

**ILLINOIS TRANSFER AND ARTICULATION INITIATIVES
ANNUAL REPORT 2005-2006**

Submitted for: Information.

Summary: The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) continues to be the primary statewide vehicle for encouraging transferability among postsecondary institutions in the state of Illinois. A more recent statewide transfer and articulation project, the Course Applicability System (CAS), is in the process of being implemented. CAS complements IAI, and will significantly enhance the availability and accuracy of transfer information to allow even more effective and efficient degree completion. This item reviews the current status of the IAI and CAS projects, highlights the past year's activities, and outlines considerations for the future.

Action Requested: None.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**ILLINOIS TRANSFER AND ARTICULATION INITIATIVES
ANNUAL REPORT 2005-2006**

Executive Summary

The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) continues to be the primary statewide vehicle for encouraging transferability among postsecondary institutions in the state of Illinois. A more recent statewide transfer and articulation project, the Course Applicability System (CAS), is in the process of being implemented. CAS complements IAI and further enhances the availability and accuracy of transfer information to allow even more effective and efficient degree completion. The functions of CAS and IAI are complementary and at times overlap. However, they are not duplicative and neither is designed to supplant or make redundant the other.

Planning for the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) began in January 1993 and the General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) was implemented in the summer of 1998. The IAI was designed to ease transfer for students among Illinois colleges and universities. May 2005 marked the end of the seventh year of implementation. In addition to the adoption of the GECC, 25 baccalaureate major panels have also been convened to recommend preparatory coursework at the lower division level.

Four years ago, the CAS project was initiated to offer Illinois students even more specific and detailed information on how their coursework will transfer among institutions and how it may or may not count towards a baccalaureate degree. This web-based program allows students to enter the courses they have completed and compare them to degree requirements at participating schools. A planning guide, which matches courses to degree requirements, is generated and outlines what additional coursework needs to be undertaken to complete the degree.

This report begins with a brief history of the development and implementation of the IAI. It then turns to discussing the current status of the IAI, CAS, and other transfer projects; observations about the impact and effectiveness of several broad goals and objectives; transfer issues that have been raised in the past year; and other related transfer concerns.

The report concludes with a summary of highlights from this past year's activities and considerations for future study.

Introduction

Recent History of Transfer Initiatives in Illinois

The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI). In January 1993, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), and transfer coordinators from Illinois colleges and universities jointly launched the Illinois Articulation Initiative (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."

Illinois has one of the most comprehensive course approval and quality assurance processes in the nation, assuring that all approved courses are comparable and meet the high standards established by faculty panels. As of June 2005, 21,709 courses had been reviewed and approved for statewide articulation through the combined efforts of over 900 faculty members and transfer coordinators serving on five general education panels and 25 baccalaureate major panels.

The IAI was developed in three phases. Phase I focused on developing a general education package, the General Education Core Curriculum (GECC), that, as part of a completed associate 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." Individual courses may be accepted in transfer at the discretion of the receiving institution.

The IAI GECC does not replace the college or university's own general education curriculum, but rather provides students with a guaranteed pathway among institutions. IAI provides one clear pathway for a large number of Illinois transfer students, while still protecting the distinctive qualities and missions of Illinois colleges and universities.

Phase II expanded the project to create models for easing transfer into baccalaureate major programs. To date, 25 panels have been established to identify lower division coursework that best prepares students for advanced studies in specific baccalaureate majors. These recommendations include specific lower division courses in the major, required prerequisite courses or supporting courses that provide the necessary background for success in the major. This component of IAI is currently undergoing a review, which will be described later in this report.

Phase III instituted the process of regular five-year reviews designed to ensure that the panels' recommendations continue. The IAI processes are currently undergoing a review, which will be described later in this report.

Course Applicability System (CAS). Four years ago, the statewide Course Applicability System (CAS) project was initiated to offer Illinois students even more accurate and detailed information on how their coursework will transfer between institutions. Where IAI concentrates on articulation of general education and foundational coursework at the lower division level, CAS

makes information on all courses as well as other degree completion requirements available to students. Northern Illinois University and the College of DuPage were the first institutions in the state to go online in 2002; the University of Illinois at Chicago and the City Colleges of Chicago followed in 2003; and in 2004, the remaining public universities were licensed and are currently at varying stages of implementation. Extensive statewide planning was undertaken in 2003, resulting in a plan to expand the participation in CAS to all interested institutions in the state on a phased-in timeline. Most recently, six additional institutions have been licensed as receiving institutions (Bradley University, College of DuPage, DePaul University, Loyola University, National-Louis University, and West Suburban College of Nursing). At the same time, concentrated efforts have been made to advance the implementation levels of the previously-licensed twelve public universities.

