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BEST PRACTICES

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UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AND ACADEMYONE AWARDED 1ST PLACE IN BEST PRACTICES COMPETITION FOR STATE-WIDE REVERSE TRANSFER SYSTEM

PESC APPROVED STANDARDS ENABLE INNOVATIVE, COST-EFFECTIVE DIGITAL PROCESS

Washington, D.C. The Board of Directors of PESC is pleased to announce the University of Tennessee and AcademyOne as 1st Place Winners of PESC's 17th Annual Best Practices Competition for its "Reverse Transfer System." The award-winning submission received high praise from the Board for its open and broad collaborative approach, sophisticated automation and technology employed, and for the positive results and outcomes it immediately produced. Included in the joint project are AcademyOne, the University of Tennessee System, Tennessee Board of Regents, and the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association.

"The reverse transfer program has been an exciting process to watch grow from its original policy concept to full implementation. We'd like to thank the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and Lumina Foundation for support of the project," said India Lane, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Success at the University of Tennessee. Tennessee took the unique approach of creating a statewide reverse transfer technology solution, rather than relying on isolated institutional agreements. "The amount of collaboration among and within institutions has been amazing from the get-go," said Gloria Gammell, Project Coordinator with the University of Tennessee. "Nearly every campus in the state has made contributions to the process – the commitment is there because it is the right thing to do for our students." Tennessee awarded over 800 reverse transfer degrees in the first year of implementation.

"Tennessee's ability to generate cooperation between its higher education governing bodies, and their respective public and private member institutions, is a great example of how strong executive sponsorship can drive outstanding outcomes," said Mike McIntyre, President and COO of AcademyOne. "With the various constituencies all working towards the same goal, implementation of a centralized solution was made possible. From a technology perspective, using the PESC standards in the extraction, management and analysis of data from close to thirty institutions and a variety of student information systems was instrumental in the automated work flow we created to support the reverse transfer process. An additional benefit is the foundation built for the reverse transfer project now serves as a key component in the State's adult degree completion initiative. This synergy shows how a comprehensive approach to data can be leveraged for a variety of purposes. We are proud to have been Tennessee's technology partner."

“The Reverse Transfer System is a shining example of success and we hope many look to it as a blueprint,” PESC President and CEO Michael Sessa praised. “When you combine Tennessee’s political wisdom, AcademyOne’s innovative technology, and a collaborative team of stakeholders, all focused on a common goal, the results and positive student outcomes are conclusive. We call that *unlocking the power of data*,” Mr. Sessa stated.

The award-winning submission made by the University of Tennessee and AcademyOne is posted on the PESC website with prior winners at <http://www.pesc.org>. An Awards Ceremony will be held during the General Sessions at PESC's Spring 2016 Data Summit being held April 13 – 15, 2015 in Washington DC at the Embassy Row Hotel.

Registration is still open for PESC's Spring 2016 Data Summit and all information including registration and program are posted online at www.PESC.org.

PESC's Education Record User Group is the permanent authority within PESC governing registrar and admissions PESC Approved Standards. As part of its mission, all PESC approved standards are available to the education community online and *free of charge*. For more information about PESC, the Annual Best Practices Competition and the Education Record User Group, please visit www.PESC.org. For questions or concerns about PESC and/or about PESC events and activities, please contact Jennifer Kim, PESC’s Membership Services Director, at 202.261.6516 or jennifer.kim@pesc.org.

[ABOUT PESC](#)

Established in 1997 at the National Center for Higher Education and headquartered in Washington, D.C., PESC is an international, 501 (c)(3) non-profit, community-based, umbrella association of data, software and education technology service providers; local, state and federal government agencies; schools, districts, colleges and universities; college, university and state systems; professional, commercial and non-profit organizations; and non-profit associations and foundations.

Through open and transparent community participation, PESC enables cost-effective connectivity between data systems to accelerate performance and service, to simplify data access and research, and to improve data quality along the Education lifecycle. PESC envisions global interoperability within the Education domain, supported by a trustworthy, inter-connected network built by and between communities of interest in which data flows digitally and seamlessly from one community or system to another and throughout the entire eco-system when and where needed without compatibility barriers but in a safe, secure, reliable, legal, and efficient manner.

