

**REPORT ON THE EVALUATION OF
THE ILLINOIS ARTICULATION INITIATIVE**

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: This item is a report on the recently completed evaluation of the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI). This examination included discussions among the General Education Core Curriculum and major panels, the IAI Steering Panel, Illinois Board of Higher Education and Illinois Community College Board staffs, the Technical Taskforce, Illinois transfer coordinators, institutional Chief Academic Officers, the Student Advisory Committee, and others; a report on the major panels commissioned by the IAI Steering Panel; a report commissioned by the Illinois Community College Board and Illinois Board of Higher Education and conducted by Dr. Ivan Lach and Dr. Kathleen Kelly; as well as feedback to these reports. This document presents proposed revisions to the IAI processes and procedures based upon the findings of this comprehensive evaluation.

Action Requested: That the Board accepts and endorses the report, *Evaluation of the Illinois Articulation Initiative*, and directs the Illinois Board of Higher Education staff to collaborate with staff of the Illinois Community College Board to implement the recommendations contained in this report as they deem appropriate.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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THE ILLINOIS ARTICULATION INITIATIVE**

Background

In January 1993, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), and transfer coordinators of Illinois colleges and universities jointly launched the IAI to ease the transfer of students among Illinois public and independent, associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions. The IAI grew out of the IBHE's 1990 undergraduate education policies on transfer and articulation. Three key concepts in these policies provided the underlying foundation for IAI: (1) that "associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions are equal partners" in educating college freshmen and sophomores, (2) that "faculties should take primary responsibility for developing and maintaining program and course articulation," and (3) that "institutions are expected to work together to assure that lower-division baccalaureate programs are comparable in scope, quality, and academic rigor."

The IAI has unfolded in four phases. The first phase developed a General Education Core Curriculum (GECC). The second phase established major panels. The third phase instituted a five-year review process. The fourth phase initiated a comprehensive review of the initiative and its processes.

The first phase developed a general education package, the GECC, that as part of a completed transferable associates degree, "would be acceptable in transfer at all IAI participating institutions in lieu of each college or university's own campus-wide lower division general education curriculum of comparable size." Since the GECC was transferred as a package replacing the general education requirements of the receiving institution, it did not guarantee the articulation of individual courses, credits, or degree, program, or institutional requirements beyond campus-wide lower-division general education requirements from the sending institution to the receiving institution. Such articulation of course, credit, or particular requirement remains at the discretion of the receiving institution. The IAI GECC is not intended to replace a college or university's general education curriculum, but rather to provide transferring students with a guaranteed pathway among institutions. IAI provides such a pathway for a large number of Illinois transfer students, while still protecting the distinctive qualities and missions of Illinois colleges and universities.

The second phase expanded the project to create models for easing transfer into baccalaureate major programs. Major panels were established with the intent of providing general advice to students who had decided upon a field of study but not upon a baccalaureate institution. Panels were to develop recommendations for lower-division coursework that would best prepare the student to transfer into that major in a baccalaureate program. Recommendations were to include courses a transfer student would need in order to be admitted to a receiving institution with "junior" status, courses among the GECC package options that could be used by the student to meet the prerequisite or foundational requirements of the major, major or related

discipline courses that a native student would normally take in the first two years of study, and additional information a student should know in order to prepare for transfer (e.g., grade point average (GPA), entry exam, portfolio or other requirements).

The third phase instituted a process of regular five-year reviews designed to evaluate the efficacy of the panels' recommendations. The five-year review process for all panels is to include a review of the core competencies, standards, and outcomes recommended by the panels. For the GECC panels, the review should also include a review of the objective outcomes by which the panels approve courses for inclusion in the GECC package and a general review of institutional offerings to ensure current course offerings are aligned with the course descriptions provided by the institution when those courses were initially approved.

