

# Implementing a Successful Reverse Transfer Credit Procedure

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**Scaling Up Conference**  
**October 31, 2013**

# Session Goals

- Explain “Why Reverse Transfer”
- Describe WCC-NIU objectives/outcomes
- Detail the WCC-NIU implementation process
- Review lessons learned and potential pitfalls

# Why Reverse Transfer?

- Completion, Completion, Completion!
  - Project Win Win
  - Complete College America
  - Focus on the Finish (IL Lt Governor's Office, 2012)
- “Credit When It’s Due” Baseline Study  
(Taylor, Bishop, Makela, Bragg and Ruud, 2013)
- “You may not know it, but you earned a degree.”  
(Porter, Wall Street Journal, October 8, 2013)
- Michigan Project  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMP1sZZkhX0>  
GVSU and GRCC

# WCC-NIU Objectives

- Promotion of associate degree completion
- Increased credentials
- Improved employability
- Seamless transfer
- Strengthened institutional relationships
- Compliance with directives of state and national government

# Success Metrics

- number of participants
- number of WCC reverse transfer degree completers
- number of students who continue at NIU and complete their four year degree
- feedback from students

# So how does this process work?

- A “memorandum of agreement” or “consortia agreement” is developed between the community college and senior institution
- This document is reviewed by both institutions for appropriate verbiage, disclaimers, clauses, etc.
- Documents are signed by the Presidents or designated officials of both institutions

## **Specific Benefits for Students**

- The student can use the credits earned at the 4-year college/university towards their associate's degree
- In many cases, these credits can, at the same time, be applicable towards their Bachelor's Degree
- Student can get “credentialed” with the associate's degree on their current transcript
- The students can now update their resume and use as needed in job seeking opportunities

# Key Components for Implementation

- Determine the criteria to use to gather this cohort group of students to be included
- Develop the specific contacts at each institution for the interaction both with the students and staff as well as the designated institutional contacts
- Communicate among campus community ahead of time before making any formal announcement
- Develop outreach letters, documents and response letters
- Follow-up in a timely manner from both institutions
- Waive transcript fees



# Step #1

- Identify the cohort group for outreach
- Outreach: Explain the reverse transfer credit process and ask if they want to have the records reviewed for status of degree completion
- Students who opt to participate will complete the authorization to send their transcript from the senior institution back to the community college for timely follow-up

# Step #2

- Develop three types of response letters sent to students after receipt of their transcript
- Letter #1 – notification of completion of degree based on all requirements had already been met and the student simply needed to apply for graduation
- Letter # 2 – notification of completion of degree requirements based on their successful completion of the necessary remaining courses at the senior institutions
- Letter # 3 – notification of the specific remaining requirements to be completed before awarding the associate degree

# Sample Outreach Letter

October 24, 2013

fld\_FIRST\_NAME fld\_LAST\_NAME  
fld\_ADDRESS1 fld\_ADDRESS2  
fld\_CITY, fld\_STATE fld\_POSTAL

Dear fld\_FIRST\_NAME:

I would like to bring to your attention an agreement that was signed by the Presidents of both Waubonsee Community College (WCC) and Northern Illinois University (NIU). Under this agreement, students who transferred to NIU from WCC without receiving their Associates Degree may qualify to complete this degree while attending NIU by transferring credits back to WCC.

Our records indicate that you have met the minimum criteria to be reviewed under this program. The established criteria between NIU and WCC to be considered are –transferred a minimum of 30 credits to NIU from WCC in the Fall 2011 or later semester have not graduated from NIU

If you would like to be considered for this agreement towards your Associate's Degree at WCC you will need to complete and submit the (attached) *Reverse Transfer Agreement Transcript Release Form*. This form will allow us to release your transcript to WCC. There will be no charge for this special request.

Your credentials analysts at WCC will –audit your record to see if you qualify for the award of the Associates Degree  
And notify you of the results of the review

If you have any questions or would like additional information regarding the agreement, please contact NIU via email to [regrec@niu.edu](mailto:regrec@niu.edu) or call our customer service center at 815.753.0681.