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AcademyOne Automating Reverse Transfer for the State of Tennessee

Introduction

Every year thousands of community college students transfer to four-year institutions, often before completing their associate degree, leaving them without a credential. While this is not a new phenomenon, more recently colleges and universities have been paying closer attention as they are faced with a growing pressure to increase graduation rates. Reverse transfer has quickly gained national recognition as an integral element to boosting degree attainment.

Through the reverse transfer process, students who transfer without their associate degree are provided the opportunity to get that degree from their community college as they complete the required coursework while pursuing their bachelor's degree at their four-year institution.

The Challenge

At the recommendation of Tennessee's legislature in July 2012, a taskforce was formed to develop and implement reverse transfer policies, guidelines and processes across the state. The reverse transfer initiative is part of the state's larger "Drive to 55" campaign to raise the number of residents in the state with a postsecondary credential from 32% to 55% by the year 2025. Since the 2000-01 academic year, 39,954 Tennessee transfer students entered a four-year institution without an associate degree. 27,744 of those transfer students did not complete their baccalaureate degree, leaving them without a degree.

The reverse transfer taskforce was comprised of members from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association (TICUA), and the University of Tennessee (UT) systems. Funding for the project was provided by the state through an appropriation, as well as a Credit When It's Due grant administered by the Lumina Foundation.

"The University of Tennessee shares the state's commitment to seeing a greater percentage of Tennesseans earn college degrees. We also recognize the numerous challenges transfer students face, and we're pleased to help find solutions to overcome those challenges."

Dr. Joe DiPietro,
University of Tennessee
System President

Solution

After much collaboration, the taskforce determined the most feasible way to develop and implement reverse transfer on a statewide basis was through a centralized and automated software system. The state issued a competitive RFP in December 2013, and in May 2014 AcademyOne was selected as their software vendor of choice. By June 2014, AcademyOne began development of the Reverse Transfer System (RTS). Tennessee's Transfer Pathway degree requirements were built using AcademyOne's Virtual Transfer Advisor solution to facilitate the mapping of course equivalencies to each community college within the system.

In July 2014, a pilot was conducted with six institutions participating and providing feedback. The pilot commenced in October 2014 and refinements were made. Training was provided to academic advisors, registrars, graduation audit analysts and other staff in November 2014.

"The Reverse Transfer initiative is a definite 'win-win.' Students may not be aware that credits earned after transfer from a two-year college can help round out their associate degree requirements. For transfer students, a reverse degree award provides a well-deserved stamp of accomplishment and appears to be a motivating factor to finish the 4-year degree. On the institutional side, both community colleges and 4-year universities stand to benefit from the impact of this initiative on graduation rates, measures that feed into the state funding formula and national rankings."

Dr. India Lane,
University of Tennessee
Assistant Vice President for
Academic Affairs and Student
Success

Reverse Transfer System Workflow

- **Student Identification:** participating four year institutions query institutional records to identify eligible students and upload them into the RTS. Criteria includes:
 - Current enrollment at a participating public or private four-year Tennessee school
 - A minimum of 15 earned college-level credits from a Tennessee community college
 - Previous transfer from a Tennessee community college before earning a degree
 - 60 college-level credits completed post-transfer at the four-year institution
- **Consent:** the RTS emails students eligible to participate in the reverse transfer process. Students must consent to the sharing of their two- and four-year course histories by opting in.
- **Transcript Exchange:** two- and four-year institutions upload course histories for consenting students into the RTS.
- **Degree Audit:** the RTS runs simulated audits on all consenting students, mapping each student's course history against 40 common Tennessee Transfer Pathway Program requirements. Students that have met, or are close to meeting, the requirements for an associate degree are identified and their simulated degree audits are available for formal review by the community college.
- **Degree Conferral & Advising:** students meeting degree requirements are notified by the two-year college and are conferred a degree. Students who do not meet degree requirements are advised by the two-year college of any outstanding requirements needed for completion and contacted again the following semester.

