

2.02.00.02 Reverse Transfer



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Policy/Guideline Area

Academic Policies

Applicable Divisions

Community Colleges

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to serve as the framework for Reverse Transfer across the State of Tennessee and among the three systems of higher education (Tennessee Board of Regents, University of Tennessee, and the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities) including the six Locally Governed Institutions (LGI).

Definitions

- The Reverse Transfer Degree refers to the associate degree awarded by the appropriate associate degree granting institution as a result of college credits transferred from a participating Tennessee university that fulfill those degree requirements after the student has transferred to said university.
- The Reverse Transfer System is a computer program that identifies likely Reverse Transfer Degree candidates by screening four-year institution student databases.
- Potential Reverse Transfer Degree candidates are those students who:
 - are enrolled in the preceding or current semester (excluding summer terms) at a Tennessee four-year institution and were previously enrolled as degree seeking students at a Tennessee community college or other Tennessee associate degree-granting institution;
 - have earned a minimum of 15 college credits towards an associate degree at the associate degree-granting institution; and

- have earned a combined minimum of 60 total college-level credits;
 - have not previously earned a college degree.
- Screening Degree Audit:
 - The screening degree audit will be run on those consenting students (opted in) who are currently enrolled at a Tennessee four-year institution and were previously enrolled at a Tennessee community college or other Tennessee associate degree-granting institution as degree seeking students, have earned a combined minimum of 60 total college-level credits and have successfully transferred a minimum of 12 college credits from the associate degree-granting institution.
- Locally Governed Institution (LGI) refers to the six public universities that were formerly part of the TBR prior to the FOCUS Act of 2016.

Policy/Guideline

- I. Policy
 - A. All TBR community colleges will participate in and comply with the functions and processes established within the state-wide Reverse Transfer System between Tennessee public higher education institutions in accordance with the Procedures listed below.

Procedures

- I. Introduction
 - A. On April 4, 2012, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam signed HB 2827 which amended Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49 relative to higher education. This amendment added the following language to Section 1 Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 7, Part 1:
The community colleges of the board of regents system are authorized and encouraged to enter into reverse articulation or reverse transfer agreements

- with the universities of the board of regents and the University of Tennessee systems and with private institutions of higher education that are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The universities of the board of regents and the University of Tennessee systems are authorized and encouraged to enter into reverse articulation or reverse transfer agreements with the community colleges of the board of regents system.*
- B. In July 2012, a task force was convened to develop and implement a Reverse Transfer Process across the State of Tennessee. The original task force was comprised of members from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association (TICUA), and the University of Tennessee (UT) systems.
- C. The full task force defined Reverse Transfer as “a credit review of degree seeking students who transfer from a community college to a four-year institution prior to receipt of the associates degree to determine if and when the students complete the associates degree requirements and, if so, to award them an associates degree.” While the remaining courses required for the associate degree are completed at a Tennessee four-year institution, it is the responsibility of the associate degree-granting institution to verify degree completion and to award the two- year degree.
- D. Subsequently, workgroups were created and charged to develop components of the overall process. The workgroups included members from THEC, TICUA, TBR, and UT. The Policies/Procedures workgroup was charged with the development of academic policy/procedures that will serve as the framework for Reverse Transfer across the State of Tennessee and among the three systems of higher education (Tennessee Board of Regents, University of Tennessee, and the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities). Although the LGI are no longer part of the TBR system,

commitments and participation in the reverse transfer process remain unchanged.

II. Participation

- A. All TBR, LGI and UT institutions will participate in Reverse Transfer as encouraged and supported by the State of Tennessee HB 2827. TICUA institutions may choose to participate. However, public universities and colleges may develop free-standing reverse transfer agreements with non-participating TICUA institutions.

