

**ILLINOIS TRANSFER AND ARTICULATION INITIATIVES  
ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017**

**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 MyCreditsTransfer 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. In an effort to improve the pathways for students entering community colleges undecided about their intended transfer destination, significant changes have been made over the years to expand the scope of IAI to include acceptance of the major recommendations by public universities. The MyCreditsTransfer project (formerly named u.select Illinois and the Illinois Course Applicability System), has been implemented and continues to complement the IAI while significantly enhancing the availability and accuracy of transfer information to allow even more effective and efficient degree completion. Due to budgetary cuts combined with the former budget crisis, both the IAI and MyCreditsTransfer projects are under serious threat; discontinuing either of these projects would negatively impact over 55,000 students who transfer to and from Illinois institutions each fall. This item reviews the current status of the IAI and MyCreditsTransfer projects particularly as it relates to the impact of recent budget cuts, 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 MyCreditsTransfer and the Illinois Articulation Initiative and through development of an objective measure of transfer and acceptance of credits.” The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI), which was formalized by the passage of the IAI Act in January 2017 (PA 099-0636), continues to be an important statewide system for encouraging transferability among postsecondary institutions in the State of Illinois. Another statewide transfer and articulation project known as MyCreditsTransfer (formerly named u.select Illinois and the Illinois Course Applicability System or CAS) has been unable to continue its expansion efforts due to inconsistent and reduced funding. IAI and MyCreditsTransfer are complementary, both enhancing the availability and accuracy of transfer information and fostering more effective and efficient degree completion. Providing both of these successful transfer tools likely contributed to Illinois ranking third in the nation for full-time community college students completing bachelor’s degrees at four-year universities, as reported by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

Planning for the 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 2016 marked the end of the eighteenth year of implementation. In addition to the adoption of the GECC, several major panels have been convened to recommend preparatory coursework at the lower division level. Over the last several years, concerns have arisen that as increasing numbers of students have begun their postsecondary careers starting at community colleges, there is a growing need to provide assistance in successfully transferring major coursework. Although substantial effort has gone into creating specific transfer agreements between community colleges and their partner four-year transfer institutions, there are many students who enter community colleges undecided about their intended transfer destinations. For these students, significant changes have been made over the years to expand the scope of IAI to include acceptance of the major recommendations by public universities. Until the fall of 2010, the major panel recommendations had been advisory only, but this agreement to accept the panel recommendations offers students undecided about their intended transfer destination additional guidance in the process.

MyCreditsTransfer (MCT) is a statewide initiative, implemented sixteen years ago, which was designed to facilitate transfer within Illinois using the nationally available tool, Transferology. Within Transferology, students can find out how courses transfer between institutions and the different majors institutions offer. This free web-based program also allows students to determine how courses they have completed may or may not count towards a

baccalaureate degree at participating schools. A planning guide, which serves as a valuable tool to both advisors and students, matches courses to degree requirements and outlines what additional coursework is needed to complete the degree.

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, MCT, and other transfer projects; transfer issues that have been raised and attempts to address these issues; and other related transfer concerns. This report also includes a summary of highlights from this past year's activities, concerns relative to funding, listings of participating schools, and considerations for the future.

## **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 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 originally developed in three phases. Phase I focused on developing a general education package, the General Education Core Curriculum. 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 ongoing reviews of courses. This process was designed to ensure that the panels' recommendations continue to be relevant and accurate, and that courses previously approved by the panel still align with the panel's current criteria and course descriptions.

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 July 2017, there are 206 GECC course descriptions, and the IAI database includes 11,261 courses in the GECC with 6,940 currently remaining active. There are 81 major course descriptions, and the IAI database has tracked 13,719 courses in the majors with 2,352 currently remaining active. About 1,000 submitted courses from over 110 participating public and private institutions are reviewed by the GECC and Major panels each fiscal year.

***MyCreditsTransfer.*** Sixteen years ago, the MyCreditsTransfer 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 free 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 MyCreditsTransfer initiative was originally funded through a series of Higher Education Cooperation Act (HECA) Grant appropriations. Beginning in 2010, HECA grant funding ended and IBHE began supporting this initiative through the agency's general grant budget, thus funding for the Project has been severely limited due to the state budget constraints and impasse last year.

## Statewide Transfer Policy and the Illinois Articulation Initiative

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 “Improve transitions all along the education pipeline.” The strategy provided to meet this recommendation is to “Strengthen articulation through stable funding and expansion of transfer tools such as u.select [now called MyCreditsTransfer] 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, undergraduate student transfers within Illinois totaled 55,363 for the fall semester of 2016, about 9.22 percent of the total undergraduate fall 2016 enrollment of 600,610 (down from 621,646 in 2015) in the state. Of these in fall 2016: 23,136 transferred from a community college (down from 24,374 in 2015); 4,329 transferred from a public university (down from 4,471 in 2015); 3,376 from an independent not-for-profit institution (down from 3,541 in 2015); 463 from an independent for-profit institution (down up from 656 in 2015); and 24,059 from other institutions (down from 24,718 in 2015).