Results

Tennessee elected to implement the Reverse Transfer System in cycles, coinciding with their Spring and Fall degree award dates. Cycle 1 began in January 2015 with 7 community colleges, 6 public four-year universities and 1 private four-year university participating. During this cycle 5,860 eligible students were identified and emailed for consent. 1,159 students consented, giving a 20% opt-in rate. It is estimated that about 4,057 staff hours were saved using the Reverse Transfer System, creating an approximate monetary savings of \$111,495.* In May 2015, 341 students across the state were part of the first group to receive their degrees through the Reverse Transfer System.

Cycle 2 began in the Fall of 2015 with 9 public four-year universities, 6 private four-year universities and all 13 community colleges in the state participating, making Tennessee one of a handful of states in the country creating reverse transfer programs on this scale. More than 7,500 eligible students were identified. 1,755 students consented to participate, giving a 23% opt-in rate. In December 2015, 460 students received their two-year degree through the Reverse Transfer System.

Student Experience

An associate degree is seen as a valuable job-seeking credential for undergraduate students working their way through college. Cassandra Titus agrees and opted in early to find out if she was eligible.

"I need to show proof of experience or education in order to advance, and I feel like having this degree will show them I'm serious about my career. I've worked in administrative assistant roles for almost 10 years and need a degree to advance."

Cassandra transferred to Tennessee State University from Nashville State Community College in May 2014 to pursue a bachelor's degree in accounting. She hopes to get her foot in the door with her current employer's accounting department before she graduates in December 2016.

Conclusion

Colleges and universities that manually administer reverse transfers are faced with the time-consuming workflow processes of compiling student credit and performing audit evaluations. Working with Tennessee, AcademyOne has developed a Reverse Transfer solution that automates and optimizes reverse transfer policies and processes, easing administrative burdens and allowing two- and four-year institutions to maximize their collaborations.

Our Reverse Transfer solution enhances communication, identifies more potential completers, assimilates data from multiple student systems and runs an automated degree audit - allowing institutions to better advise near-completers and confer degrees to those that have earned them.

* Calculation based on the total hours saved and the estimated hourly salary of Reverse Transfer staff with a benefit load incorporated. Salaries were based on the "2014-2015 Professionals in Higher Education Salaries Survey," conducted by The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. Benefit load percentage was based on the "Labor Intensive or Labor Expensive? Changing Staffing and Compensation Patterns in Higher Education," by American Institutes for Research.



13,360

Eligible Students Identified

Tennessee's Reverse Transfer System

The state of Tennessee's implementation of AcademyOne's Reverse Transfer system benefited everyone involved and provided an immediate return on its investment.

TN implemented the system in cycles coinciding with Spring and Fall degree award dates. Seven community colleges participated in Cycle 1. Cycle 2 included all thirteen community colleges in the state. As each cycle transpires, the benefits and ROI will continue to accumulate.

Our workflow software helped TN higher education institutions streamline their reverse transfer procedures, reduced their manual workload and ultimately contributed to advancing student completion rates.

2,914

Students Opted-in

10,200

Hours Saved Through Automation

801

Students Received Degrees



22%

Student opt-in rate



\$280,325

Saved through automation

PESC 17TH ANNUAL BEST PRACTICES COMPETITION

AcademyOne and Tennessee's

Submission for the TN Reverse Transfer System

Mission/Objectives

In September 2012, the public universities of Tennessee convened a statewide taskforce charged with creating a centralized reverse transfer process, at the recommendation of the legislature. The taskforce's objective was to make it possible for students who transfer from Tennessee community colleges before earning a two-year degree to retroactively receive that credential when requirements are met in pursuit of a bachelor's degree. This reverse transfer initiative was part of the state's larger "Drive to 55" campaign to raise the number of residents with a postsecondary credential from 32% to 55% by the year 2025.

Scope of the Project

AcademyOne developed a Reverse Transfer System (RTS) for Tennessee that facilitates reverse transfer programs between all Tennessee community colleges and multiple four-year institutions by assimilating data from their student information systems and performing a degree audit. As an institution-driven, semi-automated process, RTS identifies more potential associate degree completers than other approaches and allows both two- and four-year institutions to better advise students regarding an efficient path to a credential.