III. Governance and Compliance

- A. The UT-TBR-TICUA Articulation and Transfer Council will have oversight of the Reverse Transfer process and policies and will review the policy and its impact annually. Oversight responsibilities include, but are not limited to, assessment and evaluation of the process, reporting to the Legislature, and modifications in the process/policies as needed.
- B. The University of Tennessee Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) will house and maintain the server and will have primary responsibility for the stored data (demographic and academic) as well as the data extracted for evaluation and reporting purposes. CBER will maintain the confidentiality and integrity of the data and will have primary responsibility for research and reporting related to Reverse Transfer. Data collected for the Reverse Transfer process will not be integrated into or become part of the Tennessee Longitudinal Data System (TLDS) unless approved by the Chancellor/President on each campus. CBER will collaborate with THEC, TBR, TICUA, UT and LGI throughout the evaluation and reporting processes. In addition, each campus/system may designate an individual to have access to individual records for their students to conduct additional research and/or to validate the number of students receiving an associate degree and their credit hours reported to THEC. Permissions and access to data to be used for

research purposes is coordinated by CBER in accord with authorization of the Reverse Transfer Advisory Council.

- C. Policies/procedures must be in compliance with the standards of accreditation set forth by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).
 - 1. Reverse Transfer candidates must complete "...at least 25 percent of the credit hours required for the degree" at the Tennessee institution awarding the associate's degree. (SACSCOC Section 9.4)
 - 2. Reverse Transfer candidates must adhere to the Catalog requirements established by the degree-granting institution. (SACSCOC Section 9.7)
- D. All student information shared between and among institutions to facilitate Reverse Transfer awards must be in compliance with FERPA guidelines and applicable State of Tennessee statutes.

IV. Processes

- A. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission reflects a spirit of full collaboration among Tennessee institutions of higher education and credits participating Tennessee institutions equally for degrees awarded by reverse transfer. Reverse Transfer, an initiative to promote the educational attainment of adult learners through the full cooperation and collaboration among Tennessee institutions of higher education, will result in the generation of student and institutional outcomes where none previously existed.
- B. Each institution will be responsible for the accuracy of Equivalency Tables and degree audits. Equivalency tables must be reviewed twice annually, and degree audits must be reviewed and updated annually, or as new programs are approved.
- C. The "last hours" policy shall be waived for Reverse Transfer degree candidates at all Tennessee institutions. Requiring students to complete any

number of “last hours” at the community college would potentially place undue hardship on the student and would be counter-intuitive to the intent of Reverse Transfer.

- D. To adhere to the FERPA guidelines, the student must agree to the exchange of course histories and/or official transcripts among all the two and four-year institutions attended as well as the high school transcript for use in the reverse transfer degree process. The process to obtain student consent must include a reasonable way to identify the individual and authenticate the identity of the student as the source of the consent to the disclosure of the education records. Schools must obtain written consent (e.g., hard copy, electronic consent) from those students who appear to have the credits for associate degree completion prior to sending the results of the screening degree audit to the associate degree-granting institution. The communication to the student must include the purpose for sending the information, the institution to which the student’s information will be sent, and the option to revoke participation in the reverse transfer process at any time. Additionally, four-year institutions may provide a section on the transfer application to allow for the exchange of the screening degree audit results for reverse transfer audit purposes or to opt out of the reverse transfer degree audit.
- E. If a Reverse Transfer degree candidate attended more than one associate degree-granting institution prior to transferring to a four-year institution, the degree-confirming institution will be the institution where the student earned the most credits, provided the student earned a minimum of 15 credits at that institution to meet the SACSCOC residency requirement (SACSCOC Standard 9.4) and the student meets the requirements for an associate degree at that institution. In the event the student has earned the same number of credits and meets the residency and degree requirements at two or

more institutions, the institution that the student attended most recently will be considered as the degree-granting institution.

1. A four-year institution may not accept all credits earned at the associate degree-granting institution (e.g., grades of “D”) that may in fact count towards the associate degree. Therefore, a threshold of “successfully transferred” credits that is less than the minimum residency credits required at the associate degree-granting institution was established to capture and include those students who may have not had all earned degree credits accepted by the four-year institution. Students meeting this threshold are considered to be “close” to degree completion for purposes of the screening degree audit. The associate degree-granting institution will still have responsibility for the official degree audit and degree conferral if the student is eligible.
- F. Students will not be assessed a fee for to have the screening degree audit report sent to the associate degree-granting institutions in the degree audit process of Reverse Transfer.
- G. Reverse Transfer degree recipients will not be assessed a graduation fee at the associate degree-granting institution.
- H. Each community college and each participating four-year institution will designate a contact person for Reverse Transfer. The contact person will serve as a point of information to students, faculty, and advisors and will be listed on the Reverse Transfer website.
- I. Students are afforded due process under the appeals process and procedures outlined in the Catalog at the appropriate institution.
- J. Once a degree is conferred (baccalaureate or associate), the student will not be considered further for the reverse transfer process.

