



CREDIT
when it's due

North Carolina

STATE PROFILE

State Funder: USA Funds

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 public higher education system in North Carolina consists of the University of North Carolina (UNC) system and the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS). The UNC system includes 16 public universities and the NCCCS system includes 58 public community colleges. North Carolina's CWID efforts are engaging 15 community colleges and eight universities during the grant period with the expectation that reverse transfer will be scaled statewide.

Key Implementation Strategies

Reverse Transfer Project Manager. North Carolina hired a full-time project manager early in the grant period to provide grant coordination and lead the reverse transfer efforts. The project manager has been critical in developing and promoting reverse transfer around the state, meeting one-on-one with pilot institutions, building relationships, revising institutional and system policies to accommodate reverse transfer, supporting the implementation of institutional reverse transfer efforts, creating a marketing plan, ensuring FERPA compliance, and creating scenarios with community colleges to assist with the degree audit process.

Developing Shared Technology Solution. Given that the public community college and university systems are structurally separated in North Carolina, a core strategy of the CWID grant is to develop a degree audit and notification system for the purpose of reverse transfer. The Student Data Mart (SDM) system, the development of which began before the CWID grant was received, is the primary mechanism whereby transcript-level information can be used to regularly determine students' eligibility for reverse transfer based on the number of credit hours students earn. Initiation of the reverse transfer process was scheduled for January 2014, and delivery of transcript-level data will be in June 2014 when the SDM system will be fully functional.

Improving Course Articulation and Equivalencies. NCCCS has an expansive statewide common course library, however, not all courses are taught at every community college. Whereas some community college student information systems include extensive course equivalencies, others systems do not. To aid in the processing of reverse transfer degrees, UNC is engaging in a "mapping" process that articulates one university course with up to three different community college courses. Each community college will receive a transcript report from UNC that includes course equivalencies for each eligible student. This will increase reverse transfer degree audit processing and allow community colleges to articulate more university courses toward associate's degree requirements.

Institutional and System Policy Changes. Reverse transfer implementation efforts are dependent on changes to some institutional and system policies and structures at UNC and NCCCS. Several NCCCS policies have been rewritten to ensure success of reverse transfer including, but not limited to, readmission and graduation policies. To maximize the proportion of students consenting to participate and ensure sustainability of reverse transfer, North Carolina is developing "pop-up" technology that will ensure both FERPA compliance and increase response rates to 100%. This technology will require all eligible students to "opt-in" to the reverse transfer program, meaning that students must actively consent to participate.

Pilot Strategy and Scale-Up. North Carolina is engaging 15 of the 58 community colleges and eight of the 16 universities to pilot reverse transfer, which encompass 70% of the states' transfer population. The pilot community colleges and universities developed teams and initially participated in one-on-one meetings with the Director of Reverse Transfer and then attended several regional meetings in 2013. Regional meeting outcomes were positive and included development of policies, procedures, articulation of courses, and strategies for implementation. One institution piloted the FERPA compliance "pop-up" solution starting in Fall 2013, and all pilot sites launched implementation of reverse transfer in January 2014; UNC and NCCCS system leaders anticipate scaling reverse transfer to all public institutions when pilot efforts conclude.

Implementation Timeline

2012: The SDM development was launched.

February – June 2013: Reverse transfer policies and procedures were developed, and a community college technology needs assessment was conducted.

July – December 2013: Various consent methods were assessed and developed. North Carolina began "mapping" course equivalencies between universities and community colleges.

Fall 2013: One institution tested student identification and consent processes prior to the UNC pilots.

January 2014: Students were identified and contacted for reverse transfer at pilot UNC campuses.

June 2014 – September 2014: The first associate's degrees will be conferred.

Summer – Fall 2014: Statewide reverse transfer scale-up will begin.



**Associate's degrees
conferred as of March 2014: 0**





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 North Carolina's process is applied to this framework. The following process is based on the implementation efforts at the pilot institutions in Spring 2014.

1. **Reverse Transfer Student Identification:** The pilot UNC campuses queried records to identify students who met the defined reverse transfer eligibility criteria.
2. **Consent Process:** North Carolina has implemented an opt-in policy. All but one university contacted students by email during the first week of classes and asked them to provide consent by logging into a custom built web portal. The universities sent follow-up emails to non-responders each subsequent week for five weeks. Nearly all of the universities offered cash incentives and two universities offered students priority registration to increase participation. The universities will send postcards to home addresses for the remaining non-responders.
3. **Transcript Exchange:** The UNC SDM will collect the transcript data on the eligible students and place it on a secure server. The individual community colleges, once authenticated, will access transcript data via SDM.
4. **Degree Audit:** The community college is responsible for conducting the degree audit using existing institutional technology or in some cases by hand. The purpose is to identify students who meet all associate's degree requirements.
5. **Degree Conferral:** Students who meet all degree requirements will be conferred a degree and notified by the community college.

Implementation Successes and Challenges

Successes: The first year of the grant period was extremely important—consensus was built among NCCCS institutions and consistent reverse transfer policies and procedures were developed, including a common residency requirement and waiving readmission and graduation fees. At the beginning of the second year of the grant, a successful marketing strategy was developed and launched to increase participation rates. As of March 2014, over 5,000 transfer students consented to participate in the CWID program. Although some of these students may not qualify for a degree through reverse transfer if they do not meet basic eligibility criteria (e.g., residency requirement and degree audit), the high consent response numbers are promising and reflect the intense marketing strategy. Another critical success was the improvement of course equivalencies between UNC courses and community college courses so more UNC courses transfer back to community colleges and eventually apply to associate's degrees. Finally, several technology enhancements were made at the state and local levels to support reverse transfer. At the state level, the SDM will allow efficient transcript exchange among institutions. At the local level, community colleges have collaborated to share technology related to degree audit and data conversion for reverse

transfer that will improve not only the overall efficiency of reverse transfer but the normal degree audit processes in the registrar offices. This collaboration prompted sister community colleges to develop procedures to audit degrees of all current community college students to identify potential degree candidates, and the lead community college is developing training videos and manuals to communicate these shared practices

Challenges: The most significant implementation challenge has been building state and local technology infrastructure that is critical to both large-scale and long-term reverse transfer implementation. Given the complexity of the project and the need for technology development, the full implementation of the reverse transfer was planned for the last 9 months of the grant period when the SDM is fully operational. With 58 community colleges and students swirling among institutions, a second significant challenge was developing a policy to determine the community college that would confer the degree if students attended multiple community colleges. This required meetings of key constituents to develop policies and procedures to comply with both regional accreditation and state and local regulations. Additional technology solutions were also needed to overcome this challenge. Finally, a significant portion of students either did not respond to requests or did not opt-in to the program. At the university that implemented the required response "pop-up" technology, approximately half of the eligible students did not opt-in; understanding these students' reasons for not opting-in will be an important priority for the state moving forward.

Institutions Piloting Reverse Transfer in Spring 2014*

Appalachian State University
Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College
Cape Fear Community College
Central Piedmont Community College
Coastal Carolina Community College
Davidson County Community College
Durham Technical Community College
East Carolina University
Fayetteville State University
Fayetteville Technical Community College
Forsyth Technical Community College
Gaston College
Guilford Technical Community College
Martin Community College
NC State University
Pitt Community College
Rowan-Cabarrus Community College
Stanly Community College
UNC Charlotte
UNC Greensboro
UNC Wilmington
Wake Technical Community College
Western Carolina University

* Upon completion of the pilot phase, North Carolina will scale up to all 16 universities and 58 community colleges.