



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
Council on Postsecondary Education  
**OFFICE OF THE POSTSECONDARY COMMISSIONER**  
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Enclosure 7a  
June 22, 2016

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TO: Members of the Council on Postsecondary Education  
FROM: Jim Purcell, Ed.D, Commissioner for Postsecondary Education  
DATE: June 14, 2016  
RE: **Discussion of the Proposed Reverse Transfer** 

**Overview**

Rhode Island students may begin their postsecondary education at one of the public institutions of higher learning but for a multitude of reasons may not complete the associate or bachelor's degree. These students are left with earned college credits but without a postsecondary credential. Some of these students may have a significant number of credits and may have the credits needed to meet the requirements for an associate degree or certificate. Reverse transfer is a policy initiative that promotes transferring applicable coursework completed at a baccalaureate-granting institution back to a community college for purposes of awarding the associate degree or certificate. The policy on reverse transfer complements existing institutional and system transfer policies and practices. Nationally, the development of a reverse transfer policy often has been the result of a state mandate. In Rhode Island, Senate Resolution 1046 requested that a reverse transfer policy be developed (the text of S 1046 can be accessed at <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText13/SenateText13/S1046.pdf>). The purpose of the legislation is to enable the state to maintain a competitive workforce and to increase degree attainment of adults in Rhode Island.

Eligibility to participate

This policy applies to students who began their postsecondary education at the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, or the University of Rhode Island but who have not completed a degree or certificate. Students may have transferred from CCRI, or may have begun their postsecondary education at RIC or URI. All of the students earning a degree through reverse transfer will transfer credit back to CCRI which is the degree-granting institution for the associate degree. Students who have accumulated 60 college-level credits at any of the Rhode Island public postsecondary institutions, have a combined GPA of 2.0 or higher, and have no outstanding financial obligations, are eligible to have their transcripts evaluated to determine if an associate degree or certificate may be awarded.

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### Eligibility for a degree or certificate awarded through reverse transfer

To earn an associate degree through reverse transfer, students must meet CCRI degree requirements, including meeting the college residency requirement and the NEASC standard that at least 25% of the degree (15 credits) or certificate will have been taken at the degree-granting institution. On the basis of the transcript review, students who have met all of the requirements for a specific degree or certificate program at CCRI will be notified that they will be awarded an associate degree or certificate. Some students will need to take additional courses at CCRI to meet degree or residency requirements.

### Key elements of the policy and implementation

- The reverse transfer policy requires that the degree-granting institution (CCRI) accept up to 75% of the total credits required for the degree or certificate (45/60 credits).
- The specific degree and graduation requirements at the Community College of Rhode Island must be met for the associate degree or certificate to be awarded.
- In implementing the policy, CCRI is encouraged to increase the transparency and flexibility in accepting "old" credits and credits earned through prior learning assessment (PLA), particularly, in applying the credits toward meeting degree requirements.
- Student records at CCRI, RIC, and URI will be queried to identify possible completers and the data sent to CCRI for outreach to students.
- Those students who have not met associate degree or certificate requirements when their transcripts are initially evaluated will be advised on degree and course options.

### **Impact of a Reverse Transfer Policy**

#### For the state economy

- The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training Labor Market Information forecasts that occupations requiring an associate degree are projected to generate over 800 jobs per year.
- By 2018, over 61% of jobs in RI will require at least some postsecondary education (Carnevale, A.P., Smith, N. & Strohl, J, *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018-State level analysis*, (2010), Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce).
- The most recent American Community Survey found that currently, 39% of adult Rhode Islanders have an associate degree or higher and another 18% have some college without a degree (U.S. Census).
- More highly educated workers are needed for currently available jobs and to meet projected need. The greater attainment of postsecondary degrees or certificates/credentials will result in more workers prepared for career opportunities and stronger economic prospects for the state.

#### For students

- Researcher Cliff Adelman noted that approximately 15 percent of students who were no longer enrolled in postsecondary education had earned significant numbers of credits and were in good academic standing when they left school (*Principal Indicators of Student Academic Histories in Postsecondary Education, 1972-2000*, Washington, DC, US DOE).
- Reverse transfer policy has the possibility of impacting 131,602 adults 25 and over in Rhode Island who have some college credits and no degree (US Census, *American Community Survey* estimates for 2010-2014).
- Nationally, in the past 20 years, more than 31 million students have left higher education with some credits but without a degree or certificate (Shapiro, D., Dundar, et al, *Some College, No Degree: A National View of Students with Some College Enrollment, but No Completion*, July 2014, Signature Report No. 7, National Student Clearinghouse Research Center).

- Benefits from the associate degree become an incentive for completing bachelor's degree. Students with an associate degree are likely to find greater opportunity for jobs while continuing their studies.
- The median lifetime earnings of individuals with an associate degree and those with some college education but no degree (a category that includes certificate holders) are 27% and 13% higher than the median earnings of high school graduates, respectively (College Board, *Education Pays 2013*, p. 12).
- In addition to economic benefits, adults with postsecondary degrees have been shown to have an improved quality of life and are more likely to volunteer in their communities, follow a healthier lifestyle, participate in civic matters, volunteer in their communities, and report being happier thereby raising the level of society in general ( College Board, *Education Pays 2013*).

