



## CREDIT *when it's due*

# Minnesota



## 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

A total of seven universities and 24 community and technical colleges participate in CWID through the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system, and the University of Minnesota participates through a separate Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with community colleges throughout the state. Most MnSCU universities have the authority to confer the associate's degree, so community and technical colleges as well as universities may seek student consent and confer reverse transfer associate's degrees. Supporting MnSCU's reverse transfer efforts is the MnSCU Smart Transfer Plan that was endorsed in 2012 by MnSCU presidents to create a student-friendly transfer environment within the state.

### Key Implementation Strategies

**Statewide Coordinator and Steering Committee.** Reverse transfer implementation is supported by a designated, grant-funded Reverse Transfer Coordinator and Reverse Transfer Specialist at the MnSCU system. MnSCU also established a steering committee comprised of representatives from the community and technical colleges, the state universities, the University of Minnesota, and the system office to establish project parameters and to guide implementation. The steering committee meets once every two months and serves as the policy advisory group on institutional policies and practices for degree audits; outreach and notification

### Implementation Timeline

**December 2012:** Minnesota formed the reverse transfer steering committee to establish an implementation timeline and parameters, such as the eligibility criteria and graduation fee waivers.

**Spring 2013:** MnSCU used the state-level data system to identify potential eligible reverse transfer students and partitioned these students into seven groups based on the community or technical college from which they transferred.

**Spring 2013 – Ongoing:** MnSCU conducts degree audits centrally for each of the seven groups of eligible students. MnSCU sends lists of students who meet degree requirements for Associate in Arts degrees to institutions, with communication samples and a timeline.

**December 2013:** The first reverse transfer associate's degrees were conferred.

**March 2014 – September 2014:** MnSCU finished auditing degrees for students in group three in February 2014 and is auditing degrees for students in groups four through seven now.

processes; and training for advisors, registrars, and staff. Campus transfer specialists provide input through their membership in a separate transfer advisory group, and campus experts who are working on IT/data systems for reverse transfer participate in a separate technology sub-committee to improve the Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) for the purpose of reverse transfer degrees.

Early in the grant period, the committee determined the eligibility criteria for reverse transfer, including a student needing to have earned a minimum of 12 credits at a MnSCU college and having transferred to a MnSCU university during the summer or fall terms of 2008 through 2012. The committee also recommended that any fees associated with processing a reverse transfer degree would be waived.

**Staggered, Centralized Degree Audits.** Minnesota is using the DARS system that contains transcript-level information for all MnSCU students to conduct degree audits centrally on students who are potentially eligible for reverse transfer. The state staggered implementation of degree audits by identifying potentially eligible transfer students during Spring 2013, and the Reverse Transfer Coordinator and Reverse Transfer Specialist partitioned these students into seven groups for processing degree audits during the grant period. The seven groups were established based on the complexity of associate's degree requirements of the community and technical colleges from which the student transferred. Colleges with the fewest additional degree requirements were categorized into group one, and colleges with additional degree requirements were categorized into group two, three, etc.

**Clarification of Institutional Policies.** Two key institutional policies associated with reverse transfer are the residency requirement and graduation application fee. To address these policies, the Reverse Transfer Coordinator gathered data on residency and graduation requirements from all community and technical colleges to generate statewide discussion which resulted in some colleges deciding to waive graduation applications and/or fees for reverse transfer students who do not plan to participate in commencement.

**Coordination with the University of Minnesota (U of Minnesota).** MnSCU is coordinating with the U of Minnesota to develop a reverse transfer process for students who transfer from a MnSCU community or technical college having completed the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (i.e. the 40-credit general core). The U of Minnesota sends letters to identified students with instructions for contacting the MnSCU Reverse Transfer Coordinator, and students provide consent to have their records audited and may provide unofficial transcripts. If deemed degree eligible by the Coordinator, the student requests an official U of Minnesota transcript be sent to the community or technical college at his or her expense. Of the initial list of 452 potentially eligible U of Minnesota transfer students, 20 reverse transfer degrees have been conferred.



