

# Annual Report on the Illinois Articulation Initiative

Fiscal Year 2023

Submitted by





**Pranav Kothari**, Chair, Chicago  
**Sharon Bush**, Chicago  
**Andrea Evans**, Chicago  
**Jennifer Garrison**, Vandalia  
**Veronica Herrero**, Chicago  
**Subhash Sharma**, Carbondale  
**Kenneth Shaw**, Chicago  
**Garth Walker**, Chicago  
**Jamel Wright**, Morton  
**Daci Finke**, Student Board Member  
**Magnus Nobel**, Student Board Member  
**Sylvia Jenkins**, Ex Officio Representative,  
Illinois Community College Board  
**Eric Zarnikow**, Illinois Student Assistance  
Commission, Ex Officio Representative  
**Ginger Ostro**, Executive Director  
1 North Old State Capitol Plaza | Suite 333  
Springfield, Illinois 62701-1377  
217.792.2551 | Fax 217.792.8548  
TTY 888.261.2881



**Larazo Lopez**, Chair, Hoffman Estates  
**Teresa Garate**, Vice Chair, Chicago  
**Maureen Banks**, Champaign  
**Mara Botman**, Chicago  
**Craig Bradley**, Karnak  
**An-Me Chung**, Chicago  
**Lisa Dziekan**, Chicago  
**George Evans**, Kaskaskia  
**Sylvia Jenkins**, Chicago  
**Marion McClinton**, Chicago  
**Larry Peterson**, Goreville  
**Aubrey Hebenstreit**, Student Board Member

**Dr. Brian Durham**, Executive Director  
401 East Capitol Avenue  
Springfield, Illinois 62701 -1711  
217.795.0123 | Fax 217.524.4981  
TTY 217.782.5645

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## Executive Summary

As part of the annual review of transfer under the Illinois Articulation Initiative Act, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), and the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) as an entity jointly prepared this report on the state of seamless transfer among and between Illinois' public community colleges, universities, participating private institutions.

In Fiscal Year 2023 (Academic Year 2022-2023) institutions submitted and IAI panels reviewed 1,060 courses across six General Education and 15 Major panels. Of those submitted, over 700 courses received IAI approval for transfer.

Among the 38,196 students who transferred in Fiscal Year 2023, 7,632 students completed an IAI-approved General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) credential, indicating that those students completed their lower-division general education coursework and would be automatically granted "junior" status at the IAI-participating four-year institution that receives them as a transfer student.

Faculty and institution participation remained high in Fiscal Year 2023: 110 faculty from public four-year institutions, 167 faculty from public two-year institutions, and 26 faculty from private institutions participated in the 6 General Education and 15 Major panels. Meanwhile, 48 public community colleges, 12 public universities, and 14 private institutions submit courses to IAI for approval as transfer courses and received IAI-approved courses while 33 private institutions receive IAI-approved courses for transfer.

As a matter of evaluation, the Boards look at the number of courses submitted and reviewed by panels, faculty and institutional participation, and overall administration of the IAI. IBHE and ICCB staff serve as GECC and Major panel managers, provide policy guidance, and serve as external communication services. The Boards and IAI meet annually to discuss and evaluate the work of the previous year, collaborate on developing and implementing IAI policies and procedures, and recruit faculty.

This report serves as the required IAI annual report to the General Assembly under the Illinois Articulation Act.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> P.A. 99-636, eff. 1-1-17

## GECC Package at Public Institutions

In January 2019, the Illinois Community College Board launched the General Education Core Curriculum (IAI GECC Credential or GECC package) for all 48 community colleges. All colleges and universities participating in IAI agree to accept a completed IAI GECC package in lieu of their own comparable lower-division general education requirements. The IAI GECC package consists of 37–41 semester credit hours in communications, humanities and fine arts, social and behavioral sciences, life and physical sciences, and mathematics and now appears on students' community college transcripts when transferring the completed package to another Illinois institution.

