

# Four-Year Report on Progress in Meeting the Goals of the **Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act (STAR Act)**

*(P.A. 99-316 effective January 1, 2016; amended  
P.A. 100-0824 effective August 13, 2018)*

Review of Progress  
in Meeting the Goals of  
the Illinois Articulation Initiative  
Act (099-0636), Responding to  
**Senate Joint Resolution 22**



Illinois Board of Higher Education

Submitted by



Illinois Community College Board

January 9, 2020



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OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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As part of an ongoing review of transfer student success in Illinois, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) developed a joint report on progress in meeting the goals of the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act (STAR Act) (P.A. 99-316 effective January 1, 2016; amended P.A. 100-0824 effective August 13, 2018) as well as a review of progress in meeting the goals of the Illinois Articulation Initiative Act (099-0636) in response to Senate Joint Resolution 22.

Illinois is recognized nationally as a model for transfer student success. Illinois 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.

The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI), created in 1993, is a mature, coordinated, well-functioning state system that serves an average of 45,000-50,000 transfer students annually and includes 110 participating public and private institutions. The IAI is designed to support students who have not necessarily determined the specific majors they want to pursue or the particular institutions to which they would like to transfer. It is a model for transfer initiatives in other states, including Indiana, Missouri, and California. Over 6,800 general education courses are included in IAI across 194 course categories. Those courses are reviewed regularly by 21 statewide panels comprised of over 400 two- and four-year faculty, thereby ensuring that IAI-approved courses remain relevant and adhere to IAI policies. This state system is further supplemented by a robust set of intra-institutional and programmatic transfer agreements.

While there is much Illinois can be proud of, the STAR Act and SJR 22 provide the impetus for a broad, statewide review of transferability in order to advance the state's 60x25 attainment goal. Consequently, the activities reported in this document represent key steps in a process, led by the IBHE and ICCB in partnership with academic leaders and faculty across Illinois, to advance solutions to issues identified. IBHE and ICCB staff are closely collaborating on that review and have jointly convened a statewide transfer working group charged with identifying shortcomings in existing practices, new conditions that affect student transfer in Illinois, and solutions.

In fall 2019, the transfer working group conducted a survey of all public universities in response to mandates included in the STAR Act and SJR 22. The responses, combined with information gathered by the ICCB from all public community colleges, are summarized in this report.

Notable findings include:

- 68.4% of transfer students with a completed associate degree in the study's largest cohort group of 3800 graduated within three years of transfer. This compares very favorably to the national average rate of 60% for students who start at public universities full-time and complete at the same university.

- All public universities report that a student with an earned Associate of Arts or Associate of Science is eligible for transfer into a baccalaureate program with junior status and admission to an academic program, subject to program capacity, if the student meets the requirements of the transfer degree and major-specific prerequisites.
- IBHE and ICCB adopted a statewide policy and associated rules for reverse transfer applicable to two- and four-year institutions in order to maximize degree completion.
- All two- and four-year public institutions have policies for the awarding of military credit. American Council on Education recommendations form the basis for awarding that credit. IBHE and ICCB are currently exploring statewide policies for awarding of military credit in collaboration with the Midwest Higher Education Compact's Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit (MCMC).
- Effective January 2019, community colleges became eligible to award students the GECC (General Education Core Curriculum) credential, which represents the general education component of the IAI GECC within the associate of arts degree. This provides evidence of completion as well as documentation of a significant milestone in the transfer pathway.
- The full IAI GECC package will satisfy all lower-division general education requirements at all public universities. For students who have not completed the full package, individual articulated courses will be counted per IAI GECC agreements. In some cases, a grade of C or better will be required to satisfy licensure or accreditation requirements.

The report also identifies fifteen specific opportunities for improvement in four areas:

- Improving Transparency to Improve Advising and Maximize Student Success;
- Refining Processes and Strategies;
- Creating and Improving Pathways; and
- Ensuring Appropriate Resources to Maximize Transfer Student Success.

