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I. INTRODUCTION

Why Reverse Transfer?
A recent report by the National Student Clearinghouse noted that “over the last 20 years, more than 31 million students have enrolled in college and left without receiving a degree or certificate.” Furthermore, 64 percent of entering community college students transfer to four-year colleges without first earning their associate degree (Shapiro, et.al. 2013). Reverse transfer is a process by which credits earned by a student at a baccalaureate institution that meet and complete the academic credentials of an associate degree at the previously attended community college are transferred from the four-year institution to the two-year institution; thus, providing the student with the awarded associate degree from the community college.

As a university of 24 institutions in which students regularly transfer from its two-year to four-year colleges, the City University of New York (CUNY) is in the unique position to implement a reverse transfer policy and investigate its implications. With senior college enrollment dropping by 10.7 percent between fall 2009 and fall 2013 for first-time freshmen, transfers to senior colleges are essential for maintaining their student body. In the fall of 2013, there were 15,790 undergraduate transfers to CUNY senior colleges. It is reasonable to presume that a substantial percentage in this cohort moved from the two-year institutions. Because many students transfer before obtaining the associate degree, the pipeline of students eligible for reverse transfer at CUNY may be large.

Chancellor Milliken has identified implementation of a system-wide reverse transfer initiative as a University priority. Our community colleges encourage students to fulfill associate degree requirements prior to transferring, but students choose to transfer early for many reasons. It is important for CUNY to ensure that students are awarded the credentials they have earned and that will be of professional and academic value to them.

Background
The impetus for this effort, in part, relates to the national call for colleges and universities to improve their graduation rates, legislative mandates for state institutions to develop policies to facilitate student transfer, and concerns about the rising cost of higher education (see, for example, The Real Cost of College: Time and Credits to Degrees in California State University, 2014). Furthermore, dialogue and debate about the “completion agenda,” with advocates such as Project Win-Win and Complete College America, call for innovation and change to traditional practices in higher education so as to accelerate students’ progress toward degrees (Taylor, Bishop, Makela, Bragg, & Rudd, 2013). At the federal level, the current draft of legislation to reauthorize the Higher Education Act has a provision that would help community college students who transferred to
baccalaureate institutions before obtaining the associate degree to use “reverse transfer” to complete the credential.

The benefits of reverse transfer for institutions can be both political and economic. With state legislatures becoming more skeptical about the value of investing public dollars in higher education, reverse transfer may improve graduation rates and document higher levels of educational attainment than current data indicate. For community colleges in particular, many of which provide foundational courses in general education for students who transfer to university without first earning a degree, reverse transfer has the potential to correct the penalty inherent in the IPED’s metric which invariably punishes these institutions for their success in facilitating transfer, as such students are not counted as a “completion.” A National Student Clearinghouse report on baccalaureate attainment indicated that 64 percent of entering community college students transfer to four-year colleges without first earning their associate degree (Shapiro et al., 2013, Appendix Table D, p. 64); thus, reverse transfer may help community colleges document their important role in the process of degree completion. Recalculating completion rates using reverse transfer might positively impact community colleges’ performance-based funding, as well as counter prevailing criticism about their low associate degree graduation rates, which, to some extent, is an inevitable by-product of their transfer mission. This tangible benefit to two-year colleges is in addition to the hypothesized improvement in the number of bachelor’s degrees that might be awarded by four-year colleges as a result of increased student persistence if they earned an associate degree “in reverse” (Taylor et al., 2013).

Who Wrote This Manual
These implementation guidelines were prepared by the Reverse Transfer/En Route Associate Degree Task Force, which was charged by the Executive Vice Chancellor Rabinowitz to identify and draft policies and develop implementation procedures. The task force also serves as a working group to develop implementation models and strategies and prepare concrete guidelines, work plans, and processes to be shared with and implemented at the colleges. This task force of college provosts, deans, and administrators, as well as central office deans and administrators, prepared this document to provide guidance, models, and materials designed so that each college can select or design a model to implement. The task force members who prepared this manual are:

