

**ILLINOIS TRANSFER AND ARTICULATION INITIATIVES
ANNUAL REPORT 2009-2010**

Submitted for: Information.

Summary: A primary goal of the *Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success* is to “Increase the number of high-quality postsecondary credentials to meet the demands of the economy and an increasingly global society.” One of the recommendations identified under Goal 3 is to “Strengthen articulation through stable funding and expansion of transfer tools such as u.select and the Illinois Articulation Initiative and through development of an objective measure of transfer and acceptance of credits.” The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) continues to be the primary statewide vehicle for encouraging transferability among postsecondary institutions in the state of Illinois. The u.select project (formerly the Illinois Course Applicability System), is in the process of being implemented. The u.select project complements the IAI and significantly enhances the availability and accuracy of transfer information to allow even more effective and efficient degree completion. Due to cuts in the state’s budget, both projects are under serious threat. This item reviews the current status of the IAI and u.select projects, highlights the past year’s activities, and outlines the challenges facing the projects in the near future.

Action Requested: None.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Executive Summary

A primary goal of the *Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success* is to “Increase the number of high-quality postsecondary credentials to meet the demands of the economy and an increasingly global society.” One of the recommendations identified under Goal 3 is to “Strengthen articulation through stable funding and expansion of transfer tools such as u.select and the Illinois Articulation Initiative and through development of an objective measure of transfer and acceptance of credits.” The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) continues to be an important statewide vehicle for encouraging transferability among postsecondary institutions in the state of Illinois. A more recent statewide transfer and articulation project, u.select (formerly the Illinois Course Applicability System or CAS) continues its expansion. IAI and u.select are complementary, with both enhancing the availability and accuracy of transfer information and fostering more effective and efficient degree completion.

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 GECC was designed to ease transfer for students among Illinois colleges and universities. May 2010 marked the end of the twelfth year of implementation. In addition to the adoption of the GECC, several major/discipline advisory committees have been convened to recommend preparatory coursework at the lower division level.

Nine years ago, the u.select project was initiated to offer Illinois students 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 compare the courses they have completed to degree requirements at participating schools. A planning guide, which matches courses to degree requirements, outlines what additional coursework is needed to complete the degree. The u.select initiative had been funded through a series of Higher Education Cooperation Act (HECA) Grant appropriations. Funding for the program has been limited due to state budget constraints.

This report begins with a brief history of the development and implementation of the IAI. It then discusses the current status of statewide transfer policy including the IAI, u.select, and other transfer projects; transfer issues that have been raised and attempts to address these issues; and other related transfer concerns.

The report concludes with a summary of highlights from this past year’s activities, concerns relative to funding, and considerations for the future.

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Brief History

The Illinois Articulation Initiative. 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. The IAI was developed in three phases. Phase I focused on developing a general education package, the General Education Core Curriculum (GECC). Phase II expanded the project to create models for easing transfer into baccalaureate major programs. Twenty-five Major/Discipline Advisory Panels have participated in identifying lower division coursework that prepares students for studies in baccalaureate majors. Phase III instituted the process of regular five-year reviews designed to ensure that the panels' recommendations continue to be relevant and accurate.

Through the IAI, Illinois has developed 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 September 2010, the IAI database tracked over 9,742 courses in the GECC with 6,770 currently remaining active. The IAI website, iTransfer.org, receives over 2,000,000 hits per academic year.

u.select. Nine years ago, the u.select project was initiated to offer Illinois students specific and detailed information on how their coursework will transfer among institutions and how it may or may not count toward a baccalaureate degree. This web-based program allows students to compare the courses they have completed to degree requirements at participating schools. A planning guide, which matches courses to degree requirements, outlines what additional coursework is needed to complete the degree. The u.select initiative had been funded through a series of Higher Education Cooperation Act (HECA) Grant appropriations. Recently, funding for the program has been limited due to state budget constraints.

Statewide Transfer Policy

Goal 3 of the *Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success* is to "Increase the number of high-quality postsecondary credentials to meet the demands of the economy and an increasingly global society." One recommendation of Goal 3 is to "Strengthen articulation through stable funding and expansion of transfer tools such as u.select and the Illinois Articulation Initiative and through development of an objective measure of transfer and acceptance of credits." The progressively more diverse population of students has increased the need to facilitate transfer on behalf of Illinois students and institutions of higher education.

According to data from the Fall Enrollment Survey, student transfers within Illinois totaled 66,291 for the fall semester of 2009, some 10.4 percent of the total undergraduate enrollment of 637,624 in the state. Of these, 24,717 transferred from a community college, 5,504 transferred from a public university, 4,215 from an independent not-for-profit institution, 738 from an independent for-profit institution, and 31,117 from other institutions, including out-of-state, foreign and unreported/unknown institutions.

