Reverse Transfer/En Route
Associate Degree

ANNUAL REPORT
2017-18

Reverse Transfer Council
March 2019

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Reverse Transfer/En Route Associate Degree
Annual Report 2017-18

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A. INTRODUCTION

Background

The Reverse Transfer task force first met on October 5, 2015. The Chancellor had identified the implementation of a system-wide Reverse Transfer initiative as a University priority. CUNY strongly encourages students to fulfill associate degree requirements prior to transferring from community colleges, but nonetheless some students choose to transfer before conferral. CUNY wants to ensure that those students receive the credentials they have earned.

In the first year (2015-16) of the Reverse Transfer initiative, the task force was charged with creating policies and implementation procedures. (This followed a limited pilot in 2014-15.) Working groups developed implementation models and prepared concrete guidelines, work plans, and processes. The task force comprised college provosts, deans, and administrators, as well as central office deans and administrators.

In the second year (2016-17), with policies and procedures in place, the task force evolved into the Reverse Transfer Council, with a focus on incorporating Reverse Transfer into normal business practices at the colleges.

This is the third annual report, covering Year Three (2017-18).

En-Route Degrees: Comprehensive Colleges

En-Route degrees are a subset of Reverse Transfer degrees. En-Route degrees are associate degrees earned at the CUNY comprehensive colleges (which offer both associate and bachelor’s degrees). The comprehensive colleges have a broader pool of potentially eligible students, as comprehensive colleges can also award associate degrees to students enrolled in bachelor’s degree programs; those students might earn an associate degree on their way to earning a bachelor’s degree.

To clarify the difference between an En-Route associate degree and a traditional associate degree—a student must continue enrollment after earning an associate degree for it to be considered an En-Route degree.
B. OUTCOMES

Beginning with a small pilot in 2014 through summer 2018, CUNY has awarded a total of 6,429 Reverse Transfer degrees (including En-Route degrees).

Total Associate Degrees Awarded through Reverse Transfer Through Summer 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Pilot</th>
<th>2015-2016</th>
<th>2016-2017</th>
<th>2017-2018</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>38</td>
<td>66</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMCC</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>278</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSI*</td>
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<td>LaGuardia</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>1652</strong></td>
<td><strong>2206</strong></td>
<td><strong>2544</strong></td>
<td><strong>6429</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*En-Route Degrees

CUNY Reverse Transfer degrees are coded with the Action Reason of “REV” in CUNYfirst.

*Please note that previous annual reports underreported the total number of Reverse Transfer degrees. We discovered that many En-Route degrees had not been coded properly.*
The associate degrees awarded through Reverse Transfer (REV)—from the fall semester through the following summer semester—are tallied each year, by college.

### Year 3: Associate Degrees Awarded through Reverse Transfer
**Fall 2017, Spring 2018, and Summer 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>2017 FA</th>
<th>2018 SP</th>
<th>2018 SU</th>
<th>2017-2018 Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>KCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>LaGuardia</td>
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<td>Medgar*</td>
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<td><strong>348</strong></td>
<td><strong>2544</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*En-Route Degrees*

### Year 2: Associate Degrees Awarded through Reverse Transfer
**Fall 2016, Spring 2017, and Summer 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>2016 FA</th>
<th>2017 SP</th>
<th>2017 SU</th>
<th>2016-2017 Total</th>
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<td>73</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSI*</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostos</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2016-2017 Total

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016 FA</th>
<th>2017 SP</th>
<th>2017 SU</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>LaGuardia</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medgar*</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYCCT*</td>
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<tr>
<td>QCC</td>
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<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>1101</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>2206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*En-Route Degrees

**Year 1: Associate Degrees Awarded through Reverse Transfer**  
**Fall 2015, Spring 2016, and Summer 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015 FA</th>
<th>2016 SP</th>
<th>2016 SU</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BCC</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMCC</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSI*</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostos</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>LaGuardia</td>
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<td>Medgar*</td>
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<tr>
<td>NYCCT*</td>
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<td>621</td>
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<tr>
<td>QCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
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<td>192</td>
<td>1652</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*En-Route Degrees*
C. GOALS

The Reverse Transfer Council began 2017-18 by determining four goals for the year, as well as Expected Tasks, Milestones/ Deliverables, and Progress Metrics for each. The Status under each goal illustrates the progress made over the year.

**Goal 1: Implement CUNY-wide opt-in (student consent).**

2017-18 Expected Tasks:
- CUNYfirst Student Center – Checklist will be linked to an opt-in form, to be developed by repurposing the Pathways opt-in form. It will appear in the To Do list of every new transfer student.
- Via form – Opt-in will mark the checklist Complete – decline will mark the checklist Cancelled – and remove from student self-service in CUNYfirst.
- Colleges will be able to run queries based on these checklists to do extra communication if needed.