<b>Sector Students Transferred From:</b>	<b>Number of Undergrad Students Fall 2016</b>	<b>Percent of Total Transfer Students</b>
Community Colleges	23,136	41.8%
Public Universities	4,329	7.8%
Independent Not-for-Profit	3,376	6.1%
Independent For-Profit	463	0.8%
Other Institutions*	24,059	43.5%
<b>Total All Sectors</b>	<b>55,363</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Out of state, foreign, and unknown/unreported origin

The sector to which the largest number of students transferred to was the community colleges, with 16,262 students, followed closely by the public universities with 14,504. A significant number of students transferred to independent not-for-profit institutions (10,396) and independent for-profit institutions (13,491). Slightly more than 700 Illinois students transferred to out-of-state institutions operating within Illinois.

<b>Sector Students Transferred To:</b>	<b>Number of Undergrad Students Fall 2016</b>	<b>Total Fall 2016 Undergraduate Enrollments</b>
Community Colleges	16,262	277,038
Public Universities	14,504	139,508
Independent Not-for-Profit	10,396	131,254
Independent For-Profit	13,491	46,337
Out-of-State, Operating in IL	710	6,473
<b>Total All Sectors</b>	<b>55,363</b>	<b>600,610</b>

It is worth noting that the 2015 transfer rate of 9.29 percent represented the highest rate the state had experienced since 2007 in proportion to the total number of undergraduate student enrollments each year. Given the very slight decrease, the 2016 transfer rate of 9.22 percent indicates that transfer to Illinois institutions remains strong.

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 do not know 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 GECC package 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. Significant changes have been made over the years to expand the scope of IAI to include acceptance of the major recommendations by public universities. Until the fall of 2010, the major panel recommendations had been advisory only, but this agreement to accept the panel recommendations offers students undecided about their intended transfer destination additional guidance in the process. The current IAI and institutional transfer and articulation agreements work well for most students, particularly for program to program articulation agreements.

Past attempts at gaining acceptance of the recommendations had failed to produce agreement due to many curricular concerns. The chief problems stemmed from the differences between institutions about what constitutes the appropriate courses to be offered at the freshman/sophomore level for many majors. There have also 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 would 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, acceptance of the Major Panel recommendations has been completed with nearly all majors having been through the acceptance process.

Under the plan, the public universities were asked to accept the Major Panel course recommendations through three rounds and be added to a list of receiving institutions that have agreed to the recommendations. If there was a curricular issue that did not allow them to do so, they were to provide feedback to IBHE or ICCB IAI staff to suggest revisions of the courses or their approval criteria that would allow the institution to accept the major recommendations. Staff worked to combine the feedback received through all three rounds and provided the information to the panels to facilitate modifications. Each Major Panel iTransfer webpage indicates the current major course recommendations, as well as specific GECC courses relevant to the major, and a list of all institutions that agreed to those recommendations. The supporting memos and acceptance lists are available on the IAI website at <http://www.itransfer.org/iai/container.aspx?section=faculty&subsection=other&topic=iaidoc>.

Both IAI and MCT 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 MCT, these initiatives have continued their ongoing activities to the extent possible given the

funding issues. There are 113 IAI-participating institutions from all sectors, 94 as full participants and 19 as receiving only institutions. More than 640 faculty members, transfer coordinators, and academic officers from participating two-year and four-year public and private institutions serve on IAI general education and major panels. 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 and trends in various disciplines. This helps to overcome misperceptions that sometimes develop between faculties in different sectors.

Over the last five years, the iTransfer team has continued to improve service and usability of the site and course review system to its constituents. The focus has been to develop and deploy various web resources to help users find, locate, and navigate the iTransfer.org site and the necessary IAI-related information more easily. Through the last year, the iTransfer Coordinator continued to assist with panel activities as well as serve as the primary contact and information resource for iTransfer and IAI.

In order to better serve the variety of constituents that use the site, the iTransfer staff has utilized a variety of sources to obtain user data and feedback. They continue to refine and improve the iManage system, which allows for all administrative functions for institutional course submitters and IAI personnel to access information regarding IAI courses, and they have also developed mobile functionality for faculty members to use during the course review process.

The iTransfer web site serves current and potential students in Illinois higher education, parents, faculty, advisors, administrators, planners, registrars, admissions staff, and the public at large. In its nineteenth year, the site continues to be an essential tool for these constituencies. Between July 1, 2016, and June 30, 2017, the site processed 121,633 visits to the site with 75,703 being unique visitors. These figures represent a slight downward change over last year's totals but continue to demonstrate high volume user traffic through the desktop and mobile sites. On average, the site provided about six pages of information viewed per visit and handled a total of 691,096 page views.

