

CWID DATA NOTE

Reverse Credit Transfer and the Associate's Degree Advantage

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Introduction and Context

This Data Note is the eleventh in a series of publications that share results from research associated with the Credit When It's Due (CWID) initiative. CWID is a multi-state initiative that supports the development and implementation of reverse credit transfer programs and policies that confer associate's degrees to transfer students when they complete the degree requirements while en route to the baccalaureate degree. Using data from three CWID states, the purpose of this Data Note is to examine descriptive retention and bachelor's degree outcomes for students who received an associate's degree via reverse credit transfer. The results show that students who receive their associate's degree via reverse credit transfer have higher retention and bachelor's degree completion rates compared to similarly eligible students who did not receive an associate's degree, suggesting that reverse credit transfer can facilitate students' progress toward the bachelor's degree.

As reverse credit transfer expands around the country, it is important to understand how receiving an associate's degree after transfer influences students' momentum and progress toward their baccalaureate degree. Some 4-year institutions are concerned that receiving an associate's degree after transfer will divert students from their baccalaureate degree pathway or will entice them to seek employment with a credential in hand. Given that reverse credit transfer is a relatively new phenomenon, there is no published evidence on how receiving the associate's degree influences students' retention and bachelor's degree completion. This brief extracts data from the CWID Implementation and Impact report (Taylor et al., 2017) and highlights differences in retention and bachelor's degree completion rates between transfer students who received an associate's degree via reverse credit transfer and those that did not.

Methods

The following research question is answered in this Data Note: What are the differences in retention and bachelor's degree completion for transfer students who receive and do not receive an associate's degree via reverse credit transfer? To answer the research question, we used data from the CWID Impact Study in three states: Hawaii, Minnesota, and Ohio. Our sample included all students who were potentially eligible for reverse credit transfer in the dataset, which included students in initial implementation cohorts in each state (3 cohorts in Hawaii, 2 cohorts in Ohio, and 2 cohorts in Minnesota). We then examined differences in retention and bachelor's degree completion for students who did and did not complete an associate's degree via reverse credit transfer. The sample included 3,604 transfer

students in Hawaii, 10,021 transfer students in Minnesota, and 21,133 transfer students in Ohio. These students were potentially eligible because they: (a) transferred from a participating 2-year institution; (b) met their own state's minimum community college residency requirements; and (c) had not completed an associate's degree prior to transfer. Of these 34,758 potentially eligible transfer students, 3,226 students (Hawaii $n=1,032$, Minnesota $n=1,264$, Ohio $n=930$) earned associate's degrees via reverse credit transfer.

The timing of reverse credit transfer implementation varied in each state as did the collection of outcome data; readers are encouraged to read the full CWID report by Taylor et al. (2017) to understand specific state and implementation contexts. Due to this variance, the length of the observation period to measure retention and bachelor's degree completion varied in each state. For this analysis, outcomes are reported 1.5 to 2.5 years after associate's degree conferral in Hawaii, .5 years to 1.5 years in Minnesota, and 3 years to 4 years in Ohio.

Results

Figures 1, 2, and 3 report the results for the research question individually by state, and Figure 4 combines all three states. Across all states, potentially eligible transfer students who received an associate's degree via reverse credit transfer had better outcomes than similarly eligible students who did not receive their associate's degree. Figure 1 displays results for Hawaii and shows that 89% of transfer students who were potentially eligible and received an associate's degree via reverse credit transfer earned a bachelor's degree or were retained, whereas this percent was only 78% for those who were potentially eligible but did not receive an associate's degree, a difference of 11%.

Figure 2 displays results from Minnesota and shows that 65% of transfer students who were potentially eligible and received an associate's degree via reverse credit transfer were retained or earned a bachelor's degree, but this percent was only 47% for those transfer students who were potentially eligible but did not receive an associate's degree, a difference of 18%.

Figure 3 displays the results from Ohio and shows that 79% of transfer students who were potentially eligible and earned an associate's degree via reverse credit transfer were retained or earned a bachelor's degree, whereas this percent was only 74% of transfer students who were potentially eligible but did not receive an associate's degree, a difference of 5%.