The transfer working group, in collaboration with IBHE and ICCB staff, will convene frequently in the spring and summer of 2020 to discuss those opportunities and make specific recommendations for action, including best practices, policies, and procedures.

## I. INTRODUCTION AND CONTENTS

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This document responds to two reporting requirements both relating to student transfer among Illinois institutions of higher education and, specifically, the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI):

1. The four-year report on progress in meeting the goals of the Student Transfer Achievement Reform (STAR) Act as mandated by section 25 (b) of the Act (ILCS 150/25), effective January 1, 2016.
2. A review of progress in meeting the goals of the Illinois Articulation Initiative Act (099-0636), effective January 1, 2017 as mandated by Senate Joint Resolution 22.

The STAR Act is designed to facilitate transfer among Illinois public institutions, particularly for students with a completed Associate of Arts or an Associate of Science degree. In compliance with section 25(b), this report summarizes the implementation of the Act within four years of the Act's effective date.

Senate Joint Resolution 22 (SJR 22) directs the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) to review the IAI General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) and its implementation on Illinois campuses. Its purpose is to gauge attainment of the goals of the Illinois Articulation Act, 099-0636, effective January 1, 2017 and to identify any shortcomings in meeting those goals.

## II. CONTEXT OF POSTSECONDARY TRANSFER IN ILLINOIS

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This report will address the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act (STAR Act) and Senate Joint Resolution 22 specifically, but both the IBHE and the ICCB are conducting this review in the context of a larger, ongoing review of transferability of credit in its many forms.

*Illinois now leads the nation in bachelor's degree completion rates among community college students who transfer to four-year colleges.*

“Transfer credit” consists of courses that transfer from one campus to another – the credit most commonly associated the term – but also dual enrollment credit, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) credit, College Level Examination Program (CLEP), military credit, credit from prior learning assessment (PLA) and proficiency credit that may be awarded by individual institutions.

Transfer among Illinois institutions of higher education has been extremely successful. Illinois now leads the nation in bachelor's degree completion rates among community college students who transfer to four-year colleges. With the latest cohort for which data are available, Illinois is not only the national leader in transferability; it exceeds the national average by a noticeable margin. 53.8% of Illinois community college students who transferred to four-year colleges completed a bachelor's degree within six years. This bachelor's degree completion rate was 11.6 percentage points higher than the national average of 42.2%. A complete report on transfer student success in Illinois is included as Appendix A.

Underlying Illinois' success in transfer degree attainment are complex patterns of student transfer. Some students begin at their community college with a major decided upon as well as a four-year university chosen to complete their degree. Others may transfer among several community colleges and universities, a phenomenon known as "the swirl." Many students embark on post-secondary education with no firm major in mind and no choice of a transfer university. The Illinois Articulation Initiative was created in 1993 for this last category of students – those with no major selected and no chosen transfer institution.

*The Illinois Articulation Initiative is a mature, coordinated, well-functioning system that includes 110 participating public and private institutions.*

The Illinois Articulation Initiative is a mature, coordinated, well-functioning system that includes 110 participating public and private institutions. Over 6,800 general education courses are active in the IAI GECC spread across 194 course categories. Those courses are reviewed regularly by 21 statewide panels comprised of over 400 two- and four-year faculty, thereby ensuring that IAI-approved courses remain relevant and adhere to IAI policies. These panels typically include department heads, deans or chief academic officers as well. IAI has served as a model for transfer initiatives in other states, including Indiana, Missouri, and California.

Illinois' achievement in facilitating student transfer reflects the higher education system's long history of collaborative structures and organizations devoted to best practices for student success, including transition from high school to college and transfer among institutions of higher education. ICCB and IBHE representatives connect with and participate in all these groups:

- The Faculty Advisory Committee to the IBHE, an organization unique among the states, provides the IBHE with faculty perspectives on key issues. Faculty members represent institutions of higher education from all sectors and regions of Illinois.
- The Illinois Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (IACRAO) founded in 1923 and currently representing 100 public and private institutions statewide, meets regularly to share information on enrollment trends, technology, and legislation.
- The Illinois Association of College Admission Counseling (IACAC) brings together admissions professionals from secondary and higher education as well as financial aid officers to form one of the most active groups in the state. IACAC coordinates college fairs, articulation events and, through its many committees, seeks to serve students transitioning from high school to college as well as the needs of transfer students.
- The Illinois Academic Advising Association (ILACADA) is a statewide organization that meets to share best practices in student advisement, including advisement of transfer students.
- My Credits Transfer is a web-based transfer information system that served over 200,000 unique visitors in 2018. They completed 1,424,096 searches with 64,824,154 results.

