's Degree in less time.

Q: How do I know if I am eligible for Degree Matters?

A: You may be eligible if you meet ALL of the following criteria.

1. Enrolled at any Arkansas Associate's Degree granting public college or university between fall 1994 and fall 2013
2. Completed at least 15 general education transfer courses
3. Did not complete a degree as of fall 2013

Participants for whom we have contact information will be notified via mail and/or email. You also have the option to search for your name on the Degree Matters website and, if a matching name is found, submit an inquiry for further instructions.

Q: I have attended multiple higher education institutions. Which one will grant me an Associate's Degree?

A: The Associate's Degree granting institution at which you received the most credits, known as your "majority institution", will review your transcripts and determine your eligibility for an Associate's Degree.

Q: What am I agreeing to when I consent to have my course information transferred?

A: By submitting your consent online, you are allowing the Arkansas public higher education institutions that you have attended to exchange your transcripts and share your contact information. In addition, your "majority institution" will perform a thorough review of coursework and award you an Associate's Degree if eligible.

Q: Once I've consented to allow exchange of my transcripts, when will I know if I've received a degree?

A: Once you've completed the online consent, you will receive confirmation via mail that the process has started. However, it may be several months before you are awarded a degree or informed of additional courses you need to complete an Associate's Degree.

Q: What if I attended an out-of-state or a private college or university?

A: Credits earned at out-of-state and private institutions may count towards an Associate's Degree. However, these institutions are not partners in the Degree Matters initiative. Students who attended such institutions are responsible for requesting transcripts and having them sent to their "majority institution" for consideration.

Q: If I don't qualify for a degree now, what happens?

A: If you are a few courses short of an Associate's Degree, you will be notified of the steps needed to complete. At that point, you may speak with a college advisor for more details.

Q: Will this cost me anything?

A: If you owe money to a college or university, your degree will not be awarded until the debt is paid. In addition, some institutions may charge fees to participate in graduation ceremonies or related activities. Those colleges will provide this information when notifying you that you have earned a degree.

Q: What if I have outstanding fees at my current or previous college?

A: We encourage you to resolve outstanding fees at your current or previous college to ensure that you can be considered for an Associate's Degree.

Q: Will this affect my financial aid or scholarships?

A: Getting an Associate's Degree will not impact your federal or state financial aid. If you are receiving an institutional or private scholarship (such as from your college, a business organization or civic association), you should check their scholarship regulations to make sure that receiving an Associate's Degree does not make you ineligible for the scholarship.

Q: Can I attend the graduation ceremony?

A: This will be left up to the "majority institution". At a minimum, you will receive official notification that the degree has been granted.

Q: What if I do not meet the Degree Matters criteria but want to pursue a degree?

A: The Degree Matters website contains links to the websites for Arkansas public colleges and universities. Please click the link for the college or university of your choice to view admission requirements and processes.

Q: What if I do not want my Associate's Degree?

A: If you are eligible for Degree Matters and do not want an Associate's Degree, simply do nothing. You will not be awarded a degree without your consent.

Q: I think I am eligible, but I didn't receive a notification letter or email, and I can't find my name on the website.

A: There could be several reasons for this.

- 1) *Not all courses count towards an Associate's Degree.* While you may have completed 15 or more courses, they may not all be general education transfer courses approved by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education.
- 2) *Courses from out-of-state or private institutions are not tracked by the state of Arkansas.* If you attended such an institution, some of your courses may transfer to an Arkansas public college or university. Please contact your local college or university for more information.

www.degree matters.org

Additional Details for Institutions

Q: How will students be notified of their eligibility?

A: Participants for whom we have contact information will be notified via mail and/or email. There is also an option for students to search for their name on the Degree Matters website. If a matching name is found, they will have the ability to submit an inquiry to AATYC for further instructions.

Q: How will students consent to the exchange of their transcripts and degree conferral?

A: In order to comply with privacy regulations, students must actively consent to participate. Students that have been identified as eligible for Degree Matters are assigned a unique code that they will use to confirm identity and submit an online consent. That code is given to them when they are notified of eligibility.

Q: If a student has attended multiple institutions, which institution will award the Associate's Degree?

A: The Associate's Degree granting institution where the student completed the most credit hours is considered the "majority institution". This institution will collect transcripts, perform degree audits, and determine degree eligibility. The "majority institution" will follow its own policies regarding residency requirements.

Q: What responsibilities does the "majority institution" have?

A: Upon being notified that a student has consented, the "majority institution" will send an acknowledgement letter to the student within five business days to confirm that the process has begun. The next steps are to request transcripts, conduct a degree audit, award a degree OR encourage completion, and report data to AATYC monthly.

Q: What are the reporting requirements?

A: "Majority institutions" will report to AATYC monthly on student level data such as:

- 1) Date acknowledgement letter was mailed
- 2) Date transcripts were requested
- 3) Date degree audit was completed
- 4) Results of degree audit
- 5) Date student was notified of degree OR steps required to complete degree

**Official reporting of degrees will be submitted to ADHE based on the regular reporting schedule. For example, if you award a degree in October, you will report it to ADHE with December graduates.*

Q: What responsibilities does an institution have if it is not the "majority institution"?