Anny Morrobel-Sosa, Provost, Lehman College (Co-Chair)
Lucinda Zoe, University Dean for Undergraduate Studies, CUNY OAA (Co-Chair)
Paul Marchese, Provost, Queensborough Community College
Karrin Wilks, Provost, Borough of Manhattan Community College
Felix Cardona, Assistant Dean, Hostos Community College
David Crook, University Dean, Institutional Research and Assessment
II. PHASE ONE IMPLEMENTATION: STRUCTURE AND PREPARATION

Structure and Implementation
Determine a structure, roles, and responsibilities appropriate for your college, based on your own organization chart and distribution of duties. Which division will take primary responsibility for the college’s reverse transfer initiative—the provost office, registrar’s office, advisement, or transfer services? At Lehman, for example, the provost established a standing oversight committee to review and manage progress on reverse transfer. At BMCC the provost created a reverse transfer team that is composed of key players from the offices of admissions, advisement, and the registrar. This is a local decision.

A reverse transfer liaison has been appointed at each college (community colleges, comprehensive colleges, and senior colleges) to:

- Serve as project lead for implementation
- Develop the project team
- Act as point-person for all communications and instructions and disseminate those to appropriate offices, including communicating with other reverse transfer liaisons
- Track and report progress
- Manage all data transactions

The role of reverse transfer liaisons is slightly different at senior colleges than at the community and comprehensive colleges. The primary role of senior college liaisons is communication with advisement staff and serving as a point person and conduit with community colleges.
There are two groups of potentially eligible students: 1) students who are eligible to be awarded a degree via reverse transfer now, and 2) those who are only one to two courses shy of a degree.

Community college liaisons are encouraged to make contact with the liaisons at the senior college to share lists of students who may be three to six credits short of what is needed for an associate degree. Senior college liaisons will then ensure that students who are a few credits short and have been referred from a community college will receive advising at the senior college about which courses to take.

It has also been suggested that the senior college liaisons work with community college liaisons to email students identified as eligible to receive an associate degree. Thus, another role of the senior college liaisons is to assist the community colleges with communicating with students. The community colleges will send the senior college liaisons the names of students, the email text to be sent, etc. The rationale is that students may not respond to an email from their previous community college, but would be more likely to open an email from their current college.

However it is the role of all liaisons to create, lead, and communicate with your team and to be the primary point of contact for your college with other reverse transfer liaisons in all matters related to reverse transfer.

Determine specific roles and responsibilities for key staff and administrators. Typically, the major players in facilitating the process include the following offices:

- Provost
- Deans
- Chairs
- Advisors (faculty and staff)
- Registrar
- Admissions
- Institutional Research

The participating staff will vary by college, but generally include the following: academic advisor, registrar, graduation auditor, transfer credit evaluator, and program coordinators or chairs as needed (in the event of waivers or course substitutions).

**Curriculum Maps**
Creating degree maps for every major at CUNY is also a critical priority. Degree mapping refers to creating semester-by-semester plans for all majors in a given college for full-time and part-time courses of study. Degree maps can be static documents that simply lay out the curricula of each
Degree mapping can also facilitate the creation of structured schedules. Once the path to a degree for the most popular majors is laid out, administrators can begin to schedule courses in blocks over the course of the week. For example, required courses for Psychology that are typically taken together might be scheduled in both morning and afternoon blocks so that a student can take all 15 credits in the morning or afternoon. This facilitates student cohorts and is especially helpful for students who have outside employment. Structured schedules can also help make course seat needs more predictable.

Transfer Credit Rules
Work with your department chairs, faculty, registrar’s office, and admission’s office to ensure that transfer credit rules and equivalency tables in both CUNYfirst and TIPPS are up-to-date.

Reverse transfer is dependent on accurate transfer rules and course equivalencies in CUNYfirst and in TIPPS. Although the review/updating of transfer credit rules is business as usual for colleges, colleges are often able to wait until transfer students come in with courses, and then assess them on a case-by-case basis. This reactive process will not work for assessing reverse transfer in bulk.

Please see section IT PRACTICES AND CONSIDERATIONS for more details.

III. IMPLEMENTATION MODELS

The process for facilitating reverse transfer is fairly straightforward. All key players have been briefed at reverse transfer orientation sessions. This includes the Council of Registrars, Advisors, CUE, Transfer Credit Evaluators/Admissions, and Degree Works. It is up to each college to design its own process for handling the basic tasks required to implement a reverse transfer program based on its own unique organizational structure.