- The Transfer Coordinators (TC) for Illinois Colleges and Universities brings each Illinois public two- and four-year institution and 37 private four-year and two-year institutions focused on transfer issues for students, implementation of transfer policies and requirements and communication across all levels of higher education. Representatives from the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Board of Higher Education, as well as IAI and MyCreditsTransfer, also participate.
- The Illinois Association for Institution Research is a statewide professional organization comprised of institutional researchers and analysts at colleges and universities in Illinois. IAIR promotes institutional research in postsecondary education as a professional activity and disseminates information about the methods and content of institutional research.
- Campus-based transfer coordinators are an essential resource for students planning to transfer. They also serve as vocal advocates for transfer students on their campuses and through service to the organizations above.
- Individual faculty initiatives also serve to facilitate transfer through alignment of curriculum. A recent example, partially funded by the National Science Foundation, brought community college and university faculty in the geosciences together to discuss transfer issues.

### III. ONGOING REVIEW AND DATA COLLECTION

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While there is much Illinois can be proud of, the STAR Act and SJR 22 provide the impetus for a broad, statewide review of transferability. Consequently, the activities reported in this document represent key steps in a process, led by the IBHE and ICCB in partnership with academic leaders and faculty across Illinois, to advance solutions to issues identified. IBHE and ICCB staff are closely collaborating on that review and have jointly convened a statewide transfer working group charged with identifying shortcomings in existing practices, new conditions that affect student transfer in Illinois, and solutions. That group is meeting regularly in 2019-2020 and is comprised of campus experts in several appropriate areas, including faculty, chief academic officers, registrars, advisors, and transfer coordinators from both community colleges and public universities. This ongoing review will address requirements and recommendations of the Illinois Articulation Act (099-0636), the STAR Act, the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act (PWR Act) (099-0674), as well as Senate Joint Resolutions 22 and 41. A membership list is included as Appendix B.

To assist this group with its work, a survey was sent by the IBHE to registrars and academic leadership at all public universities in Illinois on November 4, 2019. That survey included questions addressing the various requirements of the STAR Act as well as those of SJR 22. Responses are summarized below. The survey is included as Appendix C.



### *Data Collection and Analysis*

To fulfill the reporting requirements set forth in the STAR Act, Illinois Board of Higher Education staff worked collaboratively with Illinois Community College Board staff to develop and execute a plan for data analysis that involved matching information across their respective data systems using the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS). Through a mutually beneficial data sharing agreement for data deriving from IBHE's Illinois Higher Education information system and ICCB's Centralized Data System, IBHE provided ICCB with a file of new transfer students who enrolled at all twelve Illinois public universities from Academic Year (AY) 2014-15 through AY 2017-18. The data sharing agreement provides the foundation for additional research within the transfer space and improved reporting of transfer student outcomes above and beyond the information that is statutorily required. ICCB then matched those students with enrollment and degree completion information specific to Illinois community colleges, such as whether the given individual earned an associate degree, and if so, during which semester, at which community college, and in which major.

Consistent with the data requested in the STAR Act, analysis was limited to new transfer students who initially enrolled full-time during their first semester at an Illinois public university. A full description of the methodology used as well as a chart indicating the majors of community college students is included as Appendix D.

Data analysis is broken out into four sections: Transfer Student Enrollment, Transfer Student Progression, Transfer Student Bachelor's Degree Completion, and Credit Accumulation and Time to Degree. The STAR Act assumes that students declare a specific major at the community college while the associate degree is usually more general in nature. Approximately 90% of community college students are currently classified in two generalist majors, making it difficult to track their progression according to the criteria established in the Act.