A: These institutions will receive confirmation of student consent and exchange transcripts when requested from the "majority institution". Consent notifications will be sent to the institution's primary contact via individual emails and weekly rosters.

Q: What if a student is not eligible for an Associate's Degree?

A: The "majority institution" will communicate with the student regarding what steps should be taken to complete an Associate's Degree.

Q: What will students receive upon completion of the degree audit? Will their degree come in the mail? Will they be allowed to participate in commencement exercises?

A: This will be left up to the “majority institution”. At a minimum, the student will receive official notification via mail that the degree has been granted.

Q: If a student is currently enrolled, will the current institution receive notification that the student received a degree through Degree Matters?

A: Yes. The “majority institution” is responsible for notifying the current institution of the degree.

Q: What effect will this have on performance funding?

A: None. ADHE is developing a special transcript code and/or a hold harmless provision that will exclude these graduates from outcomes reporting.

Q: What if a student attended an out-of-state or private institution?

A: Credits earned at out-of-state and private institutions are not included in the data used to determine Degree Matters eligibility. Students who attended such institutions are responsible for requesting transcripts and having them sent to their “majority institution” for consideration.

Q: What if a non-eligible student wants to participate?

A: Because of the television, radio, and social media campaign promoting Degree Matters, it is likely that non-eligible Arkansans will inquire about this program. The website will provide general information about Associate’s Degrees, encourage enrollment for fall 2014, and link to all Arkansas public higher education institutions’ admission websites.

www.degree matters.org

Overview of Process

For Students Who Receive a Code:

1. Student receives letter and/or email with unique code and instructions to go to Degree Matters website.
2. Student enters code on Degree Matters website, corrects contact information if necessary, and submits consent.
3. ALL institutions that student attended are notified that consent has been given. An individual email will be sent to primary contacts, and a weekly roster will be emailed to primary contacts.
4. The “majority institution” sends an acknowledgement letter to student that the process has begun.
5. The “majority institution” requests transcripts and conducts a degree audit.
6. The “majority institution” notifies student of degree eligibility OR steps needed to complete a degree.

For Students Who Do NOT Receive a Code:

1. Student goes to Degree Matters website to search for his/her name.
2. If a match is found, the student submits an inquiry to AATYC for instructions on how to receive a code. AATYC mails and/or emails the code to the student. The process continues as above.
3. If a match is NOT found, the student submits an inquiry to the institution of his or her choice for information on how to complete an Associate’s Degree.

