

CWID DATA NOTE

Degree Types Awarded Via Reverse Credit Transfer

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Introduction

This Data Note is the seventh in a series of publications that shares 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 degree requirements while en route to the baccalaureate degree. Using data from seven CWID states, the purpose of this Data Note is to examine the types of associate's degrees awarded via reverse credit transfer. As universities and community colleges collaborate to award associate's degrees via reverse credit transfer, it is important to know what type of associate's degrees students are receiving.

Associate's Degree Types and State Policy

Cohen, Brawer, and Kisker (2014) outline curricular functions of community colleges that include academic transfer, occupational, continuing education, developmental education, and community service. Of these, the academic transfer function allows students to complete lower-division general education courses at the community college before transferring to a university with a transfer degree. Occupational education prepares students for the workforce with an applied degree. Although the degrees awarded via reverse credit transfer may share the same name across states (e.g., Associate of Science), the meaning of these associate's degrees varies across states. That is, some degrees were applied, general studies, transfer-oriented, or aligned with designated pathways.

Transfer Associate's Degrees

A transfer associate's degree (transfer degree) is designed for students who begin their college education at a 2-year institution and intend to transfer to a 4-year institution to complete a bachelor's degree after earning their associate's degree. Transfer degrees often fulfill general education requirements so that students may enter the 4-year institution with junior standing and general education requirements complete. For example, Colorado defines the Associate of Arts degree as a transfer degree designed for students who plan to get their bachelor's degree at a 4-year college or university, which is similar to other states' definitions. Associate of Arts

(A.A.) and Associate of Science (A.S.) degrees that are transfer-oriented are awarded by the following CWID states included in this analysis: Arkansas, Colorado, Hawaii (A.A. only), Minnesota, North Carolina, and Tennessee. In Missouri, the A.A. and the A.A. in Teaching degrees fulfill general education requirements and provide the clearest path to transfer. Alternatively, the A.S. degree in Missouri does not allow a student to transfer with their general education requirements automatically fulfilled; instead each student is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In Hawaii, some A.S. degrees are transferrable, but many are technical or applied degrees.

Applied Associate's Degrees

Applied associate's degrees (applied degrees) are designed for students who plan to enter the workforce after degree completion and are not intended to be transfer degrees. Like other states, the Colorado Community College System's policy defines the Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree as one that "is intended to prepare individuals to enter skilled and/or paraprofessional occupations or to upgrade/stabilize their employment" (State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education, 2004, sec. 6). Although the A.A.S. degree is not intended to be a transfer degree, some CWID states conferred A.A.S. degrees via reverse credit transfer.

Other/Unreported Associate's Degrees

Degrees other than the A.A., A.S., and A.A.S. degrees were conferred via reverse credit transfer in two of the CWID states included in this analysis. Arkansas reported some students who received an Associate of General Studies degree, which is a transfer-oriented degree. In Tennessee, the degree type was not reported for a small number of students, but a program of study and CIP code were reported in areas such as business administration, accounting, history, and social work. These degrees are likely designated as transfer pathways in Tennessee. A transfer pathway in Tennessee is a degree that "lists the general requirements and area of emphasis requirements as you move from a community college to a university" (Tennessee Board of Regents, para 1.) to help students smoothly transfer needed credits from the community college without the need to retake courses at the 4-year institution.

Methods

The following two research questions are answered in this Data Note: (1) What types of degrees have been awarded via reverse credit transfer? and (2) What are the CIP codes of degrees awarded via reverse credit transfer?

Utilizing CWID Impact Study data from seven states, this brief examined the distribution of degree type by state, and the distribution of CIP codes. The data used for this brief included only a subset of data from initial cohorts of reverse credit transfer implementation, and does not represent all degrees conferred by each state. The sample included 4,112 students in seven states (Arkansas n=33, Colorado n=75, Hawaii n=1,485, Minnesota n=1,331, Missouri n=272, North Carolina n=569, Tennessee n=347).