We have identified two basic models that are currently in use: one at Hostos, Bronx, and Lehman and a second at Queensborough. Details on both models are included in the appendices. You may choose to follow one of them, or design your own process. Regardless of the model you choose,
below are the core factors and tasks that need to be addressed as you implement reverse transfer at your college.

**Recommended Criteria for Eligibility**
The criteria for student eligibility for reverse transfer were determined by the reverse transfer task force. Students who are potentially eligible to be considered for a reverse transfer degree include students at the senior colleges who:

- Earned at least 30 credits at the associate degree granting institution
- Left the associate degree institution with a GPA of 2.0 or higher (in good academic standing)
- Have earned at least 60 total credits by the beginning of the current semester

The recommended credit range for eligibility is 30 to 45+ credits. Students with multi-college credit accumulations are eligible provided the residency requirement is met (30 credits minimum in the institution for which the degree is sought). A higher credit target is more likely to result in a greater number of eligible students.

Students must be in good academic standing at the two-year institution.

**Identifying Potential Student Applicants**
The CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) will provide each college with a list of potentially eligible students, based on the eligibility criteria listed above. OIRA will provide the lists twice per year, near the beginning of the fall and spring semesters, most likely October and March.

It may be easiest to readmit this entire list of potentially eligible students before further evaluating them. For example, at BMCC, the Office of the Registrar readmits all eligible students first—by adding a row to their program plan stack with the reason code ‘Reverse Transfer’ in CUNYfirst, without changing their admit terms. Once this task is completed, Admissions reviews the file. (Please see below “Reviewing Degree Requirements” for more details.)

Lehman created a Reverse Transfer Process (RTP) service indicator in CUNYfirst in order to easily identify students who are eligible for a reverse transfer review and/or ultimately awarded a degree. This RTP is a positive service indicator with no impact and is viewable to students in their Student Center. There are queries written in CUNYfirst that can easily produce a list of students with the RTP service indicator and reason codes. Lehman created a reason code for all community colleges:
Models
Colleges may opt for one of two models or devise a combination of both. There is the College-to-College model, based on inter-institutional agreement or through articulated programs, and the College-to-Student model, based on direct outreach to non-graduate transfers from the community college to multiple senior institutions.

A. **College-to-College** model is illustrated by the Bronx and Hostos Community College-Lehman College program which includes an agreement with articulations in a variety of disciplines. The senior institutions assist in identifying potentially eligible students currently in attendance. Joint outreach by both institutions may be initiated with additional secondary outreach by the community college. Key participants include the academic advisor, the admissions office, and the registrar (for transcript review, readmit, and graduation audit).

B. **College-to-Student** model is illustrated by the Queensborough Community College program whereby outreach is to all students within a specified credit range (mostly 50+) and good academic standing. All reviews are under the auspices of the registrar (including eligibility, transcript review, and graduation audit).

Outreach and Marketing
Once identified, students can be contacted in multiple ways, including email, regular mail, and phone. Senior institutions can initiate or engage in concurrent outreach to potential eligible students attending their college. Depending on the model, community college outreach will be the primary means of contacting students, but it is recommended that community and senior colleges work together to contact students (e.g., students may be more likely to open an email from their senior college, as it is their current college).

The practice of reverse transfer should be communicated as an option for students who have not completed their associate degree before transferring to the senior college, not as an opportunity for community college students generally. (Currently attending students should be strongly counseled against transferring out of the community college before completing the associate degree.) Eligible
students are re-admitted (fees are waived) for the purposes of transferring and evaluating credits to facilitate the graduation audit. Thus, the initiative is intentionally not promoted at the community and comprehensive colleges, as we do not want to provide incentives for students to transfer before completing their associate degree.

In fact, there is little marketing or promotion required for the initiative. The outreach is directed to the specific students who have been identified as having met the criteria. The senior colleges may choose to promote the initiative through their advisement offices to encourage students to inquire about the program and assess their interest. Students can then be advised to take courses at the senior college that would fulfill degree requirements for an unfinished associate degree.