www.degree matters.org

Primary Contacts

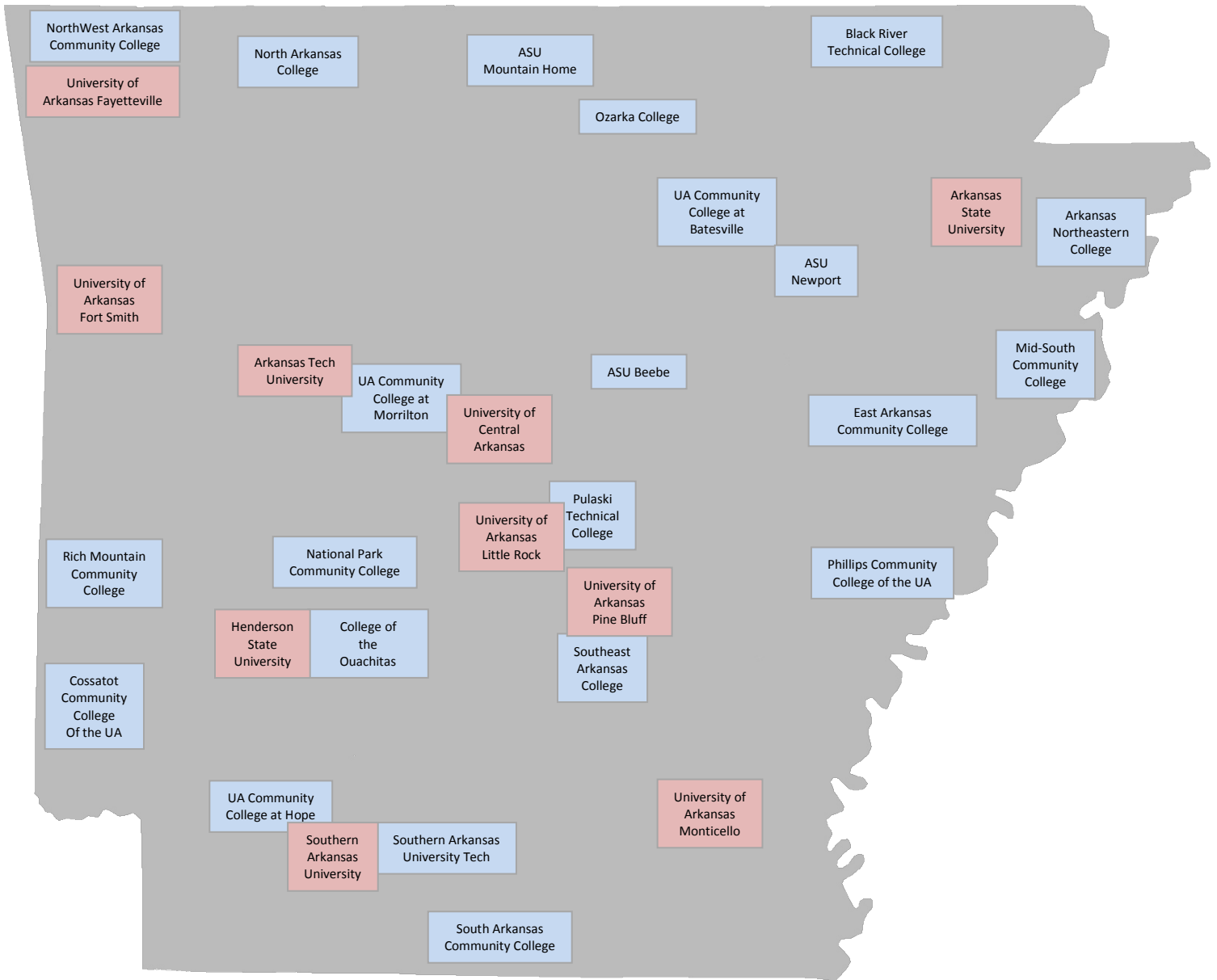
Institution	Contact Name	Contact Phone	Contact Email Address
Arkansas Northeastern College (Blytheville)	Laura Yarbrough	870-762-3143	lyarbrough@smail.anc.edu
Arkansas State University (Jonesboro)	Tracy Finch	870-972-2031	tfinch@astate.edu
ASU - Beebe	Amy Mahan	501-882-4415	ajmahan@asub.edu
ASU - Mountain Home	Rozalyn Blagg	870-508-6128	rblagg@asumh.edu
ASU - Newport	Candace Gross	870-512-7716	candace_gross@asun.edu
Arkansas Tech University (Russellville)	Tammy Weaver	479-968-0272	registrar@atu.edu
Black River Technical College (Pocahontas)	Kimberly Bigger	870-248-4015	kim.bigger@blackrivertech.edu
College of the Ouachitas (Malvern)	Keesha Johnson	501-332-0218	kjohnson@coto.edu
Cossatot Community College of the UA (DeQueen)	Brenda Morris	870-584-4471	bmorris@cccua.edu
East Arkansas Community College (Forrest City)	Michelle Wilson	870-633-4480 x233	rwilson@eacc.edu
Henderson State University (Arkadelphia)	Tom Gattin	870-230-5135	gattint@hsu.edu
Mid-South Community College (West Memphis)	Leslie Anderson	870-733-6732	landerson@midsouthcc.edu
National Park Community College (Hot Springs)	Brad Moody	501-760-4213	bmoody@npcc.edu
North Arkansas College (Harrison)	Charla Jennings	870.391.3221	charlam@northark.edu
Northwest AR Community College (Bentonville)	Brooke Holt	479-619-4298	bholt@nwacc.edu
Ozarka College (Melbourne)	Zeda Wilkerson	870-368-2028	zwilkerson@ozarka.edu
Phillips Community College of the UA (Helena)	Scott Post	870-816-1235	spost@pccua.edu
Pulaski Technical College (North Little Rock)	Kristen Chadwick	501-812-2200	kchadwick@pulaskitech.edu
Rich Mountain Community College (Mena)	Terry Francis	479-394-7622 x1460	tfrancis@rmcc.edu
South Arkansas Community College (El Dorado)	Dean Inman	870-864-7142	dinman@southark.edu
Southeast Arkansas College (Pine Bluff)	Lozanne Calhoun	870-543-5952	lcalhoun@seark.edu
Southern Arkansas University (Magnolia)	Sandra Walker	870-235-4035	slwalker@saumag.edu
Southern Arkansas University – Tech (East Camden)	Wayne Banks	870-574-4493	wbanks@sautech.edu
University of Arkansas at Fort Smith	Penny Pendleton	479 788 7121	penny.pendleton@uafs.edu
University of Arkansas at Little Rock	Joyce Hail	501-569-8175	jahail@ualr.edu
University of Arkansas at Monticello	Jimmie Yeiser	870-460-1033	yeiserj@uamont.edu
UA Community College at Batesville	Shelly Moser	870-612-2034	smoser@uacsb.edu
UA Community College at Hope	Diana Syata	870-722-8220	Diana.syata@uacch.edu
UA Community College at Morrilton	Linda Holland	501-354-7565	holland@uaccm.edu
*University of Arkansas (Fayetteville)	Dave Dawson	479-575-5057	daved@uark.edu
University of Central Arkansas (Conway)	Claye Eubanks	501- 450-5043	ceubanks@uca.edu
*University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff	Mary Jones	870-575-8492	jonesm@uapb.edu

**Institution does not award Associate's Degrees.*

For administrative questions, please contact:

Collin Callaway
Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges
501-371-0404
ccallaway@aatyc.org

Map of Partner Institutions



Red: Four-Year Universities

Blue: Two-Year Colleges

www.degreematters.org