Students who complete the IAI GECC package at a community college can transfer the package as a credential, which is guaranteed to be accepted by all IAI-participating institutions and, with some exceptions, fulfills the accepting institution's general education requirements (Section 20(b) of the 110 ILCS 152 or Illinois Articulation Initiative Act). Students pursuing an Associate of Science degree do not complete the IAI GECC package until they transfer to a four-year university due to the additional math and/or science courses necessary to be on track for junior standing status in a STEM major. However, once the additional Humanities & Fine Arts and Social & Behavioral Sciences courses are completed at the receiving four-year institution, students can reverse-transfer their completed lower-division coursework to the sending community college if the student wishes to get the GECC Package credential transcript.

In Fiscal Year 2023, more than 7,632 students completed a GECC credential from a community college, which enables those students to enter a baccalaureate institution as a junior. Further, granting GECC-credentialed students junior status unlocks upper-division coursework to transfer students, saving them time and money to degree completion.

## Institutional Participation

The IAI Act mandates all public two-year and four-year institutions participate in IAI as Full Participants by submitting and reviewing courses for approval; maintain a complete IAI General Education Core Curriculum package (GECC package; and, if applicable to the institution, maintain up to four major courses approved for transfer<sup>2</sup>. IAI staff conduct an annual audit to ensure public institution compliance with the Act.

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<sup>2</sup> 110 ILCS 152/1

## IAI Fiscal Year 2023 Quick Facts

Table 1. Quick Facts

<b>Total Number of Institutions</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>Full Participating Institutions<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>69</b>
Public	60
Private	9
<b>Receiving-Only Institutions<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>38</b>
Private	38

Academic Year 2022 Total Transfer Population: 38,196<sup>5</sup>

The charts below, generated from IBHE's Transfer Dashboard, show the total Transfer Population (38,196) as a portion of Total Undergraduate Enrollment (491,150) by gender and race/ethnic. Not included in the chart is ICCB's number of transfer students earning a GECC package credential, equaling 7,632.

Figure 1. Race/Ethnicity

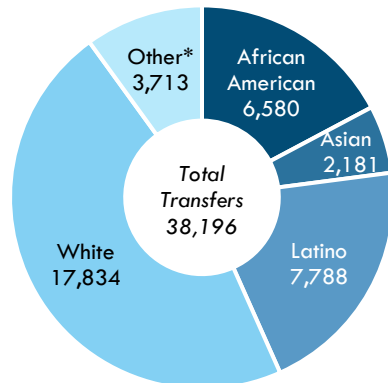
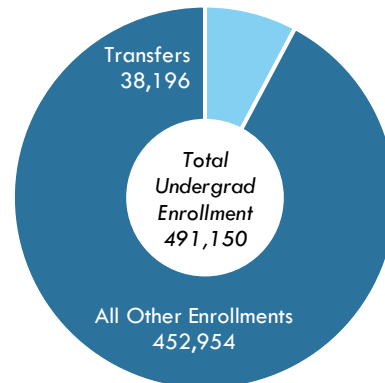


Figure 2. Undergraduate Enrollment



\*The Other category includes: Native American and Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, Multiracial, International, and No Report