Results

Figure 1 and Figure 2 report the results to the first research question. The majority of degrees awarded via reverse credit transfer were the A.A. (n=3,594), followed by the A.S. (n=352), A.A.S. (n=145), and other or unreported associate’s degrees (n=21). All states awarded A.A. degrees, and the A.S. was awarded by all states except Hawaii and Minnesota. The A.A.S. was awarded by Colorado, Missouri, and North Carolina, and other or unreported associate’s degrees were awarded by Arkansas and Tennessee.

As previously explained, state policy designates the A.A. and A.S. as transfer degrees in Arkansas, Colorado, Hawaii (A.A. only), Minnesota, North Carolina, and Tennessee, and the A.A. and A.A. in Teaching as transfer degrees in Missouri. The data from this analysis show that the A.A. and A.S. degrees were awarded most frequently via reverse credit transfer. Of the total degrees awarded (n=4,112), 96% (n=3,937) are transfer-oriented degrees based on state and institution information

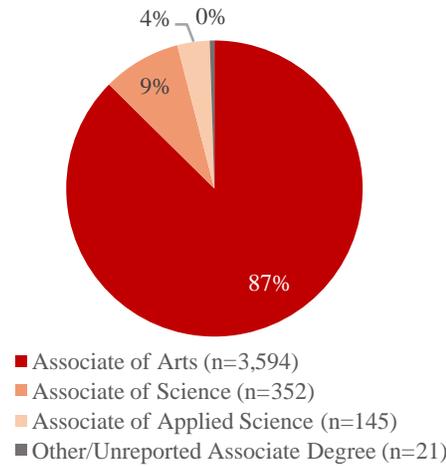


Figure 1. Degrees Awarded via Reverse Credit Transfer (n=4,112)

about degree types (A.A. in all states, A.S. in all states except Missouri and Hawaii, and other/unreported transfer pathways in Tennessee).

The second research question was answered using data from Arkansas, Colorado, Hawaii, Minnesota, Missouri, and Tennessee because they provided CIP codes for the degrees awarded via reverse credit transfer, and results are presented in Table 1. The majority of A.A. degrees with a CIP code provided (n=3,154) were liberal arts or general studies. The A.S. degrees with a CIP code provided (n=312) included a wider range of programs of study such as liberal arts or general studies (n=274), engineering/pre-engineering (n=21), and business or accounting (n=16). Of the A.A.S. degrees awarded, 46 were in general studies and 1 was in agricultural business and management. CIP codes associated with the other or unreported associate’s degree types were in liberal arts or general studies (n=3), and a variety of transfer pathways (psychology, criminal justice, social work, music, etc.).