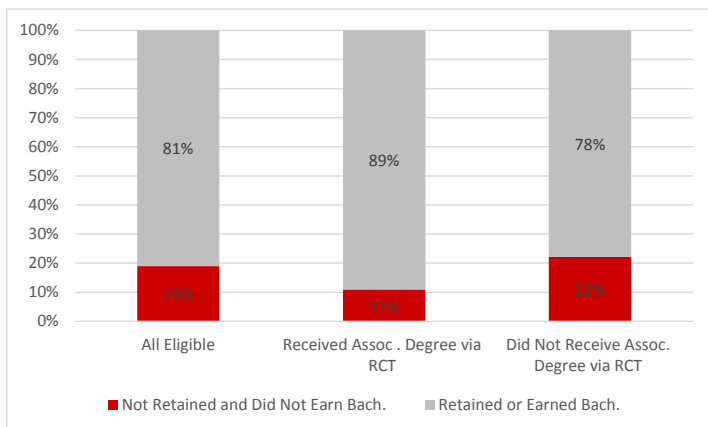


Figure 1. Retention or bachelor's degree completion within 1.5 to 2.5 years of implementation (Hawaii)

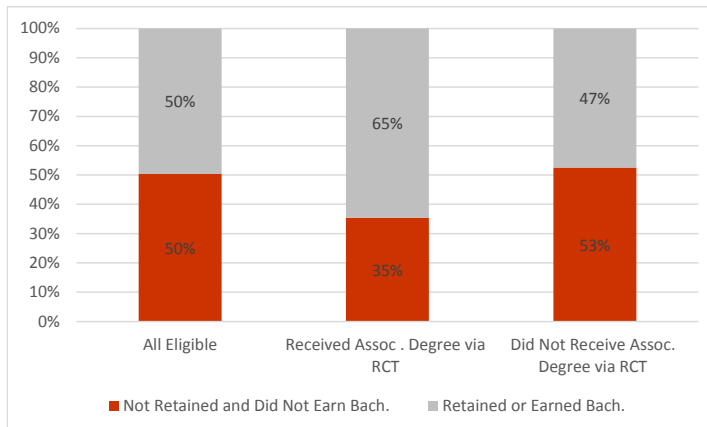


Figure 2. Retention or bachelor's degree completion within 0.5 to 1.5 years of implementation (Minnesota)

What Does This Mean?

In all three states, transfer students who earned an associate's degree via reverse credit transfer were retained or completed a bachelor's degree at a higher rate (HI 79%, MN 65%, OH 89%) compared with students who were potentially eligible but did not receive an associate's degree via reverse credit transfer (HI 74%, MN 47%, OH 78%). The difference in retention and degree completion rates ranged from 5% in Hawaii, to 18% in Minnesota, to 12% in Ohio. Although these results are only descriptive, the evidence from these states show a 5% to 18% retention or degree

completion advantage for students who receive the associate's degree via reverse credit transfer. Further, this evidence suggests that students who receive an associate's degree post-transfer are *not* more likely than similar students to stop out and seek employment given their new credential. This Data Note provides promising descriptive evidence, particularly for 4-year institutions, that receiving an associate's degree post-transfer relates to students' retention and bachelor's degree completion at the 4-year institution.

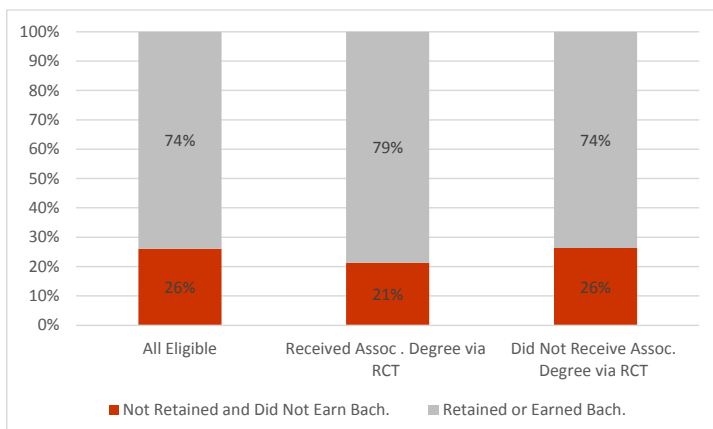


Figure 3. Retention or bachelor's degree completion within 3 to 4 years of implementation (Ohio)

Limitations

The primary limitation of this Data Note is that the data are descriptive and not inferential or causal. A forthcoming study in the *Review of Higher Education* by Jason Taylor and Matt Giani examines similar research questions using inferential statistics and finds similar results based on data from two CWID states.

Reference

Taylor, J. L., Kauppila, S. A., Cortes-Lopez, E., Soler, M. C., Bishop, C., Meza, E., McCambly, H., & Bragg, D. D. (2017, May). *The implementation and outcomes of Credit When It's Due (CWID) in 15 states*. Seattle, WA: Community College Research Initiatives, University of Washington.

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