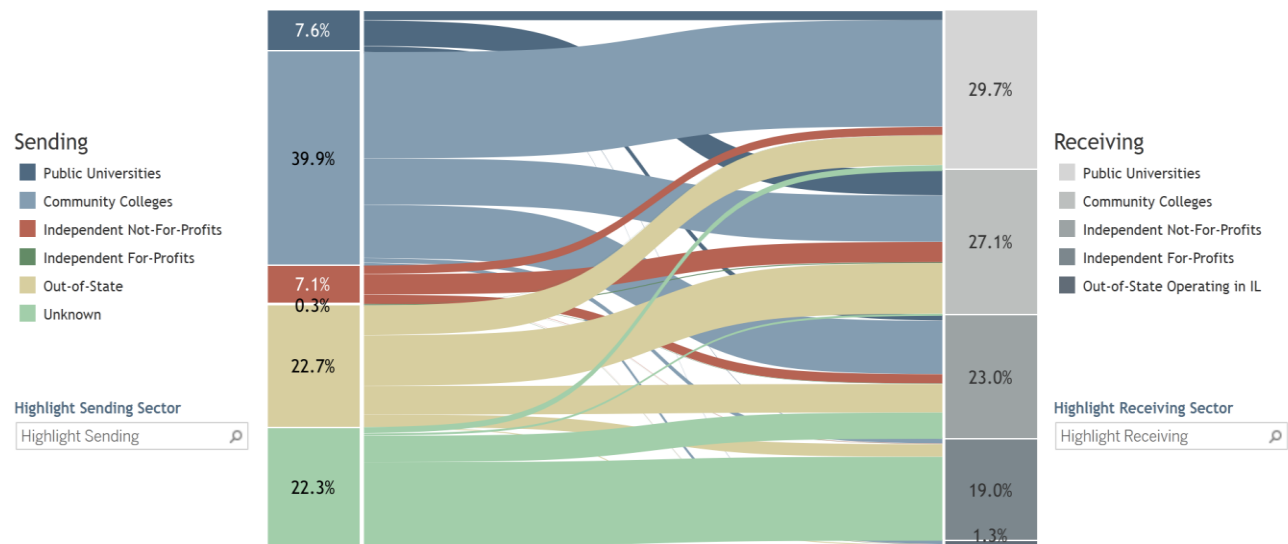
<sup>3</sup> Full Participation Institutions are required to be accredited by the Higher Learning Commission or other regional accreditor; seek approval for and maintain a full GECC package; agree to accept as meeting all lower-division general education requirements of the institution of a completed GECC package from any other participating institution. Source: Policies and Procedures Manual for the Illinois Articulation Initiative. Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board: 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Receiving -Only institutions agree to accept as meeting all lower-division general education requirements of the institution a completed GECC Package from any other participating institution. Institutional reference to IAI must include a receiving-only disclaimer. Receiving institutions will allow transfer-in students with a partially completed GECC package the option of completing the GECC after transfer under certain conditions. Source: Policies and Procedures Manual for the Illinois Articulation Initiative. Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board: 2020.

<sup>5</sup> IBHE Information Management and Research: IHEIS Fall Enrollment Collection and Fall Enrollment Survey II; ICCB Centralized Data System – Fall Enrollment

The Transfer Student Distribution chart<sup>6</sup> below, generated from IBHE's Transfer Dashboard, shows the flow of transfer students from the sending institutions to the receiving institutions demonstrating that the majority of the transfer students flow from public community colleges to public universities.

Figure 1. Distribution of Sending Sector by Receiving Sector



Panel Information

The IAI GECC and Major faculty panels serve as the foundation for IAI course review. Each fully participating institution must provide appropriate and qualified full-time faculty to serve three-year terms on relevant panels. In addition, seats on each panel are reserved for one executive or staff-level institutional representative to provide an institutional perspective. There are currently six general education (GECC) panels and fifteen active major panels in which faculty meet to review new and ongoing courses every spring and fall; only full-participating institutions or institutions working toward becoming full participants submit courses for review.

Faculty Participation in the IAI GECC and Major Panels

Table 2. Faculty Participation

Total Faculty	303
Public Four-Year Faculty	110
Public Two-Year Faculty	167
Private Institution Faculty	26

Panel Process

For a course to receive IAI approval, a participating institution must submit a representative course syllabus and other applicable course materials (e.g., sample labs) to the appropriate GECC or Major panel for review. All panels meet in the spring and fall semesters to determine each course’s alignment to a panel’s

<sup>6</sup> IBHE Information Management and Research: IHEIS Fall Enrollment Collection and Fall Enrollment Survey II; ICCB Centralized Data System – Fall Enrollment

course descriptors and approval criteria. The iManage system and the iTransfer database are the IAI's formal database and information repository, respectively, for all course submissions, panel decisions, and faculty and institutional participant access to course submission materials. If a course is approved by a panel, it receives an IAI Code assignment communicating to students and institutions' registrars that the course has been approved for transfer by the IAI. Students and institutions may access the iTransfer website to determine whether a course at a particular institution has received IAI approval and an associated course code, indicating approval for transfer.