For the colleges/ university

- The role played by the Community College in preparing transfer students who do not earn an associate degree or certificate is not documented or counted in completion statistics; however, the Community College will be able to include students earning an associate degree through reverse transfer. Reverse transfer allows community colleges to receive credit for their role in educating transfer students and graduation rates will be improved. Reports of early outcomes suggest that reverse transfer policies are helping states to confer additional associate degrees (Education Commission of the States, *Reverse Transfer: What is the Best Route to Take?* September 2015).
- Baccalaureate institutions may see an increase in retention and graduation rates among students who complete the associate degree through reverse transfer. Students who earn an associate degree through reverse transfer and students with 75 credits or more will be referred to the Finish What You Started program at URI or the Finish Strong program at RIC once their transcripts have been evaluated. These referrals will help students to continue from the associate degree on a path to the baccalaureate degree.

**Council Discussion Item**

The proposed reverse transfer policy is being introduced for discussion at the June 22, 2016 meeting of the Council on Postsecondary Education. Further discussion and a motion to approve will be considered at the next Council meeting on July 27, 2016. It is recommended that the following motion be approved:

**Motion:**

**THAT the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) approve the Reverse Transfer Policy as presented.**

**REVERSE TRANSFER POLICY**  
**Council on Postsecondary Education**  
**State of Rhode Island**

**Adopted:** (TBD)

**Amended:**

**PURPOSE**

*Moving the Needle*, a report prepared by the Senate Policy Office and the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (RIPEC), noted that greater attainment of postsecondary degrees and training would result in workers better prepared for the workforce and a stronger state economy. The Rhode Island Senate, recognizing the economic and quality-of-life benefits of having the associate degree, passed Senate Resolution S1046<sup>1</sup> that requested that the Board of Education implement a reverse transfer policy that allows students to use credits earned at the four-year institution toward the attainment of an associate degree or certificate at a public two-year institution. The reverse transfer policy sets out the conditions for eligibility to participate in the reverse transfer initiative and the conditions applicable for the granting of the certificate or associate degree through reverse transfer.

**POLICY**

Students who attend the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College or the University of Rhode Island may qualify for the conferral of the associate degree or certificate from the Community College of Rhode Island through the reverse transfer policy if the following conditions are met:

Eligibility to participate

1. The students eligible for conferral of the associate degree through reverse transfer have earned cumulatively, a minimum of 60 college-level credits combined from the Community College of Rhode Island, and/or from Rhode Island College and the University of Rhode Island.
2. The students have not earned an associate or bachelor's degree.
3. Students have a GPA greater than or equal to a 2.0.
4. Students have resolved any financial issues at the sending or receiving institutions.
5. Students agree to the exchange of educational data requested in compliance with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations.

Eligibility for Associate Degree or Certificate

1. The students will complete a minimum of 15 college-level credits at the Community College of Rhode Island (or one-fourth of the number of credits required for the associate degree or certificate). The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) standards require that at least one-fourth of the total number of credits (15 credits) be earned at the degree-granting institution.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The text of S 1046 can be accessed at (<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText13/SenateText13/S1046.pdf>).

<sup>2</sup>NEASC Standard on Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit.

4.46 Students complete at least one fourth of their undergraduate program, including advanced work in the major or concentration, at the institution awarding the degree. In accepting transfer credit, the institution exercises the responsibility to ensure that students have met its stated learning outcomes of programs at all degree levels. The acceptance of transfer credit does not substantially diminish the proportion of intermediate and advanced coursework in a student's academic program.

2. The specific degree and graduation requirements of the Community College of Rhode Island must be met for the associate degree or certificate to be awarded.
3. Students who have completed graduation requirements at the Community College of Rhode Island once the courses are transferred back from the college or university, will have the degree or certificate awarded after the transcripts have been evaluated.
4. Students who have a grievance regarding the awarding of a degree through reverse transfer will follow the procedure identified in the section on Student Rights and Responsibilities in the Council on Postsecondary Education's policy on Articulation and Transfer.

#### Responsibilities of Community College of Rhode Island (the Degree-Granting Institution)

1. The Community College will determine which associate degrees and certificates will be available through reverse transfer.
2. The community college will accept up to 75% of the total credits required for the degree (45 out of 60 credits) or certificate in transfer credit.
3. The community college is responsible for the review and evaluation of the transcripts and, with reference to Council on Postsecondary Education's policy, has the authority to determine whether the associate degree or certificate may be conferred.

#### Responsibilities of Rhode Island College and the University of Rhode Island (Host Institutions)

1. The host institutions shall make available information on the reverse transfer option on the institutions' websites, and in advising offices and enrollment management/records offices.
2. The host institutions will make contact information on potential completers available to the degree-granting institution.
3. The host institutions shall make transcripts available upon request by students if all financial and other provisions required by the host institution for release of transcripts to students are met.

#### Responsibilities of the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner

1. The Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner will have oversight of the system-wide reverse transfer program and will review the policy and the outcomes of the reverse transfer initiative annually. Oversight will include, but not be limited to, assessment and evaluation of the policy, recommendations for changes to procedures and implementation, and review of reports on the policy's outcomes.
2. The Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner will collect data from the public institutions of higher education and prepare reports on the degrees awarded through this policy as required.