More students in Oregon will have the opportunity to be credited with an associate's degree while earning a bachelor's degree through a new "Reverse Transfer" agreement, signed last week between the Oregon Institute of Technology and Clackamas Community College.

CCC President Joanne Truesdell and Oregon Tech President Chris Maples led the signing ceremony, held at CCC's Oregon City campus. The colleges launched the Reverse Transfer Degree pilot program as a way to increase degree attainment and support graduates' workforce preparation.

"Reverse Transfer" is a relatively new program in Oregon and the U.S., which recognizes students' achievements with an associate's degree after they have transferred to a four-year school. The agreement will provide students who have attended both CCC and Oregon Tech with an associate's degree, awarding them for the work they have already completed while at the community college. There are no additional costs to students to apply for and receive the reverse transfer degree, which will be awarded from CCC once the accumulated credits are reached at Oregon Tech.

"The old pattern of education first and work later no longer holds," said Truesdell. "Most students are also workers. Having an associate's degree while studying for the bachelor's shows employers that students are ready to enter their chosen field, even while they pursue further education."

Early research on outcomes shows that students who are awarded an associate's degree through reverse transfer benefit in a number of ways, including being more likely to stay in school and finish a four-year degree program. Graduates also gain both an associate's and a bachelor's degree on their resume, reflecting a broader, more accurate view of their skills and training received over time. This can add up to higher entry level and higher paying jobs for graduates.

"Today's students move frequently between two- and four-year colleges and universities to earn a degree, so it's important to have options that recognize this reality," said Chris Maples, president of Oregon Tech.

Colleges and universities also benefit from reverse transfer. Community college completion rates will more accurately reflect the investment of time, resources and support that two-year institutions have in the students who transfer prior to degree completion. This reverse transfer agreement, which started spring term, is a pilot exclusively between Oregon Tech and CCC for the 2013-2014 and 2014-15 academic years.

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