Reverse Transfer System Workflow

- *Student Identification* - Four-year institutions can query institutional records to identify eligible students for a reverse transfer associate degree and upload them into RTS.
- *Consent*- RTS emails students eligible to participate in the reverse transfer process. Students must consent to the sharing of their two- and four-year course histories by opting in.
- *Transcript Exchange* - Two- and four-year institutions upload course histories for consenting students into RTS.
- *Degree Audit*- RTS runs a simulated degree audit on all consenting students, mapping each student's course history against preloaded transfer pathway program requirements. Students that have met, or are close to meeting, the requirements for an associate degree are identified and their simulated degree audits are available for formal review by the two-year college.
- *Degree Conferral & Advising* – Students meeting degree requirements are notified by the two-year college and are conferred a degree. Students that don't meet degree requirements are advised by the two-year college of any outstanding requirements needed for completion.

Participants

The Reverse Transfer project was a joint venture of AcademyOne, the Tennessee Board of Regents, the University of Tennessee System, the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

The core project team from Tennessee included:

Dr. India Lane, VP, University of Tennessee (Executive sponsor)
Dr. Gloria Gammell, Project Coordinator, University of Tennessee
Brenda Rector, Community College Liaison, Roane State Community College
Tammy Lemon, Center for Business and Economic Research, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Tom Jenkins, Center for Business and Economic Research, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Participating Foundations:

Lumina Foundation
Kresge Foundation

Other key participants:

Randy Schulte, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academics, Tennessee Board of Regents
David Wright, Chief Policy Officer, Tennessee Higher Education Commission
Diane Berty, Vice President, Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities
Nathan James, Research Analyst, Tennessee Department of Education
Katie High, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Student Success, University of Tennessee

Standards Employed

The data being exchanged between institutions and the RTS software utilized the PESC Course Inventory and PESC Student Transcript schemas. The system also adopted the CEDS generic naming conventions to manage the student academic progress workflow.

Working with nearly thirty institutions from four different governing/oversight bodies, the use of the PESC data schemas provided a common framework which greatly facilitated and standardized the collection, exchange, and analysis of the data.

Date of Project Milestones

A competitive RFP was issued in December 2013 and AcademyOne was selected as the software vendor of choice.

In May 2014, the project kicked off and software development began.

By July 2014, six institutions began piloting the software and providing feedback. The pilot concluded in October 2014 and refinements were made.

Training was provided to academic advisors, registrars, graduation audit analysts and other staff in November 2014.

Tennessee implemented the Reverse Transfer System in cycles coinciding with their Spring and Fall degree award dates. Cycle 1 began in January 2015 and concluded in May 2015. Cycle 2 began in August 2015 and concluded in December 2015.

Statistics

Cycle 1

Cycle 1 began the Spring of 2015 with 6 public four-year universities, 1 private four-year university and 7 community colleges participating. During this cycle, 5,860 students enrolled at participating institutions were identified as potentially eligible for participating in the Reverse Transfer process. Approximately, 1,159 students gave their consent to participate. In May 2015, 341 students across the state were part of the first group to receive their degrees through the Reverse Transfer System.

Cycle 1 Highlights	
6	Public Four-Year Universities
1	Private Four-Year University
7	Community Colleges
5,860	Eligible Students Identified
1,159	Students Consented
20%	Opt-in Rate
341	Degrees Awarded

University of Tennessee System

- UT Chattanooga (402 potentially eligible students, 121 opted in, 13 students awarded degrees by former community college)
- UT Knoxville (950 potentially eligible students, 261 opted in, 72 students awarded degrees by former community college)
- UT Martin (186 potentially eligible students, 59 opted in, 17 students awarded degrees by former community college)

Tennessee Board of Regents Universities

- East Tennessee State University (899 potentially eligible students, 143 opted in, 56 students awarded degrees by former community college)
- Middle Tennessee State University (1,722 potentially eligible students, 146 opted in, 64 students awarded degrees by former community college)
- University of Memphis (1,659 potentially eligible students, 423 opted in, 119 students awarded degrees by former community college)

Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association

- Maryville College (42 potentially eligible students, 6 opted in, no students awarded degrees by former community college)