Although usage of the site remains high overall, there has been a consistent decrease in the number of visitors over the last several years. Staff have been dedicated to maintaining and continuously improving the site, however a complete redesign of the website has been deemed necessary in order to meet current needs and standards. This work is already underway and progressing as scheduled. New features of the redesigned site include: being mobile friendly; incorporating student-focused navigation and landing pages utilizing non-layman terminology that is easily understood by students and parents; and limiting content to be more relevant, streamlined, and useful for transfer students, faculty members, and advisors.

Improving successful transfer in Illinois involves a comprehensive approach, not just reliance on IAI and MCT. Different tools and strategies need to be employed in a coordinated fashion to further improve transfer. Other state level policies continue to advance that will help to smooth the transfer process. For example, the Illinois Learning Standards, which were adopted in June 2010, are intended to help eliminate remediation through the coordination of high school graduation and college readiness standards as well as increase communication of expectations by higher education institutions. Illinois' implementation of Complete College America's Game Changer strategies are also addressing preparedness and completion issues by piloting corequisite math and English courses, as well as promoting 15 to Finish campaigns which encourage students to take at least 15 credit hours every semester in order to graduate on time. 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 associate degrees have been developed in conjunction with ICCB, such as the Associate of Fine Arts (A.F.A.) degree and the Associate in Engineering Science (A.E.S.) degree.

Although the Associate of Science (A.S.) degree is not considered a specialized degree, in the fall of 2015 ICCB approved modifications to the degree intended to smooth transfer for STEM students into four-year institutions. Under the new A.S. degree model, students will be required to take one additional math course and one additional science course, which will displace two GECC courses in the Humanities & Fine Arts and Social & Behavioral Sciences to post-transfer enrollment. The GECC remains intact, however the timing of when the package is completed will now differ between Associate of Arts and A.S. students. Under this new degree model, community college students are now able to take the necessary prerequisites and complete course sequences required for baccalaureate STEM pathways. This means that students will no longer have to choose between completing the associate's degree and meeting STEM transfer prerequisites. The new changes to the A.S. degree model will provide benefits to both institutions and students. Illinois should see more A.S. completions at community colleges, and universities will receive better prepared students. Most importantly, STEM students starting at a community college will now be on equal footing with native students at the receiving institutions when they are allowed to shift two general education courses to post-transfer study to make room in the A.S. program to complete the lower-division STEM courses needed to successfully transfer.

The Community College Compact Agreement (the Compact) is still used by many Illinois institutions. The Compact originated December 1, 1970, with IBHE's 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. All transfer students benefit from effective advising when advisors provide the information to students about all of these pathways for navigating through the transfer system. The more recent Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act (PA 099-0316) ensures that "a community college student who earns an associate degree for transfer...is deemed eligible for transfer into the baccalaureate program of a State [public] university if the student meets the requirements of the transfer degree and major-specific prerequisites and obtains a minimum grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale."

While IAI did not experience as severe of budget cuts as the MCT Project this past year, the budget reduction was navigated by reducing the number of in-person faculty meetings for the Major panels, therefore requiring panel managers to hold meetings via conference calls. Given the complex nature of discussing courses submitted to the panel for approval review, this meeting mode proved to be challenging, ineffective, and not nearly as productive as in-person meetings.

Upon further review, it appears that the course approval rates by Major panels have actually decreased since changing to meeting calls. Another byproduct of the budget crisis came directly from the participating public universities and community colleges being unable to send their faculty members to meetings held in-person due to travel restrictions. Without stable funding, IAI will be forced to de-prioritize important projects and continue to operate at a suboptimal level.

**IAI: In Fiscal Year 2017, the following goals were accomplished through a number of projects and activities:**

*Note: Many of these projects and activities will continue to be reviewed and improved into future fiscal years as ongoing processes.*

- Monitored and maintained iTransfer business continuation activities to include existing systems and function. *This is an ongoing process.*
  - Edited and “fine-tuned” systems, including marketing activities to effectively meet client needs.
- Installed and implemented new software and applications to facilitate database and web application design. *This is an ongoing process.*
  - Reviewed current software on the market to ensure iTransfer is utilizing technologies appropriate for the best functionality.
  - Researched website and server technologies to ensure that iTransfer.org reflects current web practices and made changes accordingly.
  - Completed the process of transferring all server functionality over to a virtual server structure. This process was implemented with the assistance and support of IAI’s host institution, Illinois State University.
- Worked with internal resources at the host institution to begin a full reworking and redesign of the iTransfer.org site. This work continues into the Fiscal Year 2018. The target date to deploy the new site has been set for spring 2018, however this date is flexible as internal resources have many priorities beyond the iTransfer site redesign.
  - Continued to focus on iTransfer.org as an information portal for transfer within the state. Staff strove to keep this focus in the new site redesign.
  - Completed activities related to site and server structure redesign for enhanced business continuation purposes, including set up of appropriate software and server technologies, and bolstering server security from external attacks.
  - Reviewed Google analytics, site navigation, and user feedback to improve functionality and design of the website, as well as enhance site content. This will continue to be an important driving process in site revisions.
  - Added content based on recommendations from the IAI Steering Committee, IBHE, and ICCB.
- Uploaded courses into the course review system for panel review at spring and fall session meetings. *This is an ongoing process.*
  - This included monitoring the electronic processes involved in submission and via iManage.
  - Staff provided training and technical directions to submitters and faculty reviewers, and worked to improve performance and user satisfaction.
- Provided assistance and support to the IBHE and ICCB staff as necessary in order to facilitate IAI panel meetings. *This is an ongoing process.*
  - Attended all IAI GECC and Major Panel meetings in spring and fall sessions, posted course decisions, and created meeting summaries for all panels.
  - Staff also assisted the Boards as requested with securing meeting locations, handling all meeting planning-related activities, and posting agendas and summaries of other transfer-related meetings.
  - Continued the use of the join.me web conference programming for remote participants in both general education and major panel meetings, however IAI will begin using an internal

