



CREDIT

when it's due

Colorado

STATE PROFILE

State Funder: Lumina Foundation for Education

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

In April 2012, Colorado's governor signed the state's Senate Bill 12-045, which declared that community colleges and universities should work in collaboration with the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CDHE) to develop a process to confer associate's degrees earned by students on the path to a baccalaureate. The legislation stipulates that if a student completes the residency requirement at a community college (15 college credit hours from one community college), transfers to a university, and accumulates 70 credit hours (including transferred credits) at the university level, that student must be notified that they may be eligible to receive an associate's degree from the primary, sending community college

Implementation Timeline

Fall 2012: Colorado hired a Degree Audit Coordinator in the Colorado Community College System (CCCS) office and Research/Program Coordinator in the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE).

December 2012 – Present: CCCS automated the download of electronic transcripts into the CCCS Banner system. CCCS is using Parchment as the vendor for the automated transcript exchange process.

May 2013: The statewide reverse transfer marketing campaign was launched.

October 2013: The Degree Within Reach website became operational with videos on reverse transfer, information questions and answers, and institutional contact information.

November 2013 – Present: Plans were initiated to sustain reverse transfer efforts through the reverse transfer task force.

May 2014: The first reverse transfer degrees will be conferred.

Summer – Fall 2014: Community college counselors and advisors will begin contacting students who are close to associate's degree requirements to advise them on steps to complete their degree.

Summer – Fall 2014: Colorado will begin working with remaining Colorado public institutions that did not receive funding to scale-up reverse transfer statewide.

Key Implementation Strategies

Committee Structure and Implementation Plan. Colorado established three subcommittees to work on reverse transfer implementation: data advisory, communications, and stop-out students. The state also convened a reverse transfer task force to guide policy implementation, with representation by several universities, the CCCS, and the CDHE. In addition to establishing committees, the state developed an implementation plan that involved (a) developing capacity and infrastructure for statewide implementation; (b) piloting reverse transfer with one university and its community college transfer partners; and (c) developing a plan to target transfer stop-outs.

Pilot Process. Prior to CWID in Spring 2012, Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSUD) was the first university to pilot the reverse transfer process. With the CWID grant awarded in Fall 2012, the CDHE invited additional institutions to develop reverse transfer processes in a pilot phase with eight universities. The eight universities will contact eligible students in April 2014, and degrees will be conferred by community colleges in May 2014. After the pilot is complete and degrees are conferred, Colorado will scale-up reverse transfer statewide beginning in Fall 2014. The processes developed during the pilot and the lessons learned from this initial phase of implementation will inform the statewide scale-up of reverse transfer.

Course Equivalency Infrastructure and Electronic Transcript Exchange. A barrier to scaling reverse transfer identified early in the grant period was inadequate infrastructure related to course equivalencies and electronic transcript exchange. Building on the pilot with MSUD, the CDHE outlined a process whereby the CCCS obtained course catalogs from public universities, created a small team of transcript evaluators from CCCS institutions to establish direct course equivalencies, and uploaded those equivalencies into the state's Banner system. This initial process of determining and uploading equivalencies was mostly manual, and CDHE plans to explore options for a more automated equivalency system. Also early in the grant period, CDHE issued an RFP and selected Parchment as the contractor to provide electronic, automatic and seamless transfer of transcript-level data from the CDHE to the CCCS for the purpose of reverse transfer. This automated process will be the same for all participating institutions once the project is scaled statewide. Currently, the subcontract with Parchment benefits reverse transfer students only, but Colorado is exploring alternative opportunities to utilize the course equivalency database that is being built as part of this process.



Associate's degrees
conferred as of March 2014: 0



“Degree Within Reach” Website. The CDHE created a brand for Colorado’s reverse transfer efforts, called Degree Within Reach, and launched a website in October 2013 (www.degreewithinreach.org). Targeted toward potential reverse transfer students, the website allows students to register for email updates, view a promotional video about reverse transfer, learn about eligibility criteria, and receive answers to questions. Advisors and registrars can also see answers to frequently asked questions and submit questions to the web page.

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 Colorado’s process is applied to this framework:

- 1. Student Identification:** The universities submit transcript-level data each semester to CDHE, and communicate the reverse transfer degree option to eligible students via email. CDHE determines student eligibility based on this data, and the list of these students is then sent to the individual universities. The universities then check this list against their own records to ensure that all students are, in fact, eligible.
- 2. Consent Process:** Through Colorado’s communication and policy design strategy, students may opt-in and consent to authorize transcript exchange and degree conferral. The universities plan to send three emails to offer students the opportunity to consent.
- 3. Transcript Exchange:** Once students have consented, the CDHE sends the electronic transcript-level data to the CCCS through Parchment. This process translates the transcript-level data into a format that is readable through Banner, which enables the degree audit process to occur.
- 4. Degree Audit:** Degrees are audited in the registrar office of a community college, and the CCCS coordinates to ensure that the appropriate community college is conferring the associate’s degree.
- 5. Degree Conferral:** Once the degree audit confirms that students meet all degree requirements, students receive a letter from the community college conferring the degree. Colorado plans to contact students who are within a few requirements of the associate’s degree and advise students on the steps needed to receive the degree.

Implementation Successes and Challenges

Successes: A key success in Colorado’s reverse transfer efforts is the high level of participation and support received by the universities. Each participating university is represented on each reverse transfer committee, and these representatives have been enthusiastic about the implementation of reverse transfer and eager to troubleshoot problems and identify solutions. An additional success is the sustainability associated with state legislation governing reverse transfer, so future transfer students in all public institutions will benefit from reverse transfer efforts. Lastly, there is great potential for alternative uses of the course equivalencies database that is under development as a result of reverse transfer.

Challenges: The biggest challenge experienced by Colorado is the time needed to manually determine course equivalencies between the community colleges and universities. Once the first degrees are conferred in Spring 2014, the CDHE will focus energy on finding an automated process for annual course catalog updates for institutions that will begin reverse transfer in Fall 2014. An additional challenge is the need for student consent in order to send the transcript-level data from the CDHE to the CCCS. Colorado now has a user-friendly consent website for the reverse transfer process, but it is unknown whether this extra step of giving consent will deter students from participating.

Institutions Participating in Credit When It's Due

Arapahoe Community College
Colorado Northwestern Community College
Colorado State University-Fort Collins
Colorado State University-Global
Colorado State University-Pueblo
Community College of Aurora
Community College of Denver
Front Range Community College
Lamar Community College
Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSUD)
Morgan Community College
Northeastern Junior College
Otero Junior College
Pikes Peak Community College
Pueblo Community College
Red Rocks Community College
Regis University
Trinidad State Junior College
University of Colorado-Colorado Springs
University of Colorado-Denver
Western State Colorado University