



## CREDIT *when it's due*

State Funder: Helios Education Foundation

# Florida

## STATE PROFILE



### 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 Florida College System (FCS) comprises 28 state and community colleges, and the Florida State University System has 12 universities. Eleven Florida state colleges and four universities formed regional partnerships to pilot reverse transfer processes. Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) outline roles and responsibilities of the institutions in the partnerships.

### Implementation Timeline

**February – March 2013:** MOUs were developed and signed by member institutions of the reverse transfer partnerships.

**Spring 2013:** State colleges and universities identified lists of students who were potentially eligible for reverse transfer. The Florida Board of Governors' legal counsel recommended an opt-in consent policy, meaning students must actively consent in order for their transcripts to be exchanged for reverse transfer.

**Summer – Fall 2013:** Degree audits were conducted and first reverse transfer degrees were conferred.

**November 2013:** State leaders presented on Florida's reverse transfer efforts at the Association of Florida Colleges conference.

**Summer 2014:** Joint meeting of regional transfer partnerships to identify best practices and procedures for reverse transfer that will culminate in the development of a toolkit to guide statewide scale-up.

### Key Implementation Strategies

#### Regional Memoranda of Agreements (MOUs).

The policy framework for reverse transfer was established by MOUs that were signed between the university and the sending colleges. The four regional MOUs define the roles and responsibilities of universities and colleges. Whereas the MOUs vary based on the region, there are similarities. Generally, it is the responsibility of the universities to provide a list of potentially eligible students to each partner college and establish timelines for the process at their institution. The MOU indicates that the colleges agree to conduct degree audits for students on the lists, confer the associate's degree to eligible students, and report degree conferrals to the FCS and the partner university.

**Decentralized Implementation Approach.** The FCS office serves as the coordinating entity for Florida's reverse transfer initiative, and early in the grant period, FCS convened representatives from the participating institutions to provide direction for the project and review common elements among the regional partnerships. Reverse transfer implementation efforts have largely been decentralized and local among the four regional partnerships. To support local implementation and staff time on the grant, each FCS institution received approximately \$30,000 and each university partner received \$15,000.

**Statewide Scale.** Building on the work of the initial regional partnerships, Florida is planning to support expansion of reverse transfer to other state institutions. Proposed activities include holding a meeting with all existing partners in late spring or early summer 2014 to identify promising practices and challenges, sharing information about Florida's CWID at statewide meetings, and developing a reverse transfer toolkit to support new college and university partnerships. The toolkit will document promising practices, procedures, and lessons learned from the current regional partnerships to inform reverse transfer development and implementation in new partnerships.



Associate's degrees  
conferred as of March 2014: **202**



## 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. Because reverse transfer processes vary among partnerships in Florida, one partnership was selected to illustrate the reverse transfer process. The University of South Florida's process is applied to this framework below.

1. **Student Identification:** The five partner state and community colleges identify eligible students who transferred to USF using the National Student Clearinghouse and send a list of these students to USF. Using the list of names received from the five state and community colleges, USF audits students' USF and transfer academic work to determine whether students meet associate's degree requirements.
2. **Consent Process:** USF emails the eligible students to seek student consent using an opt-in model. In Fall 2014, all incoming transfer students will consent to reverse transfer as a condition of admission to USF.
3. **Transcript Exchange:** USF sends each of the five state and community colleges a list of students who consented, and the state and community colleges use the Florida Automated System for Transferring Educational Records (FASTER) to access electronic transcript data.
4. **Degree Audit:** USF uses various means to audit the student records prior to seeking consent, one of which is the degree audit system. After state and community colleges access students' FASTER data, they audit degrees using their existing technology and processes.
5. **Degree Conferral:** If students meet all degree requirements, the state and community colleges confer the degree and communicate the degree conferral to the students. State and community colleges then forward official transcripts to USF to update USF's institutional records.

## Implementation Successes and Challenges

**Successes:** Florida's regional partnership approach resulted in early implementation of reverse transfer during the grant period, and all of the partnerships

reported that reverse transfer associate's degrees have been conferred. While the number of reverse transfer associate's degree is lower than expected, this is an indicator that Florida's articulation policies and local graduation procedures are working well. A second success involves identifying enhancements to existing transfer and articulation policies that have implications beyond reverse transfer. Since implementation was locally driven through college-university partnerships, the successes were particular to a given partnership. For example, the USF regional partnership has worked on identifying opportunities for streamlining verification of students' completion of general education requirements, enhancing general education degree audit processes at FCS institutions, and identifying course substitutions and equivalencies for college-specific requirements for associate's degree conferral.

**Challenges:** Florida determined that an opt-in consent process complies with FERPA, but the opt-in policy has contributed to lower than optimal numbers of students who consent to participate in reverse transfer. Institutions are exploring ways to improve consent rates, however. For example, USF plans to embed student consent for reverse transfer in the transfer student admission application beginning in Fall 2014. A second significant challenge is the low number of students who meet eligibility requirements due, in part, to Florida policies that incentivize student completion of an associate's degree prior to transfer to a public, state university. Florida's 2+2 Statewide Articulation Agreement and process rewards associate's degree completion by guaranteeing the transfer of 60 credits earned as part of the Associates in Arts degree. Additionally, many FCS institutions have auto-graduation policies that automatically confer associate's degrees when students meet degree requirements. Both of these initiatives contribute to increased number of associate's degree holders prior to transfer, and reduce the number of students then eligible for reverse transfer.

## Institutions Participating in Credit When It's Due

Broward College	Pasco Hernando State College
Florida Atlantic University	Polk State College
Florida International University	St. Petersburg College
Florida State College at Jacksonville	State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota
Hillsborough Community College	University of North Florida
Indian River State College	University of South Florida
Miami Dade College	
Palm Beach State College	

This publication was prepared pursuant to a contract awarded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in October 2012 to OCCRL, College of Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Preliminary research associated with this project was funded by Lumina Foundation in July-September 2012. ©2014 Board of Trustees, University of Illinois

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