product purchased in association with the host institution in the coming year in order to reduce meeting costs.

- Continued to develop and implement the IAI/iTransfer marketing plan. *This is an ongoing process.*
  - Met frequently to discuss projects and collaborative marketing opportunities.
  - Looked at refining site aspects to increase satisfaction with site functionality.
  
- Completed a variety of programming and report projects in a timely manner in order to fulfill needs of the Boards as well as IAI constituents. *This is an ongoing process.*
  - Prepared the annual report and identified specific goals for the coming year.
  - Reviewed and revised, as needed, the recently updated iTransfer operations manual and Business Continuation Plan.
  - Responded to IAI Steering panel directions regarding program evaluation processes.
  - Worked to implement recommendations from the Boards and the Steering Panel for IAI and iTransfer.
  - Reviewed, developed, and enhanced training materials for institutional users.

## **IAI: Illinois Participating Colleges and Universities**

All IBHE-approved Illinois associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions which hold regional accreditation from an accrediting authority recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or the Council on Higher Education are eligible to participate in the Illinois Articulation Initiative. Institutions may participate in the Illinois transferable GECC agreement and/or in one or more of the several Baccalaureate Majors' agreements, with the level of participation in Baccalaureate Majors' agreements depending upon whether or not the institution offers a program in the specific major. Currently there are 113 schools participating in IAI (the GECC and/or the Illinois Baccalaureate Majors' Curricula).

**Full-Participating Schools:** There are 94 schools recognized by IAI currently as full-participation schools. These institutions must at all times maintain a complete GECC package which entails offering an adequate number of IAI GECC approved courses in the six core disciplines (Communications, Mathematics, Life Science, Physical Science, Humanities and Fine Arts, and Social and Behavioral Sciences).

### **Two-Year Public Institutions (48 schools)**

Black Hawk College	Lincoln Trail College (IECC)
Carl Sandburg College	Malcolm X College (CCC)
College of DuPage	McHenry County College
College of Lake County	Moraine Valley Community College
Daley College (Richard J.) (CCC)	Morton College
Danville Area Community College	Oakton Community College
Elgin Community College	Olive-Harvey College (CCC)
Frontier Community College (IECC)	Olney Central College (IECC)
Harold Washington College (CCC)	Parkland College
Harper College	Prairie State College
Heartland Community College	Rend Lake College
Highland Community College	Richland Community College
Illinois Central College	Rock Valley College
Illinois Valley Community College	Sauk Valley Community College
John A. Logan College	Shawnee Community College
John Wood Community College	South Suburban College
Joliet Junior College	Southeastern Illinois College
Kankakee Community College	Southwestern Illinois College
Kaskaskia College	Spoon River College
Kennedy-King College (CCC)	Triton College
Kishwaukee College	Truman College (Harry S) (CCC)
Lake Land College	Wabash Valley College (IECC)
Lewis & Clark Community College	Waubonsee Community College
Lincoln Land Community College	Wilbur Wright College (CCC)

### **Two-Year Independent Institutions (2 schools)**

MacCormac College  
Northwestern College

**Four-Year Public Institutions (12 schools)**

Chicago State University  
Eastern Illinois University  
Governors State University  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville  
University of Illinois at Chicago

Illinois State University  
Northeastern Illinois University  
Northern Illinois University  
University of Illinois at Springfield  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Western Illinois University

**Four-Year Independent Institutions (32 schools)**

Aurora University  
Benedictine University  
Blackburn College  
Bradley University  
Concordia University Chicago  
DePaul University  
Elmhurst College  
Illinois College  
Illinois Institute of Art  
Judson University  
Kendall College  
Lewis University  
Lincoln Christian University  
Lincoln College  
Loyola University Chicago  
MacMurray College

McKendree University  
Midstate College  
Millikin University  
National-Louis University  
North Central College  
North Park University  
Olivet Nazarene University  
Quincy University  
Robert Morris University  
Rockford University  
Roosevelt University  
Saint Xavier University  
St. Augustine College  
Trinity Christian College  
Trinity International University  
University of St. Francis

**Receiving-Only Schools [R]:** There are 19 schools recognized by IAI currently as receiving-only schools. Institutions choosing to participate on a receiving only basis agree to accept as meeting all lower-division general education requirements of the institution a completed GECC package from any other fully-participating institution.