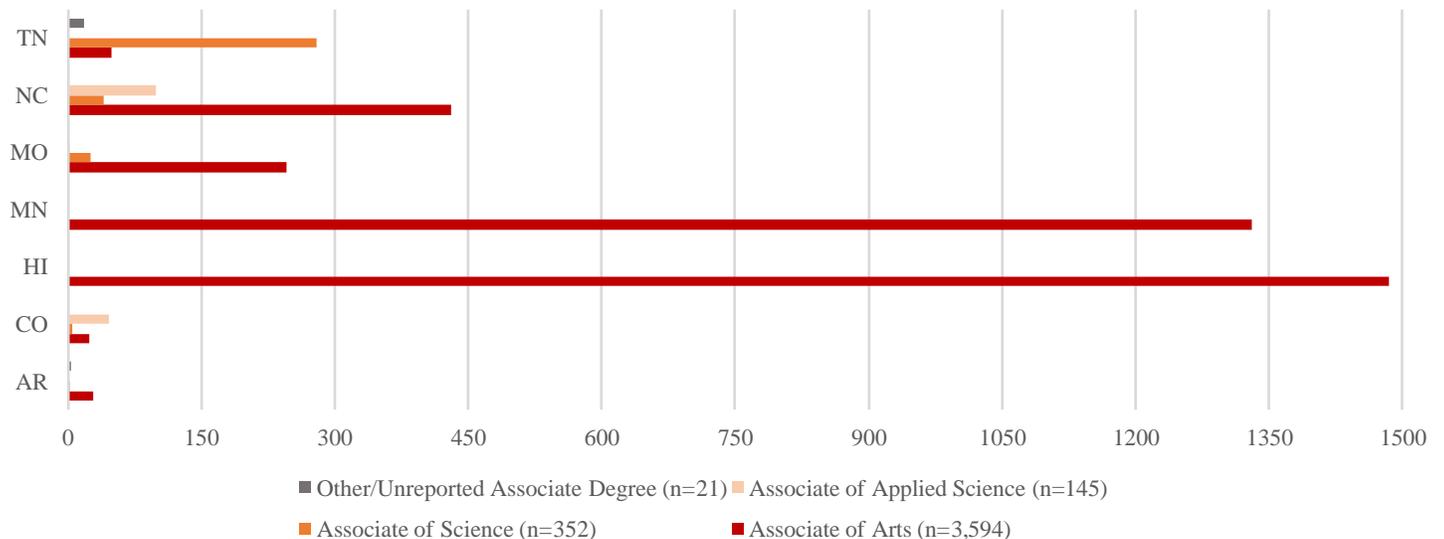


Figure 2. Degree Types Awarded via Reverse Credit Transfer, by State

What Does This Mean?

The Associate of Arts degree, which is a transfer-oriented degree in all of the states included in this analysis, represented the majority of degrees awarded via reverse credit transfer (87%), and an additional 9% were other transfer-oriented degrees. With transfer-oriented degrees, the courses students complete as part of the degree are likely to be transferrable among 2-year and 4-year institutions. In several states, state policy recognizes the completion of a transfer-oriented degree as completion of general education requirements at 4-year institutions. If the A.A. and other transfer-oriented degrees awarded via reverse credit

transfer fulfill general education requirements at 4-year institutions, this could benefit students by reducing their need to complete any unique general education requirements of 4-year institutions, thus potentially reducing the need to take excess courses. However, we are uncertain if state or institutional policy allows general education requirements to be completed by a transfer-oriented degree awarded while the student is enrolled at a 4-year institution or only at the time of transfer, so future research should explore how state and institutional policy address this.

Table 1. CIP Codes of Reverse Credit Transfer Degrees Awarded in AR, CO, HI, MN, MO, TN (n=3,543)

Program of Study (CIP code)	A.A.	A.S.	A.A.S	Other	Total
Agricultural Business and Management (1.01)	0	0	1	0	1
Ethnic, Cultural Minority, and Gender Studies (5.02)	2	0	0	0	2
Teacher Ed & Prof Dev, Specific Subject Areas (13.13)	3	0	0	0	3
Engineering, General (14.01)	0	21	0	0	21
Linguistic, Comparative, & Related Language (16.01)	2	0	0	0	2
English Language and Literature, General (23.01)	2	0	0	0	2
Liberal Arts & Sciences, Gen Studies & Humanities (24.01)	3,154	274	46	3	3,477
Psychology, General (42.01)	0	0	0	2	2
Criminal Justice and Corrections (43.01)	0	1	0	2	3
Social Work (44.07)	0	0	0	4	4
Political Science and Government (45.10)	0	0	0	2	2
Sociology (45.11)	0	0	0	3	3
Music (50.09)	0	0	0	1	1
Business Administration, Mgmt & Operations (52.02)	0	12	0	0	12
Accounting and Related Services (52.03)	0	4	0	0	4
History (54.01)	0	0	0	4	4
Total	3,163	312	47	21	3,543

References

Cohen, A. M., Brawer, F. B., Kisker, C.B. (2014). *The American community college* (6th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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Tennessee Board of Regents. (n.d.) *Pathway information*. <http://www.tntransferpathway.org/pathway-information>

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