



2. Students who meet eligibility criteria for *First Degree* will be sent a participation form by the HCC Transfer Affairs Office. Interested students simply sign the form and return it to HCC. Each semester thereafter the HCC Transfer Affairs Office will obtain WSU transcripts for participating *First Degree* students and send HCC degree audits to update them on their associate's degree completion status.
3. *First Degree* students must complete the associate's degree program that was in progress at the time of transfer to WSU. All associate's degree completion requirements are determined exclusively by HCC. When all outstanding associate's degree requirements have been satisfied at WSU, HCC will inform students of their graduation status, issue their diplomas, and invite them to participate in HCC's graduation ceremony.

***For more information, please contact:***

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# 1st° FIRST DEGREE

A Reverse Transfer Partnership

Established by

Holyoke Community College (HCC)

& Westfield State University (WSU)

**Westfield**  
 STATE UNIVERSITY  
 Founded 1838



# Introducing First Degree

[westfield.ma.edu/firstdegree](http://westfield.ma.edu/firstdegree)

Holyoke Community College (HCC) and Westfield State University (WSU) have established a reverse transfer partnership, called *First Degree*, effective fall 2012. Through the *First Degree* program, former HCC students who transferred to WSU before completing the associate's degree may be eligible to complete outstanding associate's degree requirements at WSU while simultaneously working toward completion of the bachelor's degree.

## What are the benefits of earning an associate's degree at HCC after enrolling at WSU?

- ▶ Completion of the HCC associate's degree allows students to add an important credential to their resumes before they earn the bachelor's degree. Prospective employers and current supervisors alike may recognize receipt of the associate's degree as a qualifying criterion for employment and promotion.
- ▶ Students may be more likely to complete the bachelor's degree if they earn the associate's degree first. National statistics support the theory that community college students who purposefully complete the associate's degree are more likely to apply the same sense of purpose toward completion of the bachelor's degree.
- ▶ Earning the associate's degree is more beneficial in the marketplace than not earning a college degree at all. Despite every student's best intentions, life happens. If life interrupts completion of the bachelor's degree in the future, *First Degree* program completers still will be able to list an earned college degree on their resumes.



*“Say something  
about First Degree”*

- ▶ Signing-up is easy to do, and *First Degree* program participation is free of charge. Qualifying students simply sign a participation form, which allows staff at HCC and WSU to share updated associate's degree completion information after each semester at WSU. When all outstanding associate's degree requirements have been completed at WSU, as documented on an official WSU academic transcript, HCC will award the associate's degree. *First Degree* students do not pay a fee to have their WSU transcripts sent to HCC; and HCC does not assess a fee for determining degree completion or conferring the associate's degree.

## What are *First Degree* eligibility criteria and how does the program work?

1. Each semester the WSU Registrar will send the HCC Transfer Affairs Office a list of all new students who transferred in through either the WSU Admission Office or the Division of Graduate & Continuing Education. The HCC Coordinator of Transfer Affairs will determine which students on the list are eligible to participate in *First Degree*. Eligibility criteria include completion of at least 30 credits toward the associate's degree before transferring to WSU. Additionally, eligible students who completed the 34-credit MassTransfer Block at HCC before transferring to WSU are required to complete no more than 6 general education core credits at WSU post-transfer.