HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION ACT
INNOVATION GRANTS
FISCAL YEAR 2008 GRANT ALLOCATIONS

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: This item presents grant recommendations for fiscal year 2008 Innovation Grant projects under the Higher Education Cooperation Act Program (HECA). This program supports innovative cooperative projects that address higher education goals and priorities throughout Illinois.

In September 2005, a Board committee was convened to review the HECA Grant program and develop strategies for improving its effectiveness. The implementation of the strategies recommended by the Board committee has resulted in: (1) greater emphasis on innovative projects, (2) highly focused statewide priorities, (3) increased transparency, (4) increased accountability for project results (external project evaluation), and (5) greater sharing of project results (dissemination of effective practices).

For fiscal year 2008, $x.x million has been appropriated for the HECA grant program. xx percent, or $x.x million, is recommended to support continuation of xx projects that were initially approved in fiscal year 2007. The remaining xx percent, or $x.x million, is recommended to support xx new Innovation projects.

Action Requested: That the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) approve the fiscal year 2008 allocation of $x.x million in Higher Education Cooperation Act grant funds in support of xx renewal and xx new Innovation Grant projects.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Transition to Innovation Grants

In September 2005, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) appointed a committee to review various aspects of the Higher Education Cooperation Act grant program. The improvements recommended by the Board committee have resulted in: (1) greater emphasis on innovative projects, (2) highly focused statewide priorities, (3) increased transparency, (4) increased accountability for project results (external project evaluation), and (5) greater sharing of project results (dissemination of effective practices).

Focus on Baccalaureate Completion

In April 2007, Board staff released the FY2008 HECA Innovation Grant Request for Proposals (RFP) and the FY2008 Renewal Application for Innovation Grants that were originally approved in fiscal year 2007. The focus of the RFP for new projects was increasing baccalaureate completion for all Illinois residents. Grantees were permitted to submit grant proposals for one or more of the funding categories stated in the RFP. Listed below are the fiscal year 2008 funding categories that fall within the baccalaureate completion theme:

Increasing Baccalaureate Completion		
Funding Categories	**Definition**	**Suggested Topics**
Access & Affordability	Promoting increased student access to an affordable education throughout Illinois' higher education system	▪ Promoting outreach strategies for adult learners ▪ Developing initiatives to reduce costs associated with college ▪ Developing baccalaureate completion programs offered by senior institutions on community college campuses ▪ Developing programs to increase college-going rates of at-risk students
Research & Evaluation	Program evaluation of statewide initiatives to enhance opportunities for increasing baccalaureate completion	▪ Evaluation of HECA Program ▪ Evaluation of statewide transfer issues, such as the Illinois Articulation Initiative

P-20	Promoting high quality teaching and learning throughout Illinois' higher education system to ensure a successful and smooth transition of students from elementary to postsecondary degree completion.	▪ Increasing college readiness among elementary and secondary students ▪ Developing pipeline programs to increase student interest and enrollment in STEM fields ▪ Identifying and fostering curricular alignment between secondary and postsecondary institutions
Persistence	Promoting degree completion and increased graduation rates at community colleges and four-year institutions.	▪ Increasing retention/graduation rates of underrepresented students ▪ Improving campus climate to foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students ▪ Improving campus climate to foster an inclusive and supportive working environment for all faculty

Summary of Applications

Table 1 shows that 61 Innovation Grant proposals totaling $9.5 million were received in response to the fiscal year 2008 RFPs. Because of the limited funds available, the BHE staff is unable to recommend all the high-quality projects that were submitted.

Table 1

Application Type	# Projects Received	Amount Requested	# Projects Funded	Amount Funded
New	47	$5.9		
Renewal	14	$3.6		
Total	61	$9.5		

Review Process

Proposals were classified by funding category and assigned to three-person teams for review. Each of the four review teams consisted of one out-of-state content (funding area) expert, one Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) staff member, and one IBHE staff member. ICCB and IBHE staff members were also assigned by content area expertise. The following criteria were used to rate the proposals:

▪ **Eligible Project Activities:** The proposal addresses one of the eligible funding categories to increase baccalaureate completion and clearly defines the need for the project as supported by current research and best practices, target population to be served, key project personnel, project goals and objectives stated in measurable terms, and timeline and implementation strategies.

- **Evaluation and Dissemination Plan:** The proposal provides a comprehensive evaluation plan that clearly identifies the expected outcomes of the project, including a description of benchmarks that will be used to determine project effectiveness throughout the life of the grant. The proposal provides clear rationale for selection of an external evaluator(s) recommended for the project. The proposal outlines a plan to disseminate project results.

- **Sustainability and Budget:** The proposal provides convincing evidence of institutional support (monetary and non-monetary) and the ability to sustain efforts of the project after the life of the grant. Sustainable systemic improvements are those integrated into the policies and practices of the institutions and for which ongoing support is allocated from available resources. The proposal clearly presents a cost-effective budget and narrative justification that is consistent with the scope of the proposed objectives and activities.

- **Interinstitutional Cooperation:** The proposal provides clear evidence of genuine interinstitutional cooperation through partnerships, including the roles and responsibilities of each participating institution.

After initial scoring, each review team participated in a consensus meeting during which the three team members discussed their scoring rationales and came to an agreement on funding priorities within their funding category. IBHE staff then selected the top-ranked projects based on available funding and contribution toward the Board goals listed in the RFP.

Innovation Grant Recommendations

The Governor and General Assembly approved $x.x million for the fiscal year 2008 HECA Grant Program. Table 2 presents fiscal year 2008 funding recommendations totaling approximately $x.x million for xx renewal grants and xx new grants. Appendix A presents a project synopsis for each of the grant projects recommended for funding in this item.

The staff recommends adoption of the following resolution:

The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the fiscal year 2008 allocation totaling $x.x million in Higher Education Cooperation Act grants as shown in Table 2. Payment of grants is subject to the receipt of all required documentation. The Board authorizes the Executive Director to withhold payment or adjust a grant allocation, if necessary, to conform to existing statute, rule, or available funding or to assure compliance with any previous grant agreements.