Graduation Application Process and Notification
Once identified and reviewed for eligibility, students are advised of their graduation status and the possible degree to be awarded. The consolidated transcript should be used to conduct the review, and students should not be required to submit official copies. Consolidated transcripts can now be accessed in CUNYfirst, or you may choose to do this via the process of automated transfer evaluations.

Reviewing Degree Requirements
For AAS technical or specialized degrees: Advisors or reviewers should determine the most efficient degree configuration to facilitate degree completion for eligible students. Students who were enrolled in a specialized or technical program are least likely to be degree-eligible. The Associate in Arts is in many instances the most applicable degree, and it is recommended that colleges target AA-eligible students.

It may be easiest to readmit the entire list of potentially eligible students before further evaluating them. For example, at BMCC, the Office of the Registrar readmits all eligible students first—by adding a row to their program plan stack with the reason code ‘Reverse Transfer’ in CUNYfirst, without changing their admit terms. Once this task is completed, Admissions reviews the file.

The Office of Admission will then fetch their transfer credits without posting them to the record. Once this is completed, the Office of the Registrar will be able to pull their Degree Works audits for evaluation. Since these students will not enroll at the community college, they will be auto-discontinued in CUNYfirst. Also, if you are manually updating a fetched equivalency, communicate that with the Transfer Rule Writer so that the rule can be updated.

You do not have to post credits when you fetch in order for those courses to appear in Degree Works. Transfer credits will flow to Degree Works regardless of the transfer status (Posted,
Submitted, or Complete). Evaluations do not need to be deleted, but they should remain in an unposted status if the student does not end up earning the reverse transfer degree.

Assessing Equivalencies and Overlay Requirements
Advisors and/or transfer credit evaluators will use the consolidated transcripts to conduct their evaluations. Consolidated transcripts can now be accessed in CUNYfirst, or you may choose to do this via the process of automated transfer evaluations.

Credits completed at the senior institution will be identified to establish course equivalencies consistent with the associate degree requirements. Overlay requirements (e.g., writing-intensive courses) completed at the senior institution will be assumed to be equivalent to similar requirements at the community college. For such requirements, waivers by the two-year institution should not be necessary.

Degree Works, TIPPS, CUNYfirst, and Substitution Waivers
CUNYfirst should be updated and consulted regularly to confirm equivalencies and degree requirements. Waivers or substitutions may be sought in consultation with academic departments where equivalencies are not reflected in the TIPPS, but the coursework completed at the senior college would fulfill the associate degree requirement. Manual reviews may be necessary as these systems are subject to updates and modifications based on the Chancellor’s University Report. Colleges should be attentive to new curricular changes to ensure timely updates.
Notification
Once post-audit graduation eligibility information is communicated to the student, and the student opts to receive the associate degree, the registrar graduates the student and provides notification.

Graduation Review Period
The schedule for reviews should parallel the regular phases for summer, winter, and fall graduation. The basic process is to term activate without a fee, conduct the degree audit/transfer evaluation, contact the student, confer graduation if student opts in, and then inform the senior college. When awarding the degree using the program action ‘COMP’, you should use the Action Reason ‘REV’. This will enable the identification of reverse transfer degrees.

Sample Timeline
Spring Graduation
- Second week in January: community colleges access electronic list of eligible students from OIRA or CUNYfirst queries.
- First week in March: community colleges provide list of students eligible to graduate to senior colleges.
- Second and third week of March: community colleges conduct mail, email, and phone outreach to eligible students.
- Students apply for graduation at community colleges; degrees awarded in May.
- Communicate degree conferral information to senior colleges and students in May or June.

Summer Graduation
- Second week in June: community colleges access electronic list of eligible students from OIRA or CUNYfirst queries.
- Last week in June: community colleges provide list of students eligible to graduate to senior colleges.
- First week in July: community colleges conduct mail, email, and phone outreach to eligible students.
- Students apply for graduation at community colleges; degrees awarded in September.
- Communicate degree conferral information to senior colleges in September.
Fall Graduation

- Last week in September: community colleges access electronic list of eligible students from OIRA or CUNYfirst queries.
- Last week in October: community colleges provide list of students eligible to graduate to senior colleges.
- First week in November: community colleges conduct mail, email, and phone outreach to eligible students.
- Students apply for graduation at community colleges; degrees awarded in January.
- Communicate degree conferral information to senior colleges in January.

