

**DOES ILLINOIS RETAIN ITS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
MAJORS UPON BACCALAUREATE COMPLETION?
AN ANALYSIS OF MULTIPLE SURVEY RESULTS**

Submitted for: Information.

Summary: This is the latest in a series of reports prepared for the Illinois Board of Higher Education on the shortfall between information technology jobs and graduates of information technology programs in Illinois. This particular study provides insights into what happens to information technology program graduates after their graduation.

This study accessed data from alumni surveys conducted by public four-year colleges and universities. The study reports that: (1) graduates of information technology programs leave the state at a rate greater than graduates of other disciplines; (2) graduates seeking to maximize their starting salaries generally can find better wages outside Illinois; and (3) Illinois information technology graduates are more interested in jobs not prevalent in Illinois. Additional studies on related topics are being completed at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville and the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Action Requested: None.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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During the latter part of the 1990s, Illinois business and industry were concerned about the shortage of trained workers to fill positions in information technology fields. Representatives from private industry, higher education institutions, and the Board of Higher Education held two public dialogues to address this matter. A number of steps have been taken by the Board and the higher education community to address the shortage of information technology workers. The results of surveys on student migration presented in this agenda item highlight the latest in a series of reports the Board of Higher Education has reviewed on this topic.

In July 1998, the Board of Higher Education reviewed a report entitled, *Workforce Preparation Issues in Information Technology*. This report highlighted the differences between the demand for information technology workers and graduates of information technology programs indicating a shortage of nearly 18,000 information technology workers in Illinois. Among the conclusions of the report was that colleges and universities should reexamine their programs to determine if the number, type, and quality of graduates meet the needs of the information technology industry. The Board adopted the following resolution at that time:

Public universities and community colleges should review curricula and programs and update them to be responsive to changing information technology needs of businesses and society. Public universities and community colleges should also collaborate with industry to match the capacity of programs to current and future demand. Specific proposals for program improvements may be submitted to the Illinois Board of Higher Education in the budget development process. The Board will give priority to expansion of current programs and development of cooperative programs.

In October 2000, the Board reviewed a second report entitled *Status Report on Information Technology Workers: 2000*. The Board of Higher Education and institutions responded quickly to the information technology worker shortage. Between 1996 and 2000, 315 new programs related to information technology were started bringing the total number of programs to 892. Enrollment in these programs between fall 1997 and fall 1999 increased from 39,403 to 48,080, a 22 percent increase. Graduates of information technology programs also increased from 7,595 in 1997 to 8,913 in 1999--a 17 percent increase--and a significant number of new graduates were from minority populations. The Board reaffirmed its 1998 resolution as a result of this report.

In response to the need for new workers, the Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission established a grant program to assist undergraduate students majoring in information technology fields--the Arthur F. Quern Information Technology Grant program. The first of these grants was made available to students enrolling in information

technology programs during the second semester of academic year 2000-2001. Although the grants were only available for the spring semester of 2001, 1,040 grants were made to students from a pool of over 1,900 eligible applicants.

This fiscal year, a number of Higher Education Cooperation Act (HECA) projects were funded by the Board of Higher Education to examine the supply and demand for information technology workers. The report that follows is the product of one such grant made to Northern Illinois University and the College of DuPage to determine where graduates of Illinois information technology programs found work. The study reports that: (1) graduates of information technology programs leave the state at a rate greater than graduates of other disciplines; (2) graduates seeking to maximize their starting salaries generally can find better wages outside Illinois; and (3) Illinois information technology graduates are more interested in jobs not prevalent in Illinois. Additional studies on related topics are being completed at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville and the University of Illinois at Chicago.