### *Transfer Student Enrollment*

The number of new community college students who transferred to an Illinois public university and enrolled full-time, as well as the percentage of those students completing associate degrees prior to transfer as depicted in *Figure 1*. The information is disaggregated by cohort. The overall number of new full-time transfer students from Illinois community colleges at Illinois public universities declined slightly from 2014 to 2015 and 2016 (about -2.5%) and increased by 5% from 2016 to 2017. As illustrated in *Figure 1*, there was a +6.3 percentage point increase in the proportion of community college transfer students with associate degrees from 2015 to 2016, but a somewhat similar -6.9 percentage point decline from 2016 to 2017.

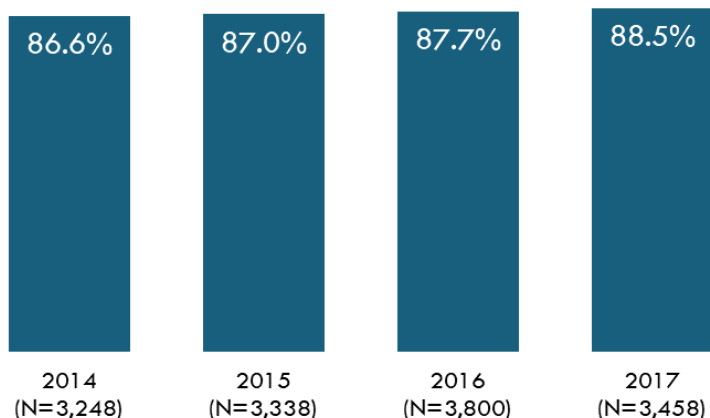
Figure 1: Transfer Student Enrollment

	2014	2015	2016	2017
New Full-Time Transfers from Illinois Community Colleges	7,561	7,369	7,371	7,737
New Full-Time Transfers from Illinois Community Colleges with Associate Degrees	3,248	3,338	3,800	3,458
% of New Full-time Transfers from Illinois Community Colleges with Associate Degrees	43.0%	45.3%	51.6%	44.7%

### Transfer Student Progression

Fall to fall retention was institution specific and established by measuring whether a new community college transfer student with an associate degree was still enrolled at their first Illinois public university during their second fall semester. As shown in Figure 2, fall to fall retention was stable across all four cohorts, with slight incremental increases among the more recent cohorts. More importantly, a high proportion of the cohort members were retained (nearly seven out of every eight). These retention rates were somewhat higher than the parallel measure for first-time full-time direct entrants at all public universities (81%) and the parallel measure for all first-time full-time community college students (62%)<sup>1</sup>.

Figure 2: Fall to Fall Retention by Cohort



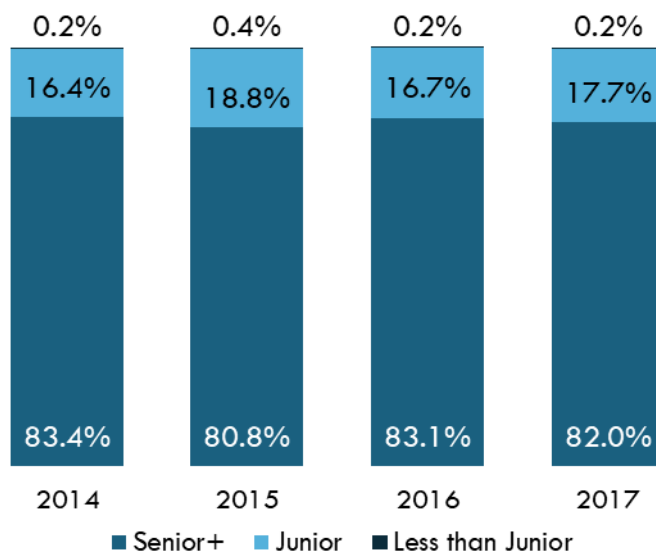
### Progression to Senior Status

Progression to senior class status was measured among the cohort members who were retained to the fall semester of their second academic year. As shown in Figure 3, more than four out of every five of the retained members of each cohort advanced to senior class status during the subsequent fall semester. There was not much variation across the four cohorts in terms of the proportion progressing from junior to senior status within one academic year. More importantly, only a small fraction of each