Milestones/Deliverables:
- Opt-in implemented CUNY-wide

Progress Metric(s):
- Increase in number of students opting in
- Increase in number of students receiving associate degrees via Reverse Transfer

Status: Completed.
- The Associate Degree Completion Opt-in, as part of the CUNYfirst Student Center–Checklist, appears on all new students’ CUNYfirst To Do lists (and has been added to eligible current students’ lists to bridge the gap).
- The opt-in language has been reviewed by CUNY legal to ensure that it complies with FERPA regulations. Students who opt in permit sharing and review of their transcripts as degree candidates for the purposes of determining fulfillment of requirements by the associate degree-granting colleges.

**Goal 2: Expand the pool of potentially eligible students.**

2017-18 Expected Tasks:
Associate-granting colleges have started to explore ways to reach out to students who have left CUNY altogether. In Year Three, colleges will begin to award degrees and track progress.

In addition, the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) approached CUNY with the opportunity to join the NSC Reverse Transfer initiative and exchange lists of potentially eligible students with colleges outside of CUNY, most notably in New Jersey and in the SUNY system.

We will need to consider how colleges can incorporate the increase in volume of student screening
into their business practices, as well as how to obtain FERPA waivers from students in order to share academic information. But, we are hopeful that a newly proposed bill, the Reverse Transfer Efficiency Act of 2017 (H.R. 3774), which CUNY signed on to support along with 16 other higher education systems and several higher education associations, will pass. This act will create a new exemption under FERPA to allow easier sharing of student credit information between institutions.

Milestones/Deliverables:
- Executed amendment to CUNY’s established contract with the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC)
- Logistics of technical communication (data sharing) between CUNY and NSC determined
- The Reverse Transfer Efficiency Act of 2017 (H.R. 3774), if passed

Progress Metric(s):
- Initial processes planned and implemented for screening students from outside of CUNY
- Students from outside of CUNY opting in and receiving associate degrees via Reverse Transfer

Status: In progress.
- CUNY and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) have signed the relevant amendment to the contract, as part of the Data Collective Expansion initiative. This is a free service.
- CUNY has begun to receive student records from NSC for a handful of students who are potentially eligible for CUNY associate degrees. CUNY must first organize these non-CUNY records before sharing them with CUNY community colleges.
- In this initial phase, CUNY is only receiving student records. At a later date, CUNY will also share student records out.
- There is no movement on the proposed Reverse Transfer Efficiency Act by Congress.

Goal 3: Improve use of technology.

2017-18 Expected Tasks:
- **Degree Works**: As part of the recent Degree Works upgrade, we expect to have a Transfer Finder component in spring 2018. Assuming successful implementation of Transfer Finder, the Reverse Transfer Council will propose best practices for its use (and data maintenance).
- **CUNYfirst**: CUNYfirst’s new Evaluate My Transfer Credit component helps replace TIPPS. However, Evaluate My Transfer Credit is student-facing only and requires a CUNYfirst login. Without TIPPS, there is no public-facing function to look up equivalencies, and even within CUNYfirst, the transfer equivalency feature is not intuitive and not a sufficient replacement for TIPPS. We are still in a transition period.

Milestones/Deliverables:
- Development of a sufficient replacement for TIPPS
- Implementation of Degree Works Transfer Finder
Progress Metric(s):
  • Effective use of the Degree Works Transfer Finder

Status: In Progress.
  • Degree Works: The implementation schedule has been delayed for Transfer Finder. The revised schedule is:
    • User Testing (UAT): Oct 2018–Jan 2019
    • Performance Testing: Jan–Feb 2019
    • Configure Production: Feb–March 2019
    • Go-Live: April 2019

  • CUNYfirst: Evaluate My Transfer Credit has been presented to the Reverse Transfer Council. Additional presentations/trainings are planned.

  • In addition, colleges now receive their lists of potential eligible students via a CUNYfirst query, a change from receiving lists via Tumbleweed.

Goal 4: Boost business practices that are critical to the success of Reverse Transfer. Review relevant policies.