Sector Students Transferred From	Number of Students	Percent of Total Transfer Students	Percent of Total Undergraduate Students
Community Colleges	24,717	37.3%	3.9%
Public Universities	5,504	8.3%	0.9%
Independent Not-for-Profit	4,215	6.4%	0.7%
Independent For-Profit	738	1.1%	0.1%
Other Institutions	31,117	46.9%	4.8%
Total All Sectors	66,291	100%	10.4%

The sector to which the largest number of students transferred was the independent for-profit institutions (17,825) while approximately the same number of students transferred to community colleges (17,755). This marks the first time that for-profit institutions have occupied this position. Significant numbers of students transferred to a public university (15,961) and to independent not-for-profit institutions (13,211). Some 1,539 Illinois students transferred to out-of-state institutions operating in Illinois.

There are four broad categories of students for whom transfer policies are designed: students who know the institution to which they intend to transfer and know the major they wish to pursue; students who have a preferred transfer institution but are undecided about a major; students who know their major, but not their preferred transfer institution; and students who know neither their intended transfer institution nor their major. For students who begin their higher education experience without knowing their major or the institution to which they wish to transfer, the IAI provides an invaluable tool. The student can complete the IAI General Education Core Curriculum to satisfy general education requirements at any of the 113 participating Illinois institutions regardless of the program or institution later decided upon by the student.

For those who do not know their transfer institution but know the intended major, the baccalaureate major panel recommendations can serve as a guide to help students until they decide on a transfer institution. The current IAI and institutional transfer and articulation agreements work well for most students, particularly for program to program articulation agreements. However, the system could do more, especially for those students who enter community colleges with an intended major, but without an intended transfer destination. There have been several abortive attempts over the years to gain full acceptance of the Major Panel recommendations by receiving institutions but these attempts have not borne fruit. Increasing scrutiny of this issue over the last few years has led to renewed efforts. Over the past year, ICCB and IBHE staffs have been working intensively to formalize the acceptance of the course recommendations of the IAI Major Panels.

Past attempts at gaining acceptance of the recommendations have failed to produce agreement due to many curricular concerns. The chief problems stem from the differences

between institutions about what constitutes the appropriate courses to be offered at the freshman/sophomore level for many majors. There have been concerns that variation in mission across four-year institutions, heavy course requirements in many majors, and the requirements of specialized accreditation in some fields will be compromised as a result of the acceptance of these course recommendations. However, working through the IAI panel structure and with a group of public institution academic officers, a plan has been developed to implement acceptance of the Major Panel recommendations. The process will begin with six majors and then add new ones each year as the process unfolds. The initial majors include; Business, Chemistry, English, History, Political Science, and Sociology.

Under the plan which is being submitted to institutions this fall, the public universities are being asked to accept the Major Panel course recommendations and be added to the list of receiving institutions that have agreed to the recommendations. If there is a curricular issue that does not allow them to do so, they are to provide feedback to IBHE or ICCB IAI staff to suggest revisions of the courses or their approval criteria that will allow the institution to accept the major recommendations. Staffs will then combine feedback received and provide the information to the panels to facilitate modifications. After this is submitted to the public institutions, it will then be presented to independent institutions offering them the opportunity to accept the recommendations under the same terms and be added to the web page lists. Each Major Panel iTransfer webpage will indicate the current major course recommendations and a list of all institutions that agree to those recommendations.

Both IAI and u.select have continued as vehicles for advancing transfer and articulation across the state. In addition to regular meetings of panels and committees dealing with IAI and u.select, these initiatives have continued their ongoing activities. There are 113 participating institutions from all sectors, 95 as full participants and 18 as receiving only institutions. Over 700 faculty members, transfer coordinators, and institutional administrators have actively participated in IAI. One of the valuable by-products of the IAI panel structure is that it provides faculty members from different sectors a conduit to have meaningful communication about curriculum. This helps to overcome misperceptions that sometimes develop between faculties in different sectors.

This year, IBHE and ICCB staff and the [iTransfer.org](http://www.itransfer.org) website team members have made a number of presentations at state and national meetings on IAI and the [iTransfer.org](http://www.itransfer.org) website, further raising awareness about Illinois' program, as well as the design and use of the web in advising. Programs have been presented at conferences sponsored by the National Academic Advising Association, the Illinois Academic Advising Association, the Illinois Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, and the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, among others. Numerous additional training and informational presentations were provided by u.select and iTransfer staff at schools and conferences and other IAI and u.select related activities during the year.

The [iTransfer.org](http://www.itransfer.org) website continues to be an essential tool for current and potential students. In addition to students, this site serves parents, faculty, advisors, administrators, planners, registrars, admissions staff, and the public at large. Over the past year, the update of the [iTransfer.org](http://www.itransfer.org) site to serve as a portal for transfer information has continued to move forward. As part of the update, an online version of the IAI bulletin was developed and implemented. It is available at <http://www.itransfer.org/iai/bulletin.aspx>.