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (May 2019), *The Condition of Education at a Glance*. Washington, DC. [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_ctr.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_ctr.asp)

cohort had a class status that was lower than junior (0.2% for the 2014, 2016, and 2017 cohorts and 0.4% for the 2015 cohort). The remainder of the retained students from each cohort continued with junior class status. This ranged from a low of 16.4% for the 2014 cohort to a high of 18.8% for the 2015 cohort.

Figure 3: Class Status During the Second Fall Semester among Retained Students by Cohort



**Retention by Major Alignment**

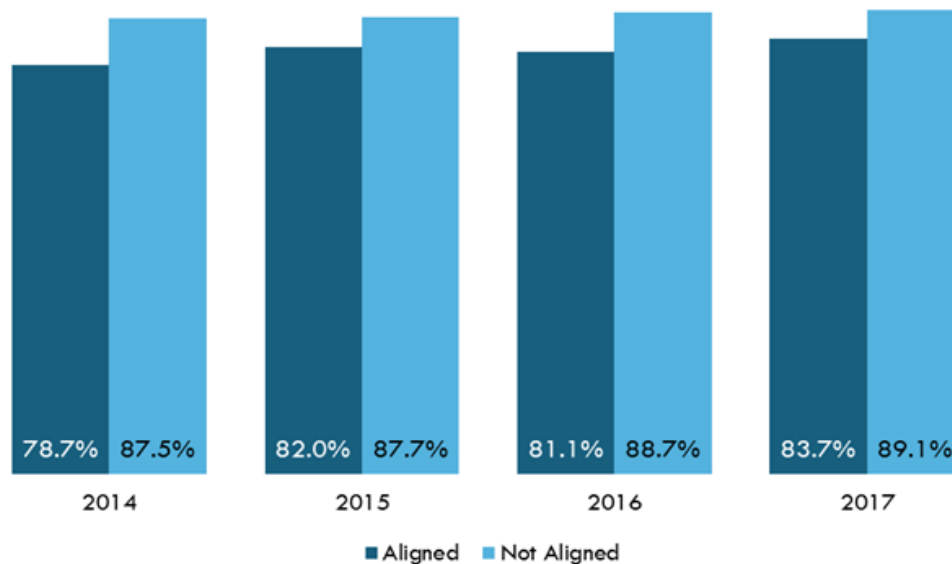
In considering the relationship between community college major and university major, it is essential to note that, currently, the overwhelming majority (approximately 90%) of community college transfer students attaining associate degrees are completing programs in either Liberal Arts and Sciences or Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies as indicated by a 2-digit Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code. This was consistent across all four cohorts and is characteristic of the general nature of the majority of associate degrees. Appendix D contains a full accounting of community college majors according to the 2-digit CIP code classification currently in use as well as the number and percentage of students in each.<sup>2</sup>

ICCB introduced a data element as part of its Centralized Data System for students in transfer degree programs which includes the 6-digit CIP code that best corresponds with the student’s area of concentration. The collection of transfer degree area of concentration at the community college-level currently varies across the system. ICCB will continue to collect and evaluate the feasibility of using transfer degree area of concentration with IBHE as it pertains to examining major and transfer. While the IAI focuses on assisting students with no chosen transfer institution or a goal to transfer without certainty of major, tracking students by the CIP code associated with their area of concentration may potentially enhance the ability of ICCB and IBHE to track both students with an identified major and destination school as well as those who have not decided.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on CIP codes see: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/FAQ.aspx?y=55>

The following information highlights the fall to fall retention outcomes by the alignment, or the lack thereof, between one’s community college major and the first post-transfer major. As shown in *Figure 4*, the students with alignment between their community college and current majors were somewhat less likely to be retained at the beginning of year 2. However, the retention rate among those with an aligned major improved among the more recent cohorts, slightly narrowing the difference.