Other Transfer Pathways. The IAI and CAS initiatives are not the only transfer pathways available to students. Other options include individual agreements between 2- and 4-year institutions, which allow for transfer of completed associate degrees; specially designed and named associates degrees such as the new Associate of Art in Teaching (A.A.T.) degree; 2+2 agreements between specific institutions; course-by-course transfer of credits; and the transfer of credits in completion of the general education requirements of the receiving institution.

Statewide Transfer: Outcomes and Accomplishments

Transferability among institutions continues to be an important focus of state and national policy. States are rightfully concerned about easing transferability to help students save time and money toward baccalaureate degree completion. Most state-level transfer agreements incorporate traditional general education objectives similar to the IAI model, although some states add highly unique objectives such as awareness of environmental issues, knowledge of state history, and development of computer technology skills. However, Illinois' statewide transfer program is unique in its focus on quality assurance, its website design and usefulness, and the voluntary nature of participation.

- At the April 2006 Community College and University English Articulation Conference, transfer issues were discussed. A variety of panels were convened that discuss the issues of dual credit, revisions to the IAI process, the Course Applicability System, and transfer patterns. Panel participants were drawn from a wide range of Illinois institutions represent both the public and independent sectors.
- IBHE and ICCB staff and the IAI website team members have made numerous presentations at state and national meetings on IAI and iTransfer.org website, further raising national awareness about Illinois' program, as well as the design and use of the web in advising. Programs were presented at conferences sponsored by the National Academic Advising Association, the Illinois Academic Advising Association, the Illinois Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, among others.
- IAI continued to coordinate transfer activities across the state. Participation in IAI is entirely voluntary and currently there are 113 participating institutions from all sectors. In addition, over 700 faculty members, transfer coordinators, and institutional administrators have actively participated in IAI. Through their activities on the various panels, faculty members have undertaken meaningful communication about curriculum with their colleagues statewide.

- The iTransfer.org website continues to be an essential tool for current and potential students. In addition to students, this site serves parents, faculty and advisors, administrators, planners, registrars, admissions staff, and the public at large. Per the directives from IBHE in April and ICCB in May of this year, the iTransfer.org staff has begun a revision of the site to facilitate its use as a transfer information portal. Full implementation of the revisions is expected early in 2007.

Evaluating Student Transfer in Illinois: Multiple Measures

Student transfers within Illinois totaled 50,449 for the fall semester of 2005. Of these, 20,893 transferred from a community college, 5,340 transferred from a public university, 4,001 from an independent not-for-profit institution, 600 from an independent for-profit, and 19,615 from other institutions.¹

Sector Students Transferred From	Number of Students	Percent of Total Transfer Students
Community Colleges	20,893	41.4%
Public Universities	5,340	10.5%
Independent NFP Institutions	4,001	7.9%
Independent FP Institutions	600	1.1%
Other Institutions	19,615	38.8%
Total All Sectors	50,449	100%

Approximately the same numbers of students transferred to a public university (16,459) or to a community college (15,845). Additionally, 12,725 students transferred to independent not-for-profit institutions and 2,025 transferred to independent for-profit institutions. Some 3,395 Illinois students transferred to out-of-state institutions.

Review of Transfer Initiatives. In a program that seeks balance among three key principles — respect for curriculum richness and diversity in 113 separate institutions, the vagaries of individual student course-taking patterns, and an effort to meet transfer expectations for multiple majors — the alignment of goals and outcomes requires much coordination. There is a commitment on the part of participating institutions to find the best way to resolve concerns and align transfer efforts whenever feasible. Most of the remaining concerns are not necessarily related to IAI. Many issues are specific to baccalaureate major programs. The process of dialog and discussion among the participating institutions in the state has generally resulted in consensus, though not always unanimity.

Ongoing review of transfer initiatives in the state continued this past year, focusing in particular on Phase II of the IAI—the baccalaureate major panel recommendations. The effectiveness of the baccalaureate major panel recommendations has become a concern and a discussion of their status was initiated during the 2003-2004 year at the request of the Technical Task Force (TTF) and continued through 2004-2005 and into 2006. During the April IBHE meeting, the board endorsed the “Evaluation of the Illinois Articulation Initiative: Report and Recommendations

¹ Illinois Board of Higher Education annual Fall Enrollment Survey. The overall transfer figures include transfers to and from out-of-state, foreign, and unknown institutions and represent the full extent of student transfer to Illinois Colleges and Universities.

January 2006” and charged the board staff with implementing the report’s recommendations as they saw fit. Additionally, at the May ICCB meeting, that board also endorsed the report and provided their staff with a similar charge. The two staffs have cooperated to formulate a series of revisions and are currently in the process of cooperating with the participating institutions to implement these.

