

**Belk Center for Community College
Leadership and Research**

Finish First NC Related Policies

Below are the policy areas that FFNC partner college tool users discussed during focus groups that the Belk Center conducted in June of 2020. In many cases, these policy areas were identified when evaluators asked about barriers or challenges to implementation. Additionally, in November 2020, colleges were asked to share information with the FFNC team about policy changes they had made or had planned to make due to implementing FFNC. This feedback is also included.

Admissions/Advising

- FFNC near completer information can facilitate accurate and proactive alerts to students regarding courses remaining to fulfill program requirements and credential opportunities. Colleges must decide if/how advisors are to incorporate information about degree progress for current students, and whether to use such data to assist previously enrolled students who have not completed their credentials.
- FFNC information can be used for both currently enrolled as well as previously enrolled students. Colleges can decide whether to allot admissions staff time to re-engaging previously enrolled students in an effort to re-enroll them so that they can finish their degree.

Credentials/Programs of Study

- Some colleges are examining program design to better facilitate the implementation/inclusion of stackable credentials within the same program of study. For programs of study designed to enable students to earn stackable credentials, colleges must decide if policies would include the front-end enrollment in certificate programs and stackable credentials. That is, upon declaration of a program of study, will a student be enrolled in all related stackable credentials that may exist?
- Some considerations for colleges:
 - Colleges must decide whether or not to award an earned stackable credential in which the student is enrolled. Options include: (1) Automatically awarding the credential; (2) Giving students the option to opt out of an earned stackable credential; (3) Requiring students to opt in when they are notified of the stackable credential.
 - Will a stackable credential be awarded to a student who has already been awarded an associate degree in the program of study?

Graduation

- In light of FFNC, many colleges have re-considered policies which require students to submit a graduation application to initiate the graduation process.
 - Some institutions have eliminated the application and have implemented an “opt-out” policy wherein a student will be automatically graduated unless they contact the college and indicate otherwise.
- Many colleges run the FFNC tool near the end of the semester, which is often close to graduation application deadlines. Colleges implementing FFNC should consider whether the

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graduation process should be amended or extended to include the processing of FFNC identified new completers?

- Several partner colleges are examining/have examined whether a graduation fee is a hindrance to graduation. While some charge a required fee to graduate (charged at time of application to graduate) others implemented or under considering changes which include:
 - Student success fee is charged in smaller increments each semester of attendance rather than at the point of graduation.
 - No fee. The credential is added to the student record and transcript.
- When it is determined that a student has earned a credential for a program in which they are not enrolled, colleges must make decisions about the conditions under which the credential will be awarded. Options include:
 - Automatically awarding the credential
 - Giving students the option to opt out of an earned credential
 - Requiring students to opt in when they are notified of the credential
 - Not awarding the credential.
- FFNC has the unique ability to identify credential(s) earned in the past but were not awarded to students who are no longer enrolled. Colleges should consider whether credentials should be awarded to previously enrolled students.
- Partner colleges have indicated that the program catalog used to run FFNC may differ from the catalog that was in place when the student first enrolled. Colleges should establish a standard practice for when students who entered under a previous program catalog year are eligible to earn a credential under the current catalog year. Specifically, colleges should consider under what conditions may the catalog year be updated.