Figure 4: Fall to Fall Retention by Alignment Between Majors



### Transfer Student Bachelor’s Degree Completion

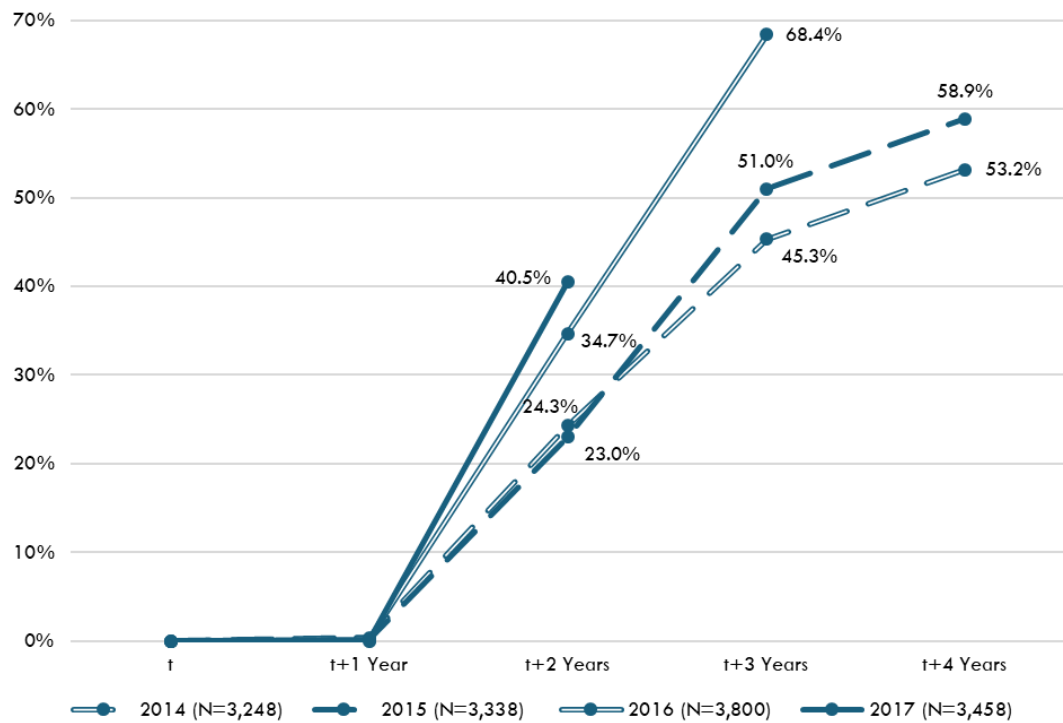
The analysis revealed large incremental increases in bachelor’s completion rates among the more recent cohorts. In examining the rates of completion within two years of transfer, there were noticeable increases among the 2016 and 2017 cohorts. As illustrated in *Figure 5*, the rate of completion within two years of transferring was 34.7% among the 2016 cohort and 40.5% among the 2017 cohort and these rates were noticeably higher than the 2014 (24.3%) and 2015 cohorts (23.0%). The large increase in the rate of bachelor’s degree completion among the more recent cohorts within three years of transfer is also noteworthy. The rate increased from 45.3% for the 2014 cohort to 51.0% for the 2015 cohort, and then jumped to 68.4% for the 2016 cohort, which also happened to be the largest cohort. Also, the bachelor’s completion rate for the 2016 cohort within three years (t+3), was substantially higher than the bachelor’s completion rates within four years of transfer for the 2014 and 2015 cohorts.

For national context, the average institution-specific completion rate (as measured through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, or IPEDS) for the entire cohort of students who start full-time at public universities was 60% in 2017.<sup>3</sup> According to the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), 56% of the fall 2013 entering cohort completed a degree at the original institution within six years, while an

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (September 2018), *Digest of Education Statistics: 2018 Tables and Figures*. Washington, DC. [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18\\_326.10.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_326.10.asp)

additional 11% completed a degree elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that the NSC cohort definition is more inclusive and enrollment intensity is not considered when calculating those specific measures, as is done with IPEDS. In comparison, the IPEDS method for establishing the cohort used to calculate that specific completion rate limits the group to first-time full-time students only.