- K. Reverse Transfer degrees may be awarded to students who complete degree requirements outside of Tennessee at the discretion of the Tennessee institution.
- L. Initially, Reverse Transfer degree awards will be limited to those degree programs that are currently identified as a Tennessee Transfer Pathway. Community Colleges also have the discretion to award the A.A. and A.S. General Studies degrees as reverse awards where applicable. All other associate degree programs will be added to the Reverse Transfer process as quickly as feasible.
 - 1. Additionally, all two-year degrees may be considered for and awarded through Reverse Transfer. While it is likely that the majority of Reverse Transfer degrees awarded will be either A.A. or A.S. degrees, it is possible that a student could complete the A.A.S., A.F.A or A.S.T. degree requirements at a four-year institution in which case the degree eligibility assessment would be made at the two-year institution.
 - 2. By Fall of 2019, all institutions will include pre-opt in consent language in their transfer applications whereby two-year students may opt-in to Reverse Transfer as they complete their transfer application for a Tennessee university.
- M. The degree awarding process will be institution-initiated.
 - 1. The four-year institutions will generate reports each spring and fall semester (for May and December degree awards, respectively) to identify potential degree candidates. Potential degree candidates will be identified through a match of descriptive attributes which may include full name, permanent address, birth date, or other identifiers.
 - 2. The Reverse Transfer System (RTS) will send those students email invitations to participate (consent/opt-in) or decline.

3. Screening degree audits will be run by the RTS and the results will be sent to the respective community colleges.
 4. The associate degree-granting institution will send eligible students a letter of degree confirmation, information regarding participation in graduation ceremonies, and then mail diploma. Students will not need to file degree application for the associate degree.
 5. A student may decline the degree.
 6. Students being awarded a degree and the hours credited for the degree at the community college and four-year school will be recorded in the data set maintained by Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC).
- N. The associate degree-granting institution will notify, in writing, those students whose associate degree audit indicates outstanding academic requirements for the Reverse Transfer associate degree and any “holds” the student may have.
1. Students will be notified of their progress toward the Reverse Transfer degree twice a year (spring and fall) to coincide with the reporting schedule.
 2. It is the student’s responsibility to complete any outstanding academic requirements within his/her Catalog time limit in order to be considered for a Reverse Transfer degree.
 3. It is the student’s responsibility to clear any and all “holds” to be considered for a Reverse Transfer degree. However, financial or other holds should not prevent transcript exchange (prior to or after a degree is awarded) between two-and four-year institutions for the purpose of communicating a reverse transfer award. Diploma and transcript

delivery directly to students with financial obligations to the institution are handled according to state law and institutional policy.

- O. Website information for Reverse Transfer was developed with input from UT, TBR, and TICUA, and is located on the Tennessee Transfer Pathway website which is maintained by Tennessee Board of Regents. Each participating associate degree-granting institution will have a Reverse Transfer page that will include a link to the Reverse Transfer website. The institution's Reverse Transfer contact person's name, email, and telephone number as well as general information about Reverse Transfer will be included on the institution page.
- P. The general education assessment requirement will be waived for Reverse Transfer degree candidates at the discretion of the degree-granting institution.
- Q. Reverse Transfer degree recipients will then complete the general education assessment as graduating seniors from a Tennessee baccalaureate degree program.
- R. Upper division courses completed at a four-year institution may be considered for lower division course substitution on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with current policy at the associate degree-granting institution.
- S. Reverse Transfer degree recipients may participate in the graduation ceremonies at the degree-granting institution. Students who choose to participate in the ceremony will be responsible for cap and gown rental.

Sources

Authority

T.C.A. § 49-8-203

Tennessee Reverse Transfer Advisory Council policy changes recommended and adopted by the state-wide Articulation and Transfer Council, July 25, 2018.

History

New Policy approved at TBR Board Meeting December 11, 2014; Revisions approved at Board Meeting March 21, 2019; Ministerial changes May 8, 2024.