Associate's degrees  
conferred as of March 2014: **355**



## 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 Minnesota's process is applied to this framework below.

1. **Student Identification:** MnSCU identified transfer students who were potentially eligible for reverse transfer based on state eligibility requirements.
2. **Consent Process:** At the advice of General Counsel, there is no consent process needed for the centralized MnSCU system to identify potentially eligible students and audit their degrees. Consent occurs after the degree audit when MnSCU sends eligible student names to the college or university that is responsible for seeking consent. The majority of institutions use an opt-in consent process but some use an opt-out process.
3. **Transcript Exchange:** MnSCU transcript-level data are centralized, so except for the partnership with the UM, transcript exchanges are not necessary.
4. **Degree Audit:** MnSCU conducts degree audits at the system (central) level at the beginning of the process, and MnSCU institutions verify students meet degree requirement.
5. **Degree Conferral:** If students meet all degree requirements, MnSCU colleges and universities confer the associate's degree. Among students who have stopped-out and have less than 16 credits to complete the associate's degree, MnSCU plans to work with Graduate Minnesota (another Lumina-funded project) to contact this population and discuss re-enrollment options.

## Implementation Successes and Challenges

**Successes:** Several technology enhancements have been made as a result of the CWID grant. First, MnSCU improved the functionality of the website that allows students to see how courses will transfer throughout the MnSCU system ([www.transferology.org](http://www.transferology.org)). Grant funds were used to create a feature that automatically imports all the courses students have taken throughout the system, removing the need for students to manually enter course information and ideally increasing use of the website. Related, MnSCU is developing a technology platform that allows both students and administrators to track and record the completion of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum on students' transcripts. The tool will increase the possibility of reverse transfer sustainability following the conclusion of the grant.

A second key success includes changes in institutional policies and practice that are barriers to students' degree conferral via reverse transfer. Through re-examination of the rationale for exceptions to degree requirements, at least two MnSCU community and technical colleges modified institutional degree requirements to allow for degree conferral through reverse transfer.

**Challenges:** Course requirements for the associate's degree vary widely among institutions within the MnSCU system. Complex degree requirements at the community and technical college level sometimes may make it easier and more efficient for associate's degrees to be conferred by the university; however, this has not been common practice. As mentioned previously, MnSCU universities have the authority to confer associate's degrees, but they are not conferring them to currently enrolled transfer students and are only conferring them to eligible transfer students who are stop-outs. MnSCU is engaging university leadership in dialogue to investigate opportunities to change institutional practice and culture.

Since MnSCU institutions are primarily using an opt-in approach for student consent, degree conferral rates are low. Despite having current contact information for students, students are not responding and consenting at high rates even with numerous contacts and mediums of communication.

## Institutions Participating in Credit When It's Due

Alexandria Technical Community College  
Anoka-Ramsey Community College  
Anoka Technical College  
Bemidji State University  
Central Lakes College  
Century College  
Dakota Technical College  
Fond du Lac Technical Community College  
Hennepin Technical College  
Hibbing Community College  
Inver Hills Community College  
Itasca Community College  
Lake Superior College  
Mesabi Range Community and Technical College

Metropolitan State University  
Minneapolis Community and Technical College  
Minnesota State – Southeast Technical College  
Minnesota State Community and Technical College  
Minnesota State University-Mankato  
Minnesota State University-Moorhead  
Minnesota West Community and Technical College  
Normandale Community College  
North Hennepin Community College  
Northland Community and Technical College  
Northwest Technical College  
Pine Technical College

Rainy River Community College  
Ridgewater College  
Riverland Community College  
Rochester Community and Technical College  
St. Cloud State University  
St. Cloud Technical and Community College  
St. Paul College  
South Central College  
Southwest State University  
Vermilion Community College  
Winona State University  
University of Minnesota