**Two-Year Public Institutions (0 schools)**

**Two-Year Independent Institutions (1 school)**

Taylor Business Institute [R]

**Four-Year Public Institutions (0 schools)**

**Four-Year Independent Institutions (18 schools)**

Adler University  
American InterContinental University [R]  
Argosy University - Chicago [R]  
Argosy University - Schaumburg [R]  
Columbia College – Chicago [R]  
DeVry University – Illinois [R]  
Dominican University [R]  
East-West University [R] Aurora University  
Eureka College [R]

Illinois Institute of Technology [R]  
Knox College [R]  
Lake Forest College [R]  
Lakeview College of Nursing [R]  
Monmouth College [R]  
Northwestern Business College [R]  
Resurrection University [R]  
Saint Francis Medical Center, Nursing [R]  
University of Phoenix – Chicago [R]

## MyCreditsTransfer

The MyCreditsTransfer (MCT) program supports Illinois' participation in the nationwide Transferology network – a web-based transfer information system for students, faculty, and staff – used by 12 public universities, 48 community colleges, and 12 private institutions in Illinois. In Fiscal Year 2017 there were over 390,000 Illinois visitors to the site (up from over 350,000 visitors in Fiscal Year 2016), with more than 215,000 of those being unique visitors (up from over 195,000 unique visitors in Fiscal Year 2016). This represents a continued climb in Illinois' use of the system for the eighth consecutive year. Clearly, the state and its citizens value MCT and the Transferology tool.

When regularly funded, the MCT Project is driven by five goals: increase participation, implementation, and usage of Transferology; promote use of Transferology to relevant audiences; collaborate and coordinate with other organizations involved in transfer; maintain the infrastructure; and evaluate progress of the MCT Project. The following completed tasks demonstrate that each Project goal was satisfactorily met over the last fiscal year:

### PARTICIPATION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND USAGE:

There are ongoing efforts to expand participation on three fronts: 1) bring fully licensed institutions up to full participation through the development and/or installation of interfaces with institutions' student information systems, course equivalency guides (CEG), and degree audit systems; 2) increase the license level of sending institutions – those participating through the submission of course banks only – to that of receiving institutions with CEG or degree audit capability; and 3) to identify and target new institutions for participation, particularly Illinois private institutions and out-of-state feeder institutions.

- MCT achieved an increase in the number of fully-licensed institutions participating in the Illinois Transferology network, from 30 to 32; increased the implementation level of three institutions that were already participating; and provided support for two additional institutions that were seriously considering the purchase of a Transferology license.

MCT staff work closely with institutions in order to increase awareness usage of the tool. Subsequently, the number of Transferology users in Illinois, which includes both students and staff, has continued to climb among returning and new (i.e., unique) visitors as demonstrated in the following chart:



#### PROMOTION:

Staff undertook numerous activities to promote the MCT Project, the use of Transferology in Illinois, and various other transfer resources and information:

- Published and distributed a quarterly newsletter: MyCreditsTransfer News is distributed electronically to the MCT listserv and is available on the iTransfer.org/MCT website. It is an excellent communication tool for providing institutions with updates, information on functional enhancements, training opportunities, usage reports, and answering frequently asked questions.
- Conducted training and made presentations to promote use of Transferology: The MyCreditsTransfer Project staff provide training and presentation sessions to a variety of audiences, including advisor training sessions; presentations at local, regional, state, and national association meetings/conferences; institutional meetings; and directly to students at transfer events. These presentations promote the use of Transferology and encourage users to participate in continuing promotion and evaluation.
- Produced institution-specific advisor training materials such as the Transferology Reference Guide for advisors.
  - Staff continue to promote the use of Transferology planning guides specifically with advisors as they help students plan for transfer. Planning guides are an excellent tool for advising students toward degree completion, rather than just admission, and are a valuable resource to help students understand how specific coursework may be used to fulfill degree requirements. This should help reduce the number of extraneous classes taken by students.
- Improved online presence: The iTransfer.org website is the object of continued collaboration between IAI staff and the MCT project. The intent is to give students the full spectrum of Illinois transfer information on one site.
  - The MCT staff collaborate with participating colleges and universities to increase the number of Illinois institutions hosting a link to Transferology on their websites. Increasing direct access to Transferology will benefit the students and will allow institutions to customize the host link to make that school a “favorite” or to filter search results to give Illinois institutions an advantage in the search process.
  - MCT staff developed the TransferREADY website which was designed for college admission counselors and students to aid in planning for baccalaureate completion through transfer. The site is also useful to community college advisors and parents. MCT collaborated with numerous transfer-related groups to solicit feedback and make suggested changes.

#### COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION:

Nearly all activities undertaken by Project staff are completed in collaboration with various stakeholder groups for the overall value, productivity, and sustainability of Illinois MyCreditsTransfer and to promote effective transfer within the state. MCT staff supported this goal by:

- Working with iTransfer staff on semi-annual updates of the Illinois GECC IAI approved course file (upon conclusion of IAI fall and spring panel meetings), to format and verify for publication in Transferology, then work with CollegeSource to load updated files. This allows users of Transferology to determine which courses are IAI approved and which category of the GECC package the courses fulfill.
- Responding to requests by Illinois Association for College Admission Counseling membership, Transfer Coordinators, IBHE, and ICCB to develop and provide reports, transfer tools, and the newly developed TransferREADY website.

- Attending various articulation conferences in order to monitor changes to transfer policies, articulation, and degree programs throughout the state.

MAINTENANCE:

Maintenance of complete functions in the Transferology system often require support or corrective action as institutions upgrade existing systems and/or change hardware, personnel, and information systems.

- Examples of this include maintenance of institution links, logos, program files, and the restoration of interface functionality between Transferology and institutions' student information systems (SIS) when disrupted by external factors, such as expiration of security certificates, URL changes, and SIS upgrades.

Staff maintained the MCT infrastructure through the following activities:

- Worked with 20 institutions in the Illinois Transferology network (including IAI/iTransfer) to update their existing articulation files, verify transfer data, and work with CollegeSource to upload the completed files into Transferology, helping to ensure users have access to current transfer information.
- Completed the procurement process to renew Illinois' annual service agreement with CollegeSource for the state Transferology license subscription. MCT staff continue to make adjustments to the Project budget given the reductions in the grant award amount coupled with annual increases for renewal of the state subscription service agreement.
- Conducted ongoing site testing, made recommendations for changes/bug fixes, and facilitated communication on open issues. This work was instrumental to ensure CollegeSource's product updates and changes were responsive to the needs of Illinois institutions and student users.
- Annual maintenance of Transferology also requires the MCT Technical Coordinator to collect and process course equivalency data files from non-DARwin/non-u.achieve institutions. This process occurs twice per year and includes a rigorous data normalization process to verify the validity of the information and to prepare the file for import by CollegeSource.

EVALUATION:

Project staff work with participating institutions to utilize the enhanced reporting capabilities available through Transferology Lab in developing more valuable, informative reports on specific usage patterns, articulation data, and most frequently utilized features. This information, along with collected Google Analytics data, provide insight regarding web trends and progress of the MCT Project. Furthermore, staff engaged in the following practices as additional evaluation means:

- Fostered open communication and solicited feedback from stakeholders through the listserv, newsletter, and at the annual statewide meetings regarding use, promotion, and evaluation of Transferology, and direction/effectiveness of MCT initiatives.
- Solicited feedback and direction from the MCT Advisory Committee on scope and direction of Project initiatives, opportunities for collaboration, legislation impacting transfer, budgetary matters, expansion efforts, institution implementation challenges, enhancements and changes to Transferology, military articulation initiatives, and vendor communications.

Due to the state's recent budget impasse, the project was not funded in Fiscal Year 2016. IBHE provided enough funds to renew the Illinois Transferology license last year, and the University of Illinois (UI) provided "life-support" funds and infrastructure support to cover staff compensation, travel, equipment, technology, supplies, and office overhead. Although the

Project has begun receiving grant payments again, the funding levels are much lower than the actual costs required to fully operate and scale the Project. UI cannot continue to provide such extensive financial support, and more importantly, the Project continues to suffer as staffing is now at a 50 percent level due to the current grant amount.

While funding was restored for Fiscal Year 2017, the project was funded at the Fiscal Year 2015 level and will experience yet another cut (10 percent less than the Fiscal Year 2015 level) for Fiscal Year 2018. Reduced and inconsistent funding creates many ongoing challenges, including the inability to maintain operations at a minimal level as well as implement plans to scale the Project. Lack of funding in the past and in the future creates a critical situation which could lead to the permanent loss of the Project's staff and/or statewide Transferology license. Simply put, without consistent and increased funding, there is no way to sustain the MCT Project.

One of the intended outcomes of the MCT Project is to provide underrepresented students access to information about how they can most efficiently transfer to baccalaureate-granting institutions. Discontinuing the MCT Project would not only affect underrepresented students, it would also negatively impact over 55,000 students who transfer to Illinois institutions each fall. It would remove the single existing source of consistent, up-to-date and centralized transfer information that allows these students, at no cost, to plan for and achieve successful transfer across the 12 public universities, 48 community colleges and 12 private institutions currently participating in the Illinois Transferology network. Furthermore, the MCT Project serves to provide detailed transfer information for the IAI. With more students each year coming to higher education through the community college system, especially students from underrepresented and minority groups, providing this transfer tool for students and advisors is now more important than ever. Several other Midwestern states provide this service so discontinuing the Project would only further disadvantage efforts to 1) encourage students from other states to enroll in Illinois institutions; and 2) to keep the state's students here in Illinois.