## IAI Panel Activity Quick Facts:

Table 3. IAI Panel Quick Facts

GECC Panels	
Number of GECC Panels	6
GECC Course Descriptors	199
Active GECC Courses	6,303
Major Panels	
Number of Major Panels	15
GECC Course Descriptors	82
Active Major Courses	2,415
Course Submission	
<b>Total Number of Courses Submitted for Fiscal Year 2023 Review</b>	<b>1,060</b>
Number Approved	770
Number Sent Back for More Information	218
Number Returned to Institution Unapproved	72

Along with the IAI, the IBHE and ICCB assist in ensuring institutional participation and adequate course submissions in IAI General Education and Major panels, faculty and institutional representation in the process, and compliance with the Act.

## IAI History and Transfer in Illinois

The Illinois Articulation Initiative, created in 1993 as a joint effort between the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Illinois Community College Board, and transfer coordinators from Illinois colleges and universities, is a mature, coordinated, well-functioning statewide system that serves an average of 44,400<sup>7</sup> transfer students annually over the past five years and includes nearly 110 participating public and private institutions. The IAI was designed to support students who have not necessarily determined the specific major(s) they want to pursue or the particular institution(s) to which they would like to transfer. The need for and importance of “seamless transfer” among and between Illinois’ degree-granting institutions was codified in 2017 by the Illinois General Assembly in the Illinois Articulation Initiative Act (the Act) (110 ILCS 152/1). The Act mandates the IBHE and ICCB to:

<sup>7</sup> Annually 2018-2022 for undergraduate degree-seeking students only; non-degree-seeking students are not included in transfer data since 2016.



*(a) . . . co-manage the implementation, oversight, and evaluation of the Illinois Articulation Initiative. . . and (b) The Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Community College Board shall provide a joint report on an annual basis to the General Assembly, the Governor, and the Illinois P-20 Council on the status of the Illinois Articulation Initiative and the implementation of this Act” (Source: P.A. 103-469, eff. 1-1-24)*

... and requires all Illinois public community colleges and universities:

*to participate in the Illinois Articulation Initiative; maintain a complete GECC package; accept all courses approved for IAI GECC codes for transfer as fulfilling parts of the GECC package; and to prohibit additional lower-division general education course requirements for students with a complete GECC package (Source: P.A. 103-469, eff. 1-1-24).*

The IAI has been administratively housed and supported via State funds at Illinois State University (ISU) since 1997, a pivotal move by the Boards that, because ISU initiated the iTransfer website that year, created a comprehensive transfer system in Illinois and enabled the launch of a fully functioning IAI and GECC Package in 1998. The IAI staff consists of a full-time director, coordinator, and system programmer as well as a part-time technology/programming consultant. IBHE and ICCB staff serve as GECC and Major panel managers and provide policy and other guidance and external communications services.

Faculty from public community colleges and universities and participating private institutions from across the state take responsibility for ensuring that GECC and lower-division major courses meet expected standards of quality and rigor, ensuring that receiving IAI-approved courses meet accepted standards for general education and prepare transfer students for upper-division and major coursework; faculty participation in IAI panels is key to seamless transfer in Illinois and student success. In Fiscal Year 2023, 22 IAI panels comprised of 303 faculty<sup>8</sup> reviewed 1,060 courses. IAI maintains more than 8,700 active general education and major courses across 281 course categories. Once approved, courses are reviewed by faculty panels regularly, ensuring that IAI-approved courses remain relevant, adhere to IAI policies, and provide students and institutions with confidence in the integrity of transferred coursework.

Today, Illinois is recognized nationally as a model for transfer student success and now leads the nation in bachelor's degree completion rates among community college students who transfer to four-year colleges, significantly exceeding the national average. This success comes from a 25-year history of coordinating the transfer needs of an average 41,000 students annually over the past five years through the Illinois Articulation Initiative, which serves students and their families by guaranteeing transferability of approved courses. The IAI serves Illinois' institutions by ensuring approved courses retain integrity, remain relevant and applicable, and provide the appropriate rigor and preparation expected of college-level courses. These dual features of IAI are intentional and vital to seamless transfer and to ensuring student success.

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<sup>8</sup> Number of faculty varies year to year. ICCB, IBHE, and IAI regularly audit participation to ensure adequate panel staffing.