IV. ADVISORS AND TRANSFER COORDINATORS: PRACTICES AND CONSIDERATIONS

For Community College Advisory and Transfer Staff and Coordinators

What to Look for (and Prepare for in Advance)

- The reverse transfer liaison should create an on-campus reverse transfer team with specifications as to each member’s responsibility. See Lehman/Bronx and Queensborough models for guidance.
- Commence training on technology, policies, and protocols being used for implementation of reverse transfer, specifically for bypassing standard readmission practices and fees.
- Based on this manual and team input, develop on-campus work flow/process manual or chart.
- Participate in creating, implementing, scribing, and updating transfer credit rules and equivalency tables in CUNYfirst and TIPPS as necessary in advance of implementation.
- Admissions/Transfer-In/Credit Evaluations: Institutions should work with their college’s Institutional Research and with the CUNY Office of Institutional Research to determine if there are any patterns as to where their early transfer students go, at what stage they leave, and to what degree they remain in the same academic area. This will help prioritize which courses/programs to focus on for identification, evaluation, and scribing purposes.
- Based on IR data, the team should prepare for likely substitutions and waivers, particularly for any courses that would be less likely to have been taken in the first year, and establish/cultivate an inventory of pre-approved substitutions/waivers/equivalencies, where possible.

Waivers, Substitutions, and Overrides

- Academic and transfer-out advisors should be aware of the complications involved in reverse transfer, in the event that a student seeks to intentionally transfer early, i.e., the courses
they would most likely take on transferring early would be courses that would either be part of their program at the community college, or would be courses that would be waived by completing the AA/AS prior to transfer.

Trends and Patterns That Would Inform Scribing Changes or Polices

- Academic and transfer-out advisors should be privy to any patterns in the IR data that can help them engage in retention through advisement and be alert to programs that are more likely to lose students through early transfer.
- They should be trained on reverse policies and procedures and should have a direct line of communication with the advising offices of senior colleges that will allow both sets of advisors to work in concert on programmatic and advisement challenges.

For Senior College Advisory and Transfer Staff and Coordinators

What to Look for (and Prepare for in Advance)

- The reverse transfer liaison should create an on-campus reverse transfer team with specifications as to each member’s responsibility. See Lehman/Bronx and Queensborough models for guidance.
- Commence training on technology, policies, and protocols being used for implementation of reverse transfer.
- Based on this manual and team input, develop on-campus work flow/process manual or chart.
- Reverse transfer liaison and registrar assist in identifying potentially eligible students currently in attendance in accordance with the reverse transfer activities and deadline schedule. The senior colleges will receive a list of students that have met the criteria to be considered for a reverse transfer degree from the community or comprehensive college they transferred from. This information is turned over to director of academic advising. Advisors will review the consolidated transcript and if a student attended more than one CUNY community college, the advisor will identify the institution from which the student could potentially receive an associate degree via reverse transfer and will share information with reverse transfer liaison at community colleges. Community college liaisons should share their own findings regarding potentially eligible students and senior and community college will ensure compatible lists/target students on a regular basis.
- Joint and collaborative outreach by both institutions may be initiated with additional secondary outreach by the community college. Information and messaging must be uniform and information shared with one another by community and senior institutions. [See list of reverse transfer liaisons with contact information in the appendix].
Waivers, Substitutions, and Overrides

- Community college will determine whether completed coursework at senior college is enough for reverse transfer consideration or if additional coursework at senior college is required. During this review, community college will determine if substitutions, waivers, new degree track, or different catalog year is needed to facilitate reverse transfer.
- If additional coursework at senior college is needed, academic advisors (with the help of community college reverse transfer liaison) will assist student to make academic choices at the senior college to meet associate degree requirements, while maintaining traction toward the baccalaureate degree as well as meeting financial aid and reverse transfer regulations. Community colleges will share its inventory list of pre-approved substitutions/waivers/ equivalencies where/when possible with senior colleges.
- Upon completion of identified coursework, academic advisor will inform community college liaison who will review student for reverse transfer with the considerations as noted above.
- According to the reverse transfer activities and deadline schedule, each community college will inform senior college upon the awarding of the associate degree so that senior institution can adjust student’s baccalaureate degree requirements in CUNYfirst and Degree Works according to CUNY Pathways policies.
- Academic advisors will review the forthcoming semester’s registration of newly awarded associate degree recipients in accordance with adjusted baccalaureate degree requirements and assist students in adjusting their program accordingly, as necessary.