Figure 5: Cumulative Rates of Bachelor's Degree Completion by Cohort



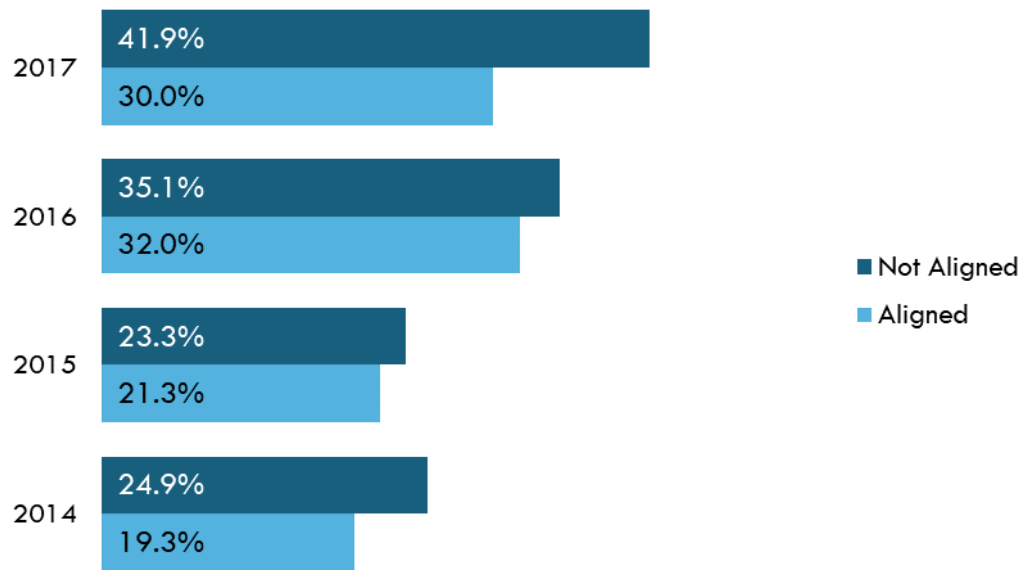
Note: t=initial semester of transfer

### Bachelor's Degree Completion by Major Alignment

This section highlights the bachelor's degree completion rates within two years of initial transfer by the alignment, or the lack of alignment, between one's community college major and the first post-transfer major. As shown in Figure 6, the students with alignment between their community college and first public university majors had somewhat lower rates of degree completion when compared to others within their respective cohorts lacking such alignment. The differences based on alignment within the cohorts were somewhat larger for the 2014 (5.6 percentage points) and 2017 (11.9 percentage points) cohorts and more muted for the 2015 (1.2 percentage points) and 2016 (3.1 percentage points) cohorts.

<sup>4</sup> Shapiro, D., Ryu, M., Huie, F., Liu, Q., and Zheng, Y. (December 2019), *Completing College 2019 National Report (Signature Report 18)*, Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. [https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Completions\\_Report\\_2019.pdf](https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Completions_Report_2019.pdf)

*Figure 6: Bachelor's Degree Completion within Two Years of Transfer by Alignment Between Majors*



When the time horizon for bachelor's degree completion is extended and measured within three years of initial transfer, the previously mentioned within cohort differences based on alignment status are essentially eliminated (see Figure 7).