Community Colleges

- Cleveland State Community College (5 degrees awarded)
- Jackson State Community College (52 degrees awarded)
- Northeast State Community College (41 degrees awarded)
- Pellissippi State Community College (73 degrees awarded)
- Roane State Community College (24 degrees awarded)
- Southwest Tennessee Community College (93 degrees awarded)
- Vol State Community College (53 degrees awarded)

Cycle 2

Cycle 2 began in the Fall of 2015 with 9 public four-year universities, 6 private four-year universities and all 13 community colleges in the state participating, making Tennessee one of a handful of states in the country creating reverse transfer programs on this scale. More than 7,500 students enrolled at participating institutions were identified as potentially eligible and 1,755 students gave their consent to participate. In December 2015, 460 students received their two-year degree through the Reverse Transfer System.

<p>Cycle 2 Highlights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">9 Public Four-Year Universities6 Private Four-Year University13 Community Colleges7,500 Eligible Students Identified1,755 Students Consented23% Opt-in Rate460 Degrees Awarded
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University of Tennessee System

- UT Chattanooga (606 potentially eligible students, 149 opted in)
- UT Knoxville (872 potentially eligible students, 228 opted in)
- UT Martin (150 potentially eligible students, 44 opted in)

Tennessee Board of Regents Universities

- Austin Peay State University (283 potentially eligible students, 73 opted in)
- East Tennessee State University (797 potentially eligible students, 190 opted in)
- Middle Tennessee State University (1,617 potentially eligible students, 326 opted in)
- Tennessee State University (439 potentially eligible students, 68 opted in)
- Tennessee Tech University (695 potentially eligible students, 151 opted in)
- University of Memphis (1,490 potentially eligible students, 367 opted in)

Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association

- Carson-Newman University (134 potentially eligible students, 25 opted in)
- Freed-Hardeman University (58 potentially eligible students, 8 opted in)
- Lipscomb University (129 potentially eligible students, 37 opted in)
- Maryville College (25 potentially eligible students, 5 opted in)
- Memphis College of Art (4 potentially eligible students, 2 opted in)
- Tusculum College (214 potentially eligible students, 83 opted in)

Community Colleges

- Chattanooga State Community College
- Cleveland State Community College
- Columbia State Community College
- Dyersburg State Community College
- Jackson State Community College
- Motlow State Community College
- Nashville State Community College
- Northeast State Community College
- Pellissippi State Community College
- Roane State Community College
- Southwest Tennessee Community College
- Vol State Community College
- Walters State Community

Estimated Cost Savings

It is estimated that about 4,057 staff hours were saved during Cycle 1 using the Reverse Transfer System, creating an approximate monetary savings of \$111,495.

It is estimated that about 6,143 staff hours were saved during Cycle 2, creating an approximate monetary savings of \$168,830.

Total savings in the past year (2015): \$280,325.

Savings will continue to accumulate each time a Reverse Transfer cycle is run. Tennessee is now in midst of Cycle 3. The RT process is run twice each academic year.

These estimates are based on a calculation of total hours saved and the estimated hourly salary of Reverse Transfer staff with a benefit load deducted. Salaries were based on the "2014-2015 Professionals in Higher Education Salaries Survey," conducted by The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. Benefit load percentage was based on the "Labor Intensive or Labor Expensive? Changing Staffing and Compensation Patterns in Higher Education," by American Institutes for Research.

Articles

["Lumina Foundation Grant Furthers Tennessee Higher Education Efforts to Boost Degree Completion in Transfer Students,"](#) UT System News, January 2014.

["Tennessee Launches Effort to Aid Transfer Students,"](#) U.S. News University Connections, January 2014.

["Program to Help Tenn. Transfer Students Get Associate Degree,"](#) Inside Higher Ed, January 2014.

["New Program Allows Transfer Students at UT to Receive Associate Degrees,"](#) UT System News, February 2015.

["341 Associate Degrees Awarded Through New Tennessee Reverse Transfer Program,"](#) UT System News, June 2015.

["Reverse Transfer Adds Earned Credentials,"](#) UT System News, September 2015.

Websites/Presentations/Webinars

[Tennessee Transfer Pathway Website](#)

[Governor Haslam on Tennessee Reverse Transfer](#)

[Reverse Transfer Webinar: Tennessee's Experience](#)