The fourth and current phase included a comprehensive evaluation of the IAI processes, procedures, and goals and the roles of the individual components, and recommendations for adjustment of these. This evaluation included discussions among the GECC and major panels, the IAI Steering Panel, IBHE and ICCB staffs, the Technical Taskforce, Illinois transfer coordinators, institutional Chief Academic Officers, the Student Advisory Committee, and others; a report on the major panels commissioned by the IAI Steering Panel; a report commissioned by the ICCB and IBHE and conducted by Dr. Ivan Lach and Dr. Kathleen Kelly (attached); as well as feedback to these reports. This document presents revisions to the IAI processes and procedures based upon the findings of this comprehensive evaluation.

Review Findings

The IAI is a significant statewide cooperative effort designed to facilitate student transfer among Illinois institutions. Ease of transfer is a central aspect of increased access, and the maximization of credit in transfer is key to reducing time-to-degree and thereby increasing affordability.

The IAI GECC has provided transferring students with a guarantee for acceptance of lower-division work as meeting general education requirements at IAI participating institutions. Consensus among all stakeholders is that the IAI GECC has benefited thousands of transferring students and has helped facilitate discussions of the nature of general education. However, the processes in place for review of courses and approval for inclusion in an institution's GECC package may take as long as six months to a year, and sometimes even longer. Therefore, the review findings suggest that use of the IAI GECC be continued, but that the process be streamlined.

The review of the major panel processes found that the efforts of the panel members were not justified by the benefits realized by the students. Considerable resources, reflected in the time devoted to syllabi review by panel members and in the institutional processes for submission of syllabi for review, were expended. However, the resulting recommendations were having little or no effect on the actual transfer of students or credits among institutions. Therefore, the review findings suggest a restatement of the charge to the major panels with a focus on recommendations for undecided students.

The review of institutional and staff roles and responsibilities suggested minor changes aimed at streamlining processes and ensuring a fair and equitable review of course submissions by the GECC panels. Additionally, the review suggested a restatement of the roles and responsibilities of all constituent groups, including the Steering Panel, the Technical Taskforce, board staffs, and the institutions.

Recommended Revisions

The proposed revisions to the IAI process are listed below:

1. Draft a statement of general purposes;
2. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the GECC faculty panels;
3. Revise the GECC course review and approval processes;
4. Redefine the roles and responsibilities of the major field panels;
5. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of participating colleges and universities;
6. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the ICCB and IBHE;
7. Recommend that Illinois colleges and universities allow students to complete the GECC package after transfer. For example,
 - When the transfer student has completed a statewide articulated associate degree such as the Associate of Fine Arts (AFA), Associate of Engineering Sciences (AES), or Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT), or;
 - When the transfer student has completed 30 semester hours of transfer credit without having completed the GECC;
8. Revise the iTransfer.org website to serve as a general transfer information site.

After reviewing the attached report and consulting with the various interest groups, the staffs of the IBHE and the ICCB are collaborating to implement the changes they deem appropriate.

Timetable

Spring 2006

- Current course review and approval processes remain in effect.
- GECC panel reviews will migrate to the iTransfer.org course review site.
- IBHE and ICCB staffs will communicate process changes to participating institutions.
- Website staff will begin revision of site.
- Institutions will identify institutional process for course submission.

Fall 2006

- Course review for GECC panels will begin phasing in a rolling schedule.
- IBHE and ICCB staffs will work with GECC panels to identify objective criteria for course review.
- IBHE and ICCB staffs will work with major panels to identify lower-division recommendations for students undecided about baccalaureate institution.
- Website staff will present proposed site revisions to IBHE and ICCB staff.

Spring 2007

- Complete transition to new processes and procedures.

Recommendation

The staff recommends that the Illinois Board of Higher Education adopt the following resolution:

That the Board accepts and endorses the report, Evaluation of the Illinois Articulation Initiative, and directs Illinois Board of Higher Education staff to collaborate with staff of the Illinois Community College Board to implement the recommendations contained in this report as they deem appropriate.