Institutional Transfer Studies. At some four-year institutions, transfer students are over 50 percent of all new admissions and students with associate degrees are in high demand. These students who have completed associate degrees are a “proven” success and are, therefore, likely to succeed at the four-year institution as well. Institutions regularly undertake studies of transferability. The results of some studies are summarized below. Since most of these studies involved only one institution or very small numbers of students, these findings should not be generalized and interpreted as being representative of all institutions.

Increasing Student Transfer Options —Implementation of CAS

Making transferability an important part of student information and decision-making has always been a primary goal of the transfer initiatives in Illinois. Activities this past year in continuing the implementation of the Illinois Course Applicability System (CAS) have focused on better serving student needs for current and accurate information about transfer issues.

Planning for the CAS project was initiated in 2001. In 2002, Northern Illinois University and the College of DuPage were the first institutions in the state to go online; the University of Illinois at Chicago and the City Colleges of Chicago followed in 2003; in 2004, the remaining public universities were licensed and are currently at varying stages of implementation; and in FY 2005, state funds were used to license six additional institutions: Bradley University, College of DuPage, DePaul University, Loyola University, National-Louis University, and West Suburban College of Nursing. Extensive statewide planning was undertaken in 2003, resulting in a plan to expand the participation in CAS to all interested institutions in the state on a phased-in timeline. All public universities were identified as a priority in the first round because they are the destination of the majority of transfer students in the state. Because of a variety of factors including the current status of the institutions’ student information systems, rates of CAS implementation vary across the public universities. While this process continues, the system has been expanded to include other institutions that serve large numbers of transfer students and that are willing to make the necessary investments to bring up CAS.

Once CAS-licensed institutions have uploaded their baccalaureate degree requirements and course articulation guides, any student in the state transferring to these institutions will be able to compare courses they have taken at any college or university in Illinois with degree and graduation requirements at the target institution.

A brief description of CAS implementation activities is included in the chart below.

Fully Implemented	Northern Illinois University University of Illinois at Chicago University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Implementation coming soon	Bradley University Chicago State University College of DuPage DePaul University University of Illinois at Springfield West Suburban College of Nursing
Course Equivalency Guides and other information	Eastern Illinois University Illinois State University Northeastern Illinois University Southern Illinois University at Carbondale Western Illinois University
Planning underway	Governors State University Loyola University Chicago National-Louis University Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville

The best measure of CAS usage is the number of accounts that have been created. There are currently just over 25,000 accounts in Illinois. Of these, 15,528 were created during the past 12 months. Students are quick to recognize the benefit of CAS and the figures illustrate their readiness to use the system.

In summary, CAS will promote greater inter-institutional cooperation and information-sharing among Illinois institutions. This, in turn, will increase the likelihood that transfer students will select the most appropriate courses for transfer and degree completion. Several outcomes could result: an increase in the number of students who transfer; efficient use of the resources of Illinois higher education; and a decrease in the amount of time it takes transfer students to complete their baccalaureate degrees. Strengthened by the use of technology, opportunities for success will extend to all transfer students in Illinois, but particularly to students from underrepresented groups who are more likely to begin their postsecondary education at a community college.

2005-2006 Summary of Transfer Initiatives

In general, the year 2005-2006 can be characterized as a year during which issues related to transferability were addressed, new statewide initiatives were undertaken, and recommendations were brought forward.

- A study by external consultants of IAI processes and procedures was completed and endorsed by the board.
- Revisions to the iTransfer.org website to create a general transfer information portal are underway and are expected to be completed in early 2007.

- The board staff is continuing discussions with institutional representatives to formulate revisions to the IAI process that take into account the recommendations endorsed by the IBHE and ICCB in early 2006 and the needs of the institutions and their students.
- The implementation of CAS by public universities was well underway and a request for additional funding was submitted.

Considerations for the Future

As part of the Board's ongoing commitment to enhancing transferability in the state, a variety of activities will continue into the near future.

Staff will continue to monitor the findings of independent studies undertaken by institutions of their own transfer students or on small, statewide studies. In addition, as more institutions are available to students on CAS, a variety of user survey data will provide a picture of student use and satisfaction with CAS.

Illinois students are benefiting from an array of transfer options and services designed to assist them in their degree planning. The IAI has achieved an important level of stability and is respected across the state and the nation. When compared to similar statewide transfer projects in other states, the Illinois transfer network is one of the strongest, most inclusive, and the most focused on quality assurance. The active and voluntary involvement of 110 institutions in the Illinois Articulation Initiative reflects a shared commitment to helping students prepare at the lower division to transfer easily and smoothly into baccalaureate degree programs. CAS will build upon these strengths and provides students with even more accurate and timely information about how completed courses transfer to specific institutions and fulfill specific degree requirements. As the awareness of the IAI and CAS grow, students will come to depend upon having access to even more information to assist them in making decisions about academic programs and institutions.