A fully-funded grant is necessary to properly sustain MyCreditsTransfer. However, with additional funding, the Project staff could also pursue active engagement in several initiatives to maximize the value of Transferology for all Illinois students. This includes veteran students' ability to determine how their military training will be accepted in transfer; high school students with dual credit coursework; Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate test credit; and students who bring coursework and/or prior learning assessment to bridge programs and degree completion programs. Likewise, flat and/or reduced funding levels will not only limit these expansion plans but will also prohibit operating the Project at a standard level given the rising costs associated with higher licensing and implementation fees. Without continued, as well as additional funding, the potential for continuation and/or expansion of the project is questionable.

### **MyCreditsTransfer: Illinois Participating Colleges and Universities**

#### **Fully-Licensed "Receiving" Institutions (32 schools\*)**

Benedictine University	Illinois College
Bradley University	Illinois State University
Chicago State University	Loyola University Chicago
City Colleges of Chicago	National-Louis University
Harold Washington College	North Central College
Kennedy-King College	Northeastern Illinois University
Malcolm X College	Northern Illinois University
Olive Harvey College	Oakton Community College
Richard Daley College	Parkland College

Harry S. Truman College  
Wilbur Wright College  
College of DuPage  
Columbia College of Chicago  
DePaul University  
Eastern Illinois University  
Elgin Community College  
Elmhurst College  
Governors State University  
Harper College  
Illinois Articulation Initiative\*

Resurrection University  
Roosevelt University  
Saint Xavier University  
Southern Illinois University, Carbondale  
Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville  
Southwestern Illinois College  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
University of Illinois at Springfield  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Western Illinois University

*\*The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) is a participating institution in the Illinois Transferology network so that users can see if or how their classes fulfill IAI requirements. The system also lets users search for IAI courses across all participating institutions.*

### **Other Institutions\* (35 schools)**

*\*Formerly called “sending only” institutions, these Illinois community colleges participate under the Illinois Articulation Initiative license.*

Black Hawk College  
Carl Sandburg College  
Danville Area Community College  
Heartland Community College  
Highland Community College  
Illinois Central College  
Illinois Eastern Community Colleges  
Frontier Community College  
Lincoln Trail College  
Olney Central College  
Wabash Valley Community College  
Illinois Valley Community College  
John A. Logan College  
John Wood Community College  
Joliet Junior College  
Kankakee Community College  
Kaskaskia College  
Kishwaukee College

Lake Land College  
Lewis & Clark Community College  
Lincoln Land Community College  
McHenry County College  
Moraine Valley Community College  
Morton College  
Parkland College  
Prairie State College  
Rend Lake Community College  
Richland Community College  
Rock Valley College  
Sauk Valley Community College  
Shawnee Community College  
South Suburban College  
Southeastern Illinois College  
Spoon River College  
Triton College  
Waubonsee Community College

### **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*, particularly Goal 3 which is to “Increase the number of high-quality post-secondary credentials to meet the demands of the economy and an increasingly global society”. 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 MCT continue to be vital tools. Goals and plans for the near future for IAI and MCT reflect this commitment.

The course descriptors for General Education courses in the IAI 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 have been created and to inform high school curricula as part of Illinois' participation in the Common Core and Illinois Learning Standards state project. In addition to other content experts, faculty on the IAI panels will be asked to continue to participate in the implementation of this project and to help build the bridge between high school graduation standards and college readiness expectations.

The process of formalizing the acceptance of the course recommendations of the IAI Major Panels has been an essential part in the continued success of IAI. This plan has attempted to address concerns that have been ongoing with the Major Panel recommendations. IBHE and ICCB staff have worked with IAI and are dedicated to making sure that there continues to be progress on this issue.

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, such as reverse transfer and dual credit programs. Additionally, as more institutions become available to students on MCT, a variety of user survey data will continue to provide a picture of student use and satisfaction with the MCT Project.

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 education issues. Measuring the success of transfer students requires careful coordination of informational resources across the various sectors: Illinois public universities; Illinois private colleges and universities; and Illinois community colleges. The establishment of such a coordinated information system has been underway with the passage of Public Act 096-0107, the P-20 Longitudinal Education Data System Act. This system will open the door to a wide variety of research projects that will shed light on the transfer and articulation process, including reaching a clearer understanding of the impact of Illinois initiatives. IBHE's component of the ILDS, the Higher Education Information System (HEIS), was moved into full production in fall of 2016 and IBHE staff are in the process of finishing the collection of its fourth year of enrollment and completion data from all MAP-eligible institutions, as well as institutions that confer graduate or professional degrees. The development of a reporting system with integrated analytical tools is the final phase of the development of HEIS and with adequate funding should be completed sometime this fiscal year.