Trends and Patterns That Would Inform Scribing Changes or Polices

- Regularly monitor your institution’s curricular changes and work with your on-campus point-persons to ensure that TIPPS, CUNYfirst, and Degree Works keep pace with the changes and that rules, equivalencies, and policies are regularly updated and scribed.
- It is recommended that all institutions that do not have a set timetable for curricular change implementation look to formally adopt a timetable will ensure that faculty, advisors, systems, and publications articulate the same curriculum, requirements, and information.
- Report concerns, issues, trends, patterns, problems to your institution’s reverse transfer liaison so that he/she may report the information to the CUNY reverse transfer task force.

V. TECHNOLOGY: PRACTICES AND CONSIDERATIONS

College IT departments will need to collaborate with advisement, registrar, and academic affairs regarding any additional reports needed beyond the lists provided by OIRA. All community colleges in collaboration with campus IT will develop reports and dashboards detailing the total number of
potential records, total number of records reviewed, and total degrees offered including total opted in/out, of those offered and total attended commencement ceremony.

Queries for Maintenance of Transfer Credit Rules and Courses
Every time a new course is created, new transfer credit rules must be created for equivalent courses at all other CUNY colleges. For reverse transfer, it is especially important for community colleges to create transfer credit rules with all senior colleges. The recommended practice is to review new course reports from CUNYfirst to capture new/changed courses, and create/update transfer credit rules for all as needed.

These queries will assist with the maintenance of the transfer credit rules and courses. We recommend you run these queries frequently to ensure accuracy on transfer credit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Query Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CU_SR_TRNS_EXTERNAL_RULES</td>
<td>This query identifies non-CUNY schools courses and their transfer equivalencies.</td>
<td>It is recommended you process this query one source institution at a given time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU_SR_TRNS_EXTERNAL_RULES_SHRT</td>
<td>This query is a shorter version of the above. The information provided is streamlined and may be easier to read.</td>
<td>This query is used frequently. Information is provided in a user-friendly format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU_SR_TRNS_INTERNAL_RULES</td>
<td>This query identifies CUNY schools courses and their transfer equivalencies.</td>
<td>It is recommended you process this query one source institution at a given time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU_SR_TRNS_INTERNAL_RULES_SHRT</td>
<td>This query is a shorter version of the one above. The information provided is streamlined and may be easier to read.</td>
<td>This query is used frequently. Information is provided in a user-friendly format. It is recommended you process this query one source institution at a given time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A number of policy issues will emerge that will need to be addressed. Most should be determined locally at the college. But a few have been determined to be CUNY-wide policies. Below is an accounting of some of the policy issues identified thus far. We expect others may arise from the colleges as you put your processes in place.

Student Consent and Outreach
CUNY will employ an “opt in” policy, in which students will actively affirm that they wish to receive the degree (as opposed to an “opt out” policy). Students must opt in and confirm that they want the associate degree.

Outreach should only target potentially eligible students who have already matriculated at a senior college, to avoid encouraging students to transfer early without an associate degree.

The following items are reiterations or clarifications of current policies. They hold for reverse transfer and should not be changed.

Student Eligibility
The current policies for residency requirements and academic standing hold for reverse transfer. In order to obtain an associate degree via reverse transfer, students must be in good academic standing at the community college, meaning they must have a GPA of 2.0 or higher when calculated with regard to the courses they completed at the community college.

It is important to maintain the same standards for degree completion for all students.

Pathways College Option
CUNY policy provides students who complete associate degrees with benefits (fewer college option credits); this policy holds for reverse transfer students. Once a student receives an associate degree their college options requirements will be reduced to no more than 6 credits, as required by current Pathways policy.