Improving successful transfer in Illinois involves a comprehensive approach, not just reliance on IAI and u.select. Different tools need to be employed in a coordinated fashion to

improve transfer. Other state level policies are advancing that will help to smooth the transfer process. For example, the Common Core Standards, which were adopted in June 2010, and the American Diploma Project efforts are intended to help to eliminate remediation through the coordination of high school graduation standards and college readiness as well as increase communication of expectations by higher education institutions. The Dual Credit Quality Act aims to standardize and facilitate the expansion of dual credit opportunities in Illinois. This will enable the accumulation of transferable credit more easily, but relies on the well developed Illinois Articulation Initiative structure to help to increase course transfer legitimacy. Not every student transfer problem can be solved through state policy, but these policies should be implemented in a coordinated fashion to open the widest pathways possible to help students achieve successful transfer.

Many other tools are available to facilitate student transfer in Illinois. Students who already know their transfer institution destination are advised to make use of existing individual articulation agreements between institutions. Such articulation agreements between the sending and receiving institutions are the primary conduit for transfer and are able to provide specific detail to students about courses to take at partner institutions for successful transfer. For those who know their major as well, specially designed and named associates degrees have been developed in conjunction with the Community College Board such as the Associate of Arts in Teaching (A.A.T.) degree. The Community College Compact Agreement is still used by many Illinois institutions. The Compact originated December 1, 1970, with the Illinois Board of Higher Education adoption of "A Resolution on Transfer Equivalency of the Junior-Community College Associate Degree in Baccalaureate Sequences." The Board directed public senior institutions to declare that a transfer student in good standing, who has completed an associate degree based on baccalaureate-oriented sequences, be transferred from an Illinois Community College to an Illinois Public University at junior status having met lower division general education requirements of the senior institution. And of course, all transfer students benefit from effective advising. Effective advisors provide the information to students about all of these pathways for navigating through the transfer system.

Expansion of u.select

Making transferability an important part of student information and decision-making has always been a primary goal of transfer initiatives in Illinois. Activities this past year in continuing the implementation of u.select have focused on better serving student needs for current users and supplying accurate information to support transfer.

Planning for the u.select 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 FY 2004, the remaining public universities were licensed and are currently at varying stages of implementation; and in FY2005, 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 u.select 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 u.select 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 are willing to make the necessary investments to implement

u.select. Currently, all 12 public universities, the 48 community colleges, and seven independent institutions participate in u.select at some level.

A table of u.select implementation activities is included below.

Receiving Institutions:		
Planning Guide, Course Equivalency Guide and Course Listing Implemented		
DePaul University	University of Illinois at Springfield	
Eastern Illinois University	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	
Illinois State University	West Suburban College of Nursing	
University of Illinois at Chicago	Western Illinois University	
Course Equivalency Guide and Course Listing Implemented		
Bradley University	Northern Illinois University	
College of DuPage	Southern Illinois University, Carbondale	
National-Louis University		
Course Equivalency Guide or Course Listing Implemented		
Chicago State University	Northeastern Illinois University	
Governors State University	Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville	
Loyola University Chicago		
Sending Institutions:		
Course Listing Implemented		
Black Hawk College	IECC-Olney Central College	Parkland College
Bradley University	IECC-Wabash Valley College	Prairie State College
Carl Sandburg College	Illinois Central College	Rend Lake College
CCC-Harold Washington	Illinois State University	Richland CC
CCC-Harry S. Truman	Illinois Valley CC	Rock Valley College
CCC-Kennedy-King	John A. Logan CC	Sauk Valley CC
CCC-Malcolm X	John Wood CC	Shawnee CC
CCC-Olive Harvey	Joliet Junior College	South Suburban College
CCC-Richard J. Daley	Kankakee CC	Southeastern Illinois College
CCC-Wilbur Wright	Kaskaskia College	Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
Chicago State University	Kishwaukee College	Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville
College of DuPage	Lake Land College	Southwestern Illinois College
College of Lake County	Lewis & Clark CC	Spoon River College
Danville Area CC	Lincoln Land CC	St. Augustine College
DePaul University	MacCormac College	Triton College
Eastern Illinois University	McHenry County College	University of Illinois at Chicago
Elgin CC	Moraine Valley CC	University of Illinois at Springfield
Heartland CC	Morton College	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Highland CC	National-Louis University	Waubonsee CC
IECC-Frontier CC	Northern Illinois University	West Suburban College of Nursing
IECC-Lincoln Trail College	Oakton CC	Western Illinois University
		William Rainey Harper College

One measure of u.select usage is the accounts that have been created. It is likely that student and advisors log in as guests without creating an account, although exact numbers of these occurrences cannot be measured accurately at present as guest usage currently cannot be tracked. Illinois u.select continues to receive approximately 10,000-13,000 web visitors per month.