Sincerely,

Jerry Montag, Director/Registrar  
Office of Registration and Records  
Northern Illinois University

# Sample Reverse Transfer Credit Release Form



## REVERSE TRANSFER AGREEMENT

### Transcript Release Form

Northern Illinois University  
Registration and Records  
Williston Hall 220  
DeKalb, IL 60115  
815-753-0681  
815-753-0149 FAX  
regrec@niu.edu



**WAUBONSEE**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*Please complete, sign and then mail, fax, email or deliver in person to the above address:*

|                           |  |                           |        |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|---------------------------|--------|---------------------------|--|
| NIU Student Z#            |  | WCC Student X#            |        | Birth Date (mm/dd/yy)     |  |
| Last Name                 |  | First                     | Middle | Former (If Applicable)    |  |
| Current Street Address    |  |                           |        | NIU Student Email Address |  |
| City                      |  | State                     | Zip    | Telephone                 |  |
| Last Completed Term @ NIU |  | Last Completed Term @ WCC |        | WCC Student Email Address |  |

#### FERPA Statement:

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974, updated January 2009, I understand that my educational records cannot be released without my written permission. I authorize the release of my academic records from NIU to WCC, and the release of any additional academic records from WCC to NIU, in order to share student data information between the two institutions without the violation of FERPA. I understand that I have the right to rescind this release agreement of my academic records at any time by notifying the Registrar at Northern Illinois University.

I understand the FERPA statement and agree to my student records being shared between NIU and WCC for the purposes of credit evaluation to determine the awarding of an Associate's Degree from WCC. This form also confirms my intention to graduate from WCC if/when I've met the Associate Degree requirements.

STUDENT SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

*A copy of this form will be mailed to WCC together with the requested official transcript from NIU.*

## Sample Waubonsee Community College action letter #1

Dear Student,

Thank you for participating in the Reverse Transfer Agreement between Northern Illinois University and Waubonsee Community College.

You have been evaluated for the Associate in Arts degree. This is a general transfer degree and requires 37 semester hours of general education courses and 23 semester hours of additional/elective courses;

You have completed:

WCC - 63 semester hours

NIU - 24 semester hours

The evaluation has determined you have met all requirements for the degree and it will be awarded in May 2013. A follow up transcript with the degree posted will be sent to NIU at that time.

Please follow up with your NIU advisor after the degree has been recorded for any possible changes to your program at NIU.

**CONGRATULATIONS** and best wishes as your further your education.

Graduate/Credentials Analyst

[graduation@waubonsee.edu](mailto:graduation@waubonsee.edu)

Waubonsee Community College

630-466-2361

## Sample Waubonsee Community College action letter #2

Dear Student,

Thank you for participating in the Reverse Transfer Agreement between Northern Illinois University and Waubonsee Community College.

You have been evaluated for the Associate in Arts degree. This is a general transfer degree and requires 37 semester hours of general education courses and 23 semester hours of additional/elective courses;

You have completed:

WCC + Military credit- 67 semester hours

NIU - 12 semester hours

The evaluation has determined you will need the NIU-Math101, to complete the degree. When confirmation of a passing grade has been received, the degree will be posted for May 2013. A follow up transcript with the degree will be sent to NIU at that time.

Please follow up with your NIU advisor after the degree has been recorded for any possible changes to your program at NIU.

**CONGRATULATIONS** and best wishes as you further your education.

Graduate/Credentials Analyst

[graduation@waubonsee.edu](mailto:graduation@waubonsee.edu)

630-466-2361

## Sample Waubonsee Community College action letter #3

Dear Student,

Thank you for participating in the Reverse Transfer Agreement between Northern Illinois University and Waubonsee Community College.

You have been evaluated for the Associate in Arts degree. This is a general transfer degree and requires 37 semester hours of general education courses and 23 semester hours of additional/elective courses;

You have completed:

WCC - 39 semester hours

NIU - 48 semester hours

The evaluation has determined you will need a Life Science (biology), to complete the degree. You are not currently enrolled in a Life Science course but there are two options for taking the course and earning the degree.

#1 - Check with your NIU advisor to see if a Life Science would apply to your program at NIU or if taking the Life Science and earning the associate degree would be an advantage to your program at NIU. You may then take the course in a future semester and have a follow up transcript sent to Waubonsee.

#2 - Meet with a counselor at Waubonsee to choose a Life Science course for the summer semester at Waubonsee. The degree would be complete at the end of the summer semester and would become a permanent part of your academic record. A follow up transcript would be sent to NIU.

If you have questions about the evaluation please contact Waubonsee at [graduation@waubonsee.edu](mailto:graduation@waubonsee.edu).

Graduate/Credentials Analyst

[graduation@waubonsee.edu](mailto:graduation@waubonsee.edu)

