Sponsored by:
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SYNOPSIS
Directs Secretary of Higher Education to establish a communication and incentive plan to encourage re-enrollment in college; requires Statewide reverse transfer agreement.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.
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AN ACT concerning higher education and supplementing chapter 3B
and chapter 62 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
of New Jersey:

1. a. Each public institution of higher education, in
consultation with the Secretary of Higher Education and the New
Jersey Presidents’ Council, shall establish and enter into by July 1,
2017 a collective Statewide reverse transfer agreement under which
at least 30 credits that a student earns at a four-year public
institution of higher education in the State toward a baccalaureate
degree are transferrable to any county college for credit toward an
associate degree.

b. An independent institution of higher education in the State
may elect to enter into the agreement.

c. The annual report prepared by the Secretary of Higher
Education pursuant to section 4 of P.L.2007, c.175 (C.18A:62-49)
shall include an analysis of each institution’s compliance with the
provisions of this section.

2. The secretary and each public institution of higher education
shall develop and implement incentives for students to obtain an
associate degree prior to enrolling in a four-year public institution
of higher education.

3. Each four-year public institution of higher education shall
dedicate a portion of its institutional financial aid to provide
financial assistance to resident undergraduate students who transfer
with an associate degree from a county college in the State.

4. a. As used in this section, “near completer” means an
individual who resides in the State and who has completed some
college credits but has not attained a college degree and is no longer
attending an institution of higher education.

b. The Secretary of Higher Education, in consultation with the
public institutions of higher education, shall create a Statewide
communication campaign to identify near completers and to
encourage them to re-enroll in a degree program in an institution of
higher education. The communication campaign shall:

(1) make use of a variety of marketing media including
billboards, brochures, and electronic resources;

(2) provide a centralized contact point for near completers to
obtain information about and assistance with re-enrollment;

(3) make readily available contact information for each public
institution of higher education; and

(4) focus on near completers who,
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(a) earned a minimum grade point average of 2.0 on a scale of
4.0 while enrolled in college; and
(b) earned at least 45 credit hours if enrolled in a county
college, or at least 90 credit hours if enrolled in a four-year
institution of higher education.

c. The secretary shall develop and implement a plan that
provides an incentive to:
(1) a near completer to re-enroll and earn a degree; and
(2) a public institution of higher education to identify and
graduate near completers.

The incentive plan shall use all available resources including
institutional funds, private sector funds, and State funds.

d. The secretary and public institutions of higher education
may implement other near completer initiatives in addition to those
required pursuant to subsections b. and c. of this section.

e. The secretary shall submit a report by July 1, 2017 to the
Governor and to the Senate Higher Education Committee and the
Assembly Higher Education Committee, or their successor
committees, that outlines the details of the Statewide
communication campaign and the incentive plan, including the
timeline for implementation.

5. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill directs each public institution of higher education, in
consultation with the Secretary of Higher Education and the New
Jersey Presidents’ Council, to establish and enter into a Statewide
reverse transfer agreement under which at least 30 credits that a
student earns at a four-year public institution of higher education
toward a baccalaureate degree are transferrable to any county college
for credit toward an associate degree. An independent institution may
elect to enter into the agreement. The State currently has a Statewide
transfer agreement in accordance with legislation adopted in 2007 that
provides for the seamless transfer of academic credits to a
baccalaureate degree program from a completed associate of arts,
associate of science, or associate in technical studies degree program.

The bill provides that the annual report that is currently prepared by
the Secretary of Higher Education on the Statewide transfer agreement
must also include an analysis of each institution’s compliance with the
Statewide reverse transfer agreement.

The bill also: 1) directs each public institution of higher education
to develop and implement incentives for students to obtain an associate
degree prior to enrolling in a four-year public institution; and 2) provides that each four-year public institution dedicate a portion of its
institutional financial aid to provide assistance to resident
undergraduate students who transfer to the four-year institution with
an associate degree from a county college located in the State.

The bill also directs the Secretary of Higher Education, in
consultation with the public institutions of higher education, to create a
Statewide communication campaign to identify individuals who have
“nearly completed” college and to encourage them to re-enroll in an
institution of higher education. The campaign will focus on individuals
who earned a minimum grade point average of 2.0 on a scale of 4.0
while enrolled in college; and earned at least 45 credits if enrolled in a
county college or at least 90 credits if enrolled in a four-year
institution. The secretary is also directed to develop and implement a
plan that provides an incentive for such individuals to re-enroll in
college, and for a public institution to identify and graduate them.

The bill directs the secretary to submit a report by July 1, 2017 to
the Governor and the Senate and Assembly Higher Education
Committees that outlines the details of the Statewide communication
campaign and the incentive plan.