Collaboration with other states that use u.select began a little over two years ago. Discussions with representatives of the Indiana Commission for Higher Education have been

particularly beneficial and have even led to joint presentations. Collaborative discussions have expanded to include several other states using u.select. Among other benefits, there are hopes that such collaboration will result in better ways to develop the interfaces necessary to bridge u.select with the different student data systems, degree audit systems, and course articulation systems of the primary vendors. The efficiency of grouping schools with like needs can be realized if state boundaries are put aside in favor of functional groupings such as the schools using SCT/Banner, PeopleSoft, or Datatel, for example. Initial discussions are promising in these early stages.

Use of u.select by the community colleges is an area of potential growth that is as yet underdeveloped. Community colleges are at present sending only, but as indicated from the data above, transfer patterns have evolved such that community colleges receive nearly as many students in transfer as they send. Students could benefit greatly from community colleges being able to expand to full participation as both sending and receiving institutions. The state could also benefit as there is potential to use such technology to facilitate reverse transfer allowing students who transfer before finishing their associate degrees to reverse transfer credits earned at the receiving institution and be awarded associate degrees by the community college after transfer. This would be a great tool for facilitating degree attainment since many of these students who do not complete the baccalaureate degree could be granted the associate credential which they might not otherwise receive. Unfortunately, moving the community colleges to full participation incurs a much greater expense both in licensing and technologic support.

The greatest challenge to the continued expansion and success of u.select in Illinois is the concern over funding. The budget shortfall of the past few years has aggravated an already problematic situation with delayed payments. The minimum budget for effective continuation of the program was not able to be met and the shortfalls have had to be absorbed by relying on the University of Illinois and the Illinois Articulation Initiatives for cooperative ventures and making timely payments which are not being made by the state. There exists great potential for expansion but it depends not only on restoration of full funding, but on growth in funding for the program. This problem must be addressed for the continued viability of u.select.

Considerations for the Future

Smooth transfer pathways play an important part in achieving the goals of the *Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success*. Improving degree attainment, enhancing affordability, and increasing the number of credential holders in Illinois are all facilitated through an effective transfer system. As part of the Board's ongoing commitment to enhancing transferability in the state, IAI and u.select continue to be vital tools. Plans for the near future for IAI and u.select reflect this commitment.

The process of formalizing the acceptance of the course recommendations of the IAI Major Panels will be an essential part in the continued success of IAI. This plan needs to show success this year to address the concerns that have been ongoing with the Major Panel recommendations. IBHE and ICCB staffs who work with IAI are dedicated to making sure that there is progress on this issue and as with last year, this will be the central focus for this year's IAI plans.

Staff will continue to monitor the findings of independent studies undertaken by institutions of their own transfer students as well as national trends in transfer initiatives. Additionally, as more institutions are available to students on u.select, a variety of user survey data will provide a picture of student use and satisfaction with u.select. As recognized in the *Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success*, the establishment of a P-20 longitudinal

data system to improve accountability is an essential step in researching such education issues. An important tool for measuring of transfer success requires the implementation of a standard student identifying number (student unit record) that will allow comprehensive tracking of students across sectors and levels from preschool through post-graduate education. The establishment of such a system is underway with the passage of Public Act 096-0107, the P-20 Longitudinal Education Data System Act. This system should open the door to a wide variety of research projects that could shed light on the transfer and articulation process, including reaching a clearer understanding of the impact of Illinois initiatives.

Growing interest is being shown in baccalaureate completion agreements across the state. An annual survey of community colleges is conducted by ICCB regarding the availability of baccalaureate completion programs in Illinois with results to be used to identify unmet needs that could be addressed through the addition of more agreements. A process is being considered to formalize the communication of these community college baccalaureate completion needs to the universities. Although currently unfunded, Public Act 96-0535, which was passed last year, amends the Board of Higher Education Act to provide that the Board implement and administer a grant program to be referred to as the Collaborative Baccalaureate Degree Development Grant Program. The provision of funding for this grant program could greatly enhance the availability of such baccalaureate completion programs and help to address the disparities in baccalaureate degree completion options in many regions of the state.

The course descriptors for General Education courses in the Illinois Articulation Initiative were developed by faculty panels and identify an agreed-upon content and level of rigor for lower-division courses. These descriptors are being used as a part of the foundation upon which college-readiness standards are being created and to inform high school curricula as part of Illinois' participation in the Common Core Standards project and the American Diploma Project. In addition to other content experts, faculty on the IAI panels will be asked to continue to participate in the implementation of the Common Core Standards and help to build the bridge between high school graduation standards and college readiness expectations.

