

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Academic Affairs

NO.: AAC 17-08

COMMITTEE DATE: November 29, 2016

BOARD DATE: December 6, 2016

STATEWIDE POLICY ON REVERSE TRANSFER

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby adopts the attached statewide Reverse Transfer Agreement and charges the Commissioner to implement the Reverse Transfer Pathway by Fall 2017.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, § 9(b), (u) and (v)

Contact: Dr. Patricia A. Marshall, Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs
and Student Success

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Director of Postsecondary Strategies

Background

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and the Massachusetts community colleges, state universities and University of Massachusetts campuses recognize the value of the associate's degree for students enrolled in the Massachusetts system of public higher education. Half of the community college students who transfer to state universities and University of Massachusetts campuses have not completed their associate's degree requirements. In order to encourage and enable more students to earn their associate's degrees, the Department, in collaboration with the three segments of public higher education, has established the Reverse Transfer Pathway, its latest initiative in developing a comprehensive and unified system of transfer.

Reverse transfer will provide an opportunity to earn an associate's degree for community college students who transfer before graduating. Credits earned at the four-year institutions are transferred back to the community colleges and used to fulfill the associate's degree requirements. Once degree requirements are met, the community colleges confer the associate's degrees.

By completing their associate's degrees, students gain a credential that enhances their chances for employment, certifications, promotions and pay increases prior to completing their bachelor's degrees. Achieving this benefit requires no additional time or expense. Additionally, community colleges, state universities and UMass campuses raise their retention and graduation rates by affording students the reverse transfer option. Finally, completion of the associate's degree ensures that students whose pursuit of a bachelor's degree is interrupted receive a college degree documenting the work they have completed thus far.



**Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
Reverse Transfer Agreement:
*Massachusetts Community Colleges, State Universities and the
University of Massachusetts***

A. Preamble

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (herein after “Department”) and the Massachusetts community colleges, state universities and campuses of the University of Massachusetts recognize the value of the associate’s degree for students enrolled in the Massachusetts system of public higher education. The Department understands that some students who begin their studies at community colleges transfer to state universities and University of Massachusetts campuses before they have completed their associate’s degree requirements. In order to encourage and enable more students to earn their associate’s degrees, the Department and these institutions have established this Reverse Transfer Pathway.

This Reverse Transfer Pathway is a component of the Commonwealth’s *MassTransfer* Program¹, designed to make transfer from one Massachusetts public higher education institution to another easy for students. The *MassTransfer* Program includes a general education course block (*MassTransfer* Block), academic transfer pathways (*MassTransfer* Pathways), a course equivalency database, a reverse transfer program and the Commonwealth Commitment (a discounted cost associate’s degree to bachelor’s degree program).

The Vision Project², a public agenda for higher education in Massachusetts, commits the Commonwealth to producing “the best educated citizenry and workforce in the nation.” The Vision Project’s “Big Three” Completion Plan advances strategies to boost college completion rates, close achievement gaps, and attract and graduate more students from underserved populations.

Dr. Carlos Santiago, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, built upon and expanded the Vision Project in his September 2014 paper “Creating a Unified System of Transfer for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,”³ in which he initiated the Department’s groundbreaking work to develop academic transfer pathways from community colleges to state universities and University of Massachusetts campuses. This Reverse Transfer Pathway strengthens the Department’s commitment to creating a unified system of transfer.

¹ <http://www.mass.edu/system/masstransfer.asp>

² <http://www.mass.edu/visionproject/home.asp>

³ <http://www.mass.edu/strategic/completion/documents/Creating%20a%20Unified%20System%20of%20Academic%20Transfer%20for%20the%20Commonwealth%20of%20Massachusetts.doc>

B. Benefits

This Reverse Transfer Pathway affords the following benefits to students, institutions, employers and taxpayers across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

1. Students who complete a reverse transfer associate's degree gain an additional credential to include on their résumés. The degree enhances students' opportunities for employment, certifications, promotions and pay increases prior to completion of the bachelor's degree.
2. Students who complete a reverse transfer associate's degree receive documentation of the academic work they have completed already in the event that their bachelor's degree study is interrupted.
3. Students who earn an associate's degree in Massachusetts gain an estimated net income of over \$250,000 (averaging more than \$6,000 a year) from 40 years of employment compared with students who earn only a high school diploma.⁴
4. Students gain the opportunity to earn an associate's degree, while working on a bachelor's degree, without requiring any additional time or expense.
5. Students working on a reverse transfer associate's degree benefit from state universities and UMass campuses waiving transcript fees and community colleges waiving graduation fees.
6. Community colleges enhance their retention and graduation rates by affording students a reverse transfer option.
7. Employers gain the opportunity to hire and advance more highly qualified employees.
8. Taxpayers in Massachusetts gain an estimated income of more than \$68,000 from taxes of associate's degree wage earners over the course of their work lives compared with students who earn only a high school diploma.⁵

C. Guidelines

This Reverse Transfer Pathway establishes the following general guidelines for students, community colleges, state universities and UMass campuses across the Commonwealth.

1. Students must have matriculated into an associate's degree program at the community colleges from which they transfer (the community college most recently attended) to the state universities or UMass campuses.
2. Students must be in good financial standing at both the community colleges and the state universities or UMass campuses.
3. Students must have earned at least 30 college-level credits (excluding developmental courses and transfer credit) at the community colleges from which they transfer before matriculating at the state universities or UMass campuses.
4. Students must have earned a cumulative grade point average of 2.00 or higher at the community colleges from which they transfer. The cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or higher at the community college is exclusive of developmental coursework.
5. Students must not have earned an associate's degrees before matriculating at a state university or UMass campus.

⁴ http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/Value_of_an_Associate_Degree_10.13.pdf, page 18.

⁵ http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/Value_of_an_Associate_Degree_10.13.pdf, page 20.

6. Students must complete the associate's degree requirements of the program in progress at the time of transfer or a Liberal Arts/General Studies program.
7. Students must earn grades on courses taken at the state universities and UMass campuses sufficient to meet community college transfer credit minimum grade requirements.
8. Students will not receive *MassTransfer* benefits after completing their associate's degree requirements at a four-year institution, unless the university explicitly offers these benefits to reverse transfer students.
9. State universities and UMass campuses will waive transcript fees, if they charge them. For institutions that use the National Student Clearinghouse or other e-transcript provider for electronic transcripts, students will be required to pay the convenience fee.
10. Community colleges will waive graduation fees.
11. Community colleges, state universities and UMass campuses will include information about this Reverse Transfer Pathway in their print and online publications.

D. Implementation

Following approval of this agreement by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, the Department will work over the 2016-2017 academic year with registrars and others at the community colleges, state universities and University of Massachusetts campuses to develop implementation procedures for this Reverse Transfer Pathway. In addition, the Department will design and produce appropriate promotional materials for campuses to use.

E. Review

1. The Department annually will convene a meeting of registrars and others from the community colleges, state universities and UMass campuses to:
 - a. Review the reverse transfer guidelines and recommend changes when warranted; and
 - b. Review the operation of the reverse transfer implementation procedures and recommend changes when warranted.
2. The community colleges, state universities, UMass campuses and Department annually will review and update information about this Reverse Transfer Pathway in their print and online publications.

F. Effective Date

This Reverse Transfer Pathway will be implemented during the 2017-2018 academic year. Therefore, the implementation procedures must be developed sufficiently in advance to enable implementation no later than September 2017.