2017-18 Expected Tasks:
In addition to maintaining accurate data in Degree Works, colleges must update Transfer Credit Equivalencies. All academic departments should review current transfer credit rules and evaluate courses that have not yet been evaluated. The following areas are impacted:
  • Typical transfer students – Colleges are using CUNYfirst to automatically evaluate transfer credits based on the equivalencies as defined by the college.
  • ePermit – When a student applies for an ePermit, they are presented with equivalency options as defined by the college.
  • Evaluate My Transfer Credit – Since TIPPS is no longer an available tool, all students (and prospective students) have the ability to conduct an unofficial evaluation in their Student Center. This evaluation relies completely on the transfer credit equivalencies.
  • Reverse Transfer – Equivalencies can help make the awarding of a Reverse Transfer Associate degree a more streamlined process.

Colleges can develop lists of pre-approved substitutions, waivers, and equivalencies to alleviate labor-intensive processes by making decisions up-front. There are many student-by-student considerations (requirement terms, waivers/substitutions, overlays and writing intensive courses, residency requirements, etc.). Determine guidelines for these issues, document those guidelines, and fold them into normal practice. Share lists of pre-approved substitutions, waivers, equivalencies among colleges.

Colleges need to plan for time and staff to review the records of potentially eligible students and code Reverse Transfer degrees in CUNYfirst (REV).
Milestones/Deliverables:
- A target in the PMP for updating Transfer Credit Equivalencies
- Updates/clarifications to policies related to Reverse Transfer
- Updated Reverse Transfer manual (last updated November 2016)

Progress Metric(s):
- Increase in number of courses with updated Transfer Credit Equivalencies
- Smoother processes for screening potentially eligible students

Status: In Progress. The Reverse Transfer manual was updated in May 2018 and will be revised again in 2019 to reflect CUNY-wide Opt-in, the National Student Clearinghouse agreement, and new eligible list procedures (via CUNYfirst).

There is still a need to improve practices around updating Transfer Credit Equivalencies; developing lists of pre-approved substitutions, waivers, and equivalencies; and incorporating additional staff time for reviewing student records.

D. PROBLEMS, ISSUES, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD

Problems and Issues

Until this year, the biggest obstacle was reaching students to obtain their consent. But now the Associate Degree Completion Opt-in in CUNYfirst is up and running, and we expect an increase in Reverse Transfer degrees conferred, as well as a decrease in time spent trying to communicate with students via email and phone.

As with previous years, colleges continue to report that they struggle with the time required to review student records, especially when drilling down to individual students to determine how best to serve them, which requires managing logistics across several offices. There are many student-by-student considerations: requirement terms, waivers/substitutions, overlays and writing intensive courses, residency requirements, etc.

But now several colleges (such as BMCC) have implemented business practices to ensure smooth, consistent review among a diverse team, and are successfully absorbing Reverse Transfer as business-as-usual. They share their models of best practices.

Recommendations

1. Review Transfer Credit Equivalencies: All academic departments should review their current transfer credit rules and evaluate courses that have not yet been evaluated. The following areas are impacted:
   - Typical transfer students – Colleges are using CUNYfirst to automatically evaluate transfer credits based on the equivalencies as defined by the college.
• ePermit – When a student applies for an ePermit, they are presented with equivalency options as defined by the college.

• Evaluate My Transfer Credit – Since TIPPS is no longer an available tool, all students (and prospective students) have the ability to conduct an unofficial evaluation in their Student Center. This evaluation relies completely on the transfer credit equivalencies.

• Reverse Transfer – Equivalencies can help make the awarding of a Reverse Transfer Associate degree a more streamlined process.

We suggest that academic departments start by reviewing CUNY-to-CUNY course equivalencies for their particular area of expertise. When updates are necessary, they can be done by campus admissions and/or registrar’s office. Faculty likely already have a contact person for this type of request.

2. Continue to plan for time and staff needed for Reverse Transfer, including reviewing the records of potentially eligible students and coding Reverse Transfer degrees in CUNYfirst (REV).

3. Colleges have the flexibility to make allowances in the best interests of students when determining substitutions, waivers, and equivalencies. Ensure that senior-level members of the colleges’ Academic Affairs offices are an integral part of the Reverse Transfer team and these decision-making processes.

4. Develop lists of pre-approved substitutions/waivers/equivalencies. Alleviate labor-intensive processes by making decisions up-front. There are many student-by-student considerations (requirement terms, waivers/substitutions, overlays and writing intensive courses, residency requirements, etc.). Colleges can be pro-active and leverage faculty expertise to determine guidelines for these issues, document those guidelines, and fold them into normal practice. Share lists of pre-approved substitutions/waivers/equivalencies among colleges.

5. Community colleges: Share lists of students who are three to six credits short of an associate degree, and work with senior college able to provide advising about which courses to take.

6. Continue to propose ideas to the Reverse Transfer Council on how to improve the Reverse Transfer processes and policies.