Note that this requires careful timing and attention to the registration schedule and student status in CUNYfirst. This will require review of any future courses the student is enrolled in; care needs to be taken such that the re-evaluation does not retroactively affect financial aid. A schedule with deadlines for both the community college (reviewing transcripts and posting degrees—not during the TAP audit) and the senior college (re-evaluating transfer credit) is included in the implementation section.
The below items are for the colleges to determine. Colleges should decide how to approach these issues and apply their policies consistently. Take students’ best interests into account; try to be flexible. Make use of faculty expertise to establish guidelines.

Specified Curriculum in the Community Colleges
Most of CUNY’s associate degree programs have highly specified degree requirements with few or no elective credits included in the curriculum. It may be unlikely that students would meet remaining requirements for their associate degrees while working toward their bachelor’s degree. Several community and comprehensive colleges have more flexible requirements for the AA in Liberal Arts programs, making it more likely that students could meet these requirements while working toward their bachelor’s degrees. However, other colleges have highly specified curriculum in all degree programs, including the AA in Liberal Arts.

CUNY encourages colleges to be flexible when considering whether students meet program requirements. College may want to consider revising their basic AA degrees to be more flexible to allow for a greater range of courses to meet requirements.

Reliance on Course Equivalencies
To determine if students have met requirements of the associate program, coursework completed must be deemed equivalent to courses required for the associate program. However, in some cases courses taken at one college have no equivalent at another CUNY college. This may be especially problematic for reverse transfer because the senior colleges typically offer many more courses than the community colleges. In such cases where a course taken at one college has no equivalent at another college, the course may transfer for blanket elective credit or blanket credit in a discipline, and it is unlikely that such blanket credit would help students meet particular degree requirements.

CUNY encourages colleges to be flexible when determining equivalencies and consider the “spirit if not the letter” of equivalencies, when appropriate. CUNY encourages colleges to be pro-active and leverage faculty expertise to determine guidelines for waivers, etc.

Parameters for the Analysis of Completed Coursework Toward Degree Requirements
It is possible that students may meet degree requirements as published under one catalog year, but not the degree requirements published in another catalog year. This is particularly relevant because when Pathways was implemented many of the degree requirements changed. To optimize the success of reverse transfer, student coursework should be analyzed against both the current catalog requirements as well as the requirements that were in effect when the student began at the community college.
It may be desirable to consider allowing course substitutions or requirement waivers in particular circumstances and/or switching degree programs.

Colleges have implemented the Pathways Common Core framework in different ways, which may raise questions about how to make reverse transfer equitable across CUNY campuses. For example, some colleges may require that students fulfill the sixth course requirement in the Flexible Core in the Creative Expression area. Colleges will have to come up with their own policies about what recent requirements they are willing to grant waivers for.

Overlay requirements offer another potential hurdle that could be addressed through waivers in particular circumstances. For instance, many colleges require that students complete one or more Writing Intensive courses as part of their degree program, with the expectation that this requirement will be completed simultaneously with other requirements for the degree. However, students who have left the college may be unlikely to have fulfilled such overlay requirements. The use of substitutions and waivers may require faculty approval, and further, the widespread use of waivers and substitutions could be problematic in a TAP audit.

Again, CUNY encourages colleges to be pro-active and leverage faculty expertise to determine guidelines for waivers, etc.

**VII. Final Thoughts and College Reverse Transfer Liaisons**

The reverse transfer process is, in essence a quiet, back-office administrative process that is being implemented across all of our associate degree granting institutions to assist students in completing their associate degrees. We expect this to be an incremental process that will produce more policy considerations and more discussions.

In the first official year of CUNY-wide implementation, we will address the challenges that emerge, share ideas and practices, and hone our process. Considerations for the coming year include plans to reach out to students who have left CUNY altogether. We also expect to revise this manual as our systems are upgraded and change, as new tools and functions that will assist in the process are likely to emerge from the Degree Works upgrade and evolving changes to CUNYfirst.

Your comments, ideas, and recommendations are most welcome and appreciated. Please share your suggestions with your college reverse transfer liaison who will pass them along to the Reverse Transfer Task Force for review and consideration.
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VIII. REFERENCES AND SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


Additional Useful Resources

Credit When it’s Due, Office of Community College Research and Leadership | University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. http://occrl.illinois.edu/cwid

Reverse Transfer: The path less traveled http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/18/77/11877.pdf


Blueprint for College Readiness http://www.ecs.org/docs/ECSblueprint.pdf