STC Room 262

630-466-2361

# Data Analysis / Outputs

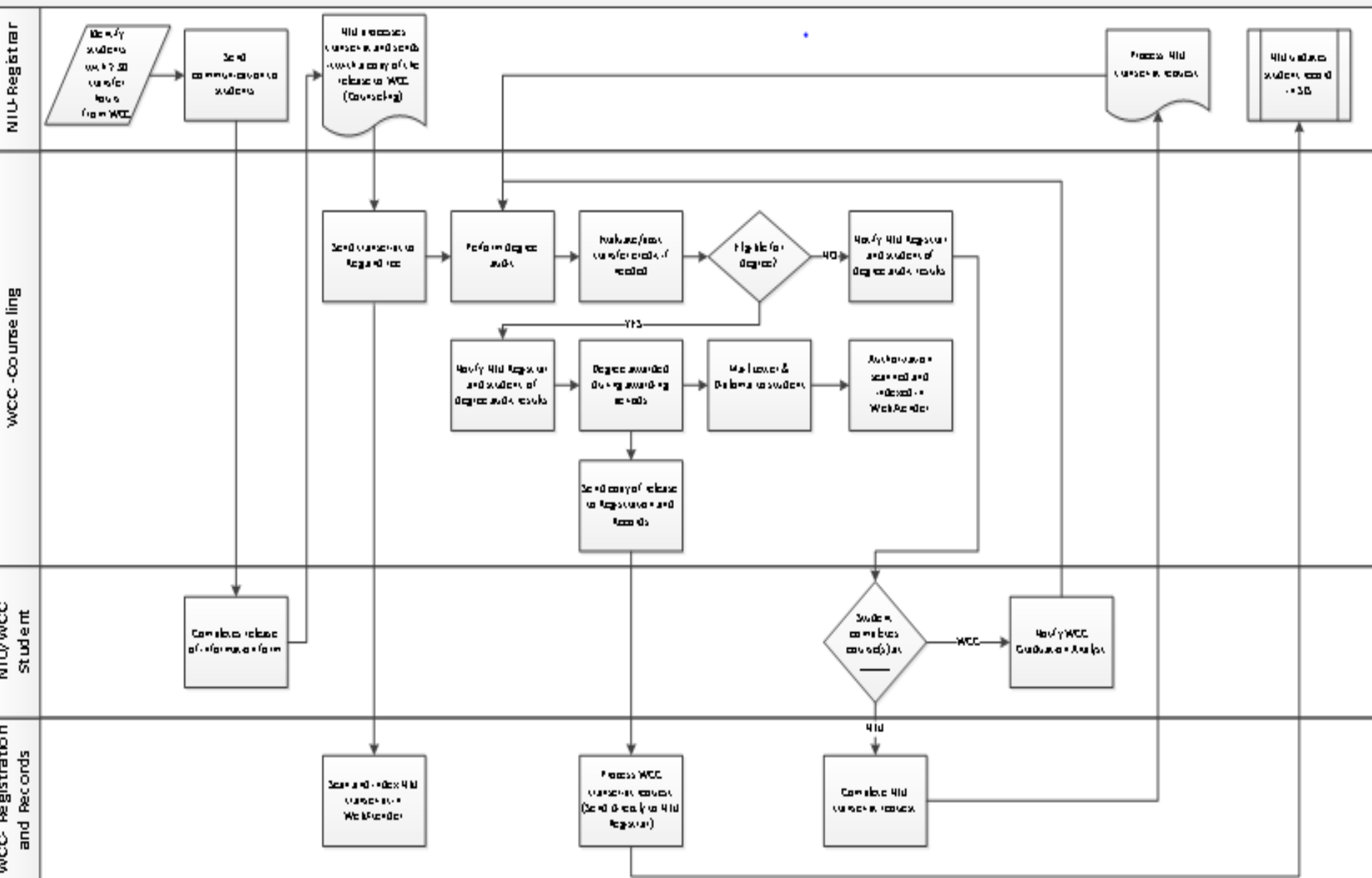
Spring/Summer 2013 Pilot

- NIU developed a report to identify the cohort of students meeting the established WCC guidelines. If the NIU report indicated that student already graduated from NIU or had not been in attendance for more than one year, they were not notified.
- Students were only notified one time about this agreement.
- 70 students were contacted in Feb 2013.
- 12 students submitted the Reverse Transfer Agreement form requesting evaluation of WCC and NIU courses for the associate degree
- 4 students had completed the requirements at WCC before transferring to NIU, but had not previously applied
- 1 student needed one course and was currently enrolled in the required course at NIU - only the final grade needed submitting
- 7 students needed one or more courses and were sent emails (see samples) detailing the options to complete



## Data Analysis/Outputs Fall 2013

- 76 notified Sept 2013
- 11 responded
- Results forthcoming



**Reverse transfer credit process FERPA questions and answers after a discussion with  
LeRoy Rooker, Senior Fellow, AACRAO and former Director of the  
Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO)  
(with permission for release of information by LeRoy Rooker)**

Students who transferred to Northern Illinois University (NIU) from Waubensee Community College (WCC) typically submitted their official transcript before the end of their currently enrolled semester or before the awarding of their degree for evaluation. **Can NIU request from WCC updated (completed) transcripts without the student's permission in order to update institutional data to determine if the student graduated or to evaluate additional credit to be awarded to the student?** Does FERPA §99.31 paragraph (2) provide this authorization to institutions under the new regulations?