In the coming months, IBHE will be using the HEIS to analyze information as part of a major ILDS supported project. In collaboration with the Illinois Community College Board, IBHE has developed a template for a Community College Transfer Student Success report and will pilot the report using two public universities (Northern Illinois University and University of Illinois Urbana Champaign) and their respective feeder community colleges. Once the community college transfer student success report is fully implemented statewide in the coming years, it will allow staff to identify community colleges and four-year institutions that are best supporting transfer students; pinpoint where improvements and/or enhancements in the transfer process are needed; and fulfill our mandated responsibilities under Public Act 099-0316, the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act.

Growing interest is being shown in baccalaureate completion agreements across the state. Although currently unfunded, Public Act 96-0535, which was passed several years ago, 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.

Due to budgetary cuts combined with the former budget crisis, both the IAI and MCT projects are under serious threat. Discontinuing either projects would negatively impact over 55,000 students, including minority and underrepresented students, who transfer to and from Illinois institutions each fall. Both systems not only complement each other, they work together to provide a complete package of tools to ensure successful transfer by students within the state.

Ending the MCT project would remove the primary source of consistent, up-to-date and centralized transfer information that allows these students to plan for and achieve successful transfer across 12 public universities, 48 community colleges, and 12 private institutions currently participating in the Illinois Transferology network. In Fiscal Year 2017 there were over 390,000 Illinois visitors to the site, with more than 215,000 of those being unique visitors, representing a continued climb in use for the eighth consecutive year. Several other Midwestern states provide this service so discontinuing this project would only disadvantage efforts to 1) encourage students from other states to enroll in Illinois institutions; and 2) to keep the state's students here in Illinois.

Furthermore, the MCT project serves to provide detailed transfer information for the IAI. There were nearly 122,000 visitors to the IAI site in Fiscal Year 2017, with over 75,000 of those being unique visitors. There are nearly 9,300 general education and major-specific courses currently approved for 113 participating institutions by IAI panels. These numbers clearly indicate that the state relies heavily on IAI as the leading state-wide transfer agreement among Illinois institutions.

With more students each year coming to higher education through the community college system, especially students from underrepresented and minority groups, providing both of these transfer tools for students, parents, advisors and administrators continues to be extremely valuable and important. As another example of how the two systems complement each other, IAI is a fully-licensed "institution" in MCT and is the reason that all Illinois community colleges, even the 35 who are not licensed independently, have access to the transfer advising functions of the Transferology Lab tool. This is key because a majority share of transfer advising happens at the two-year schools before students are admitted to a four-year institution. Illinois community college advisors, therefore, use the Transferology Lab tool a great deal.

Illinois ranks second in the nation behind New Jersey in being a leading exporter of students. Efforts should be made to maximize and advertise the advantages to students of staying and enrolling in Illinois colleges and universities. Primary selling points include the state's robust transfer system, IAI, which is a nationally renowned model, and the state-licensed Transferology tool, both of which likely contributed to Illinois ranking third in the nation for full-time community college students completing bachelor's degrees at four-year universities, as reported by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. The amended College and Career Success for All Students Act, PA 099-0624, guarantees college credit to students earning a score of three or above on Advanced Placement exams and for scores of 4 or above on International Baccalaureate exams. Strong commitments to increasing the number of dual credit offerings as well as the number of 2 + 2 agreements between colleges and universities also continue to provide early college opportunities and more successful transfer pathways to students in Illinois.

In conclusion, one of the recommendations identified under Goal 3 of the *Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success* is to “Strengthen articulation through stable funding and expansion of transfer tools such as MyCreditsTransfer and the Illinois Articulation Initiative and through development of an objective measure of transfer and acceptance of credits.” Efforts should be made by the Board now to recommit to this goal by ensuring stable and increased funding going forward for Illinois’ distinguished transfer tools, the Illinois Articulation Initiative and MyCreditsTransfer, so that both may continue to exist and expand.

*The following people and reports were used as sources to create this report:*

- Krista Jackson, IAI Coordinator
- Dena Lawrence, MyCreditsTransfer Coordinator
- Dr. Eric Lichtenberger, IBHE Deputy Director of Information Management & Research
  
- iTransfer Annual Report July 2016 – June 2017
  
- MyCreditsTransfer Project FY2017 Evaluation Report
  
- IBHE Enrollments and Degrees System Reports  
<http://www.ibhe.org/EnrollmentsDegrees/Search.aspx>
  
- MCT Annual Transfer Data Reports:  
Overall Summary of Transfers to and from an Illinois 2007-2016  
<http://www.mycreditstransfer.org/support/transfer/docmultiyear/Fall%202007-016%20Overall%20Summary.pdf>