*The new language in §99.31(a)(2) would permit such follow-up disclosures by WCC “so long as the disclosure is for purposes related to the student’s enrollment or transfer.” Providing the updated transcript would be such a purpose.*

To obtain this information, do we submit the names and other identifying factors or are we limited to only submitting our institution's directory information?

*The institution where the student is now in attendance is not limited by "directory information" conditions when it requests the information. Rather, the conditions of §99.31(a)(2) would govern what information could be disclosed from NIU to WCC.*

If a student has requested confidentially, does this effect requesting the transcript from WCC (the confidential flag may be on the institutional or WCC record.

*No. See response above.*

If the student owes money from WCC or their home institution can we still request/send the transcript?

*Yes. §99.31 permits, but does not require, the disclosure of student education records so long as the conditions of the particular exception to the signed consent requirements in §99.30 are met. As we discussed in our conference call, because all of the exceptions in §99.31, except §99.31(a)(12), are permissible, **an institution is not required to provide a student's transcript to another institution where the student is seeking to enroll if the student owes the providing institution money.** However, if the student requests to "inspect or review" the transcript, the institution must provide the student that opportunity even if the student owes the institution money. See §99.10.*

Please confirm the following – **Any and all students who want to participate in this agreement must complete a transcript request form in order for their transcript to be sent from NIU to WCC.** It is suggested to include verbiage on the transcript request form that authorizes both NIU and WCC to send/receive transcripts automatically without additional authorizations from the student (sort of a carte blanche approval). Does the student at NIU need to know that we requested and received an updated transcript from WCC?

*If the student has signed a consent based on the agreement discussed in the paragraph above, then the recordation requirements in FERPA would not apply. See §99.32(d)(3).*

Since we are handling these student records 'differently' than others based on the end of semester tracking - Is it more appropriate that we let students know we are or may be doing this?

*Any such notification to the student would be left to the discretion of the institution.*

What, if anything, can NIU share with WCC regarding the student's potential WCC degree completion?" "Can NIU say that we believe s/he may have completed the courses necessary to meet WCC's degree requirements?

*Disclosing education records created by the institution the student now attends back to GRCC would generally require a written consent from the student. See §99.30.*

# Benefits to Students and Participating Institutions

- This project is “win win,” with no cost to students and minimal cost to institutions
- Students benefit from having additional credentials to “fall back on” and/or enhance their resume or portfolio.
- WCC benefits from the increase in completions and student successes.
- NIU benefits from its strengthened relationship and communication with its community college partners.
- Both institutions benefit from improved public perception.

# **Essential Components**

- leadership support from upper administration at NIU and WCC (buy in from both institutions)
- a shared understanding that “every student counts!”
- clearly outlined process/protocol
- regular communications with strategic points of contact for NIU and WCC
- the Student Information System provides reports and data that are shared between institutions,
- 100% FERPA compliance throughout entire process

# Factors Likely to Influence Success

- centralize efforts, work with one primary contact person on each campus
- simplicity is the essence of success
- no cost to students for participating in this process (waiver of any transcript request fee, graduation process fee, other)



## **Lessons learned as a result of a successful implementation....**

- Some students who received the letter to participate in the reverse transfer credit initiative indicated they already graduated but never sent their final transcript; thus, some were eligible to receive additional transfer credit
- Develop your implementation plan well in advance of kick-off date
- Establish obtainable and measurable results
- Be cautious of setting timetables that conflict with busy times during the semester.
- Review results of data – adjust accordingly
- Provide ample communications to the campus community both before and after implementation
- Agree on schedule of frequency for reports
- Provide expedited service to students who participate in program
- Rectify any issues with academic and administrative staff on a continual basis
- Use press releases and community notices to communicate the results of meritorious achievement

# Useful Links....

## **Complete College America**

<http://www.completecollege.org/>

## **Credit When It's Due** (Taylor, Bishop, Makela, Bragg and Ruud, 2013)

<http://occr1.illinois.edu/files/Projects/CWID/Baseline%20Study%20Brief.pdf>

## **Focus on the Finish** (Illinois Lt. Governor Simon, 2012)

<http://www2.illinois.gov/ltgov/Documents/CC%20Report%20for%20web.pdf>

## **Project Win-Win**

<http://www.ihep.org/projectwin-win.cfm>

## **“You may not know it, but you earned a degree.”** (Wall Street Journal Oct. 8, 2013)

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324123004579057080163126394.html>

## **Michigan Project Video** (Davenport, WMU, GVSU, Ferris, GRCC, 2011)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMP1sZZkhX0>

Questions??

Suggestions??

# For more information, contact:

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