*Figure 7: Bachelor's Degree Completion within Three Years of Transfer by Alignment Between Majors*

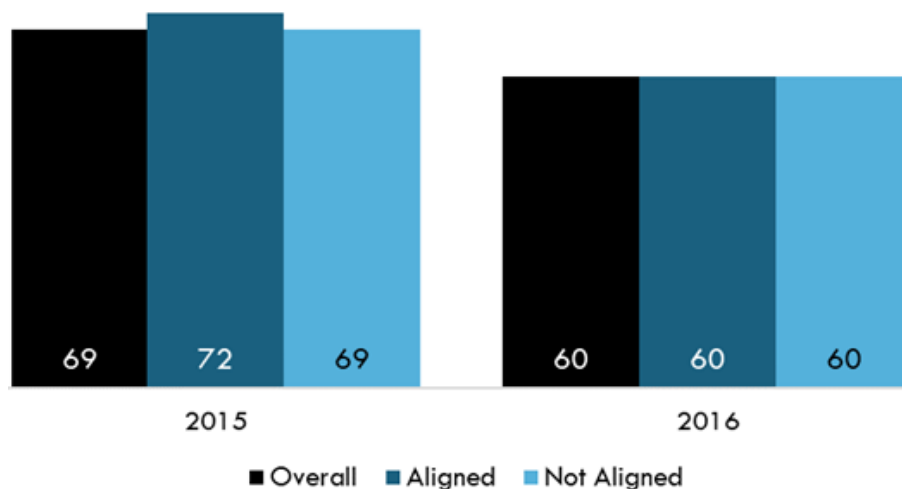


*Credit Accumulation and Time to Degree*

Due to the time horizon variation across the cohorts (see Appendix D) and completeness issues specific to the credit hours variables submitted for the 2014 cohort, the credit accumulation and time to completion measures were limited to the 2015 and 2016 cohorts and calculated for cohort members completing within three years of initial transfer. The average number of credits accumulated among bachelor’s degree completers from the 2015 cohort was 69, while the same measure was 60 for the 2016 cohort. This represented a fairly large difference between the two cohorts (see *Figure 8*).

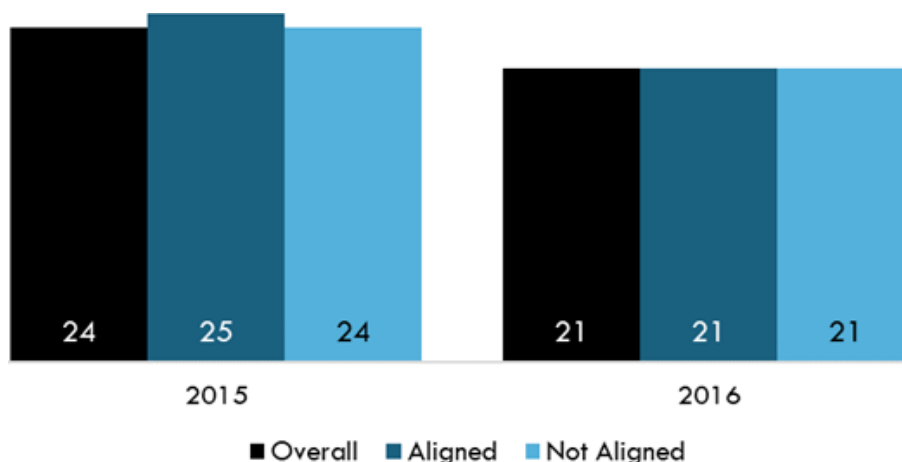
When disaggregated by the alignment of the community college major to the degree major, slight differences existed within the 2015 cohort. For the 2015 cohort, completers with aligned majors required slightly more credit hours (72) than their cohort peers without aligned majors (69 hours). Among the 2016 cohort, completers with and without aligned majors accumulated an average of 60 credits, indicating no difference in credit accumulation by the alignment between one’s community college major and the major associated with their bachelor’s degree.

*Figure 8: Mean Credit Hour Accumulation among Bachelor’s Degree Completers by Alignment between Majors*



In terms of time to degree, as measured in months, the bachelor’s completers from the 2015 cohort took 24 months to finish their respective degrees (based on the median). In comparison, the bachelor’s completers from the 2016 cohort took 21 months to finish (based on the median). For this metric, there was not much within cohort variation based on the alignment of one’s community college major to the major associated with their bachelor’s degree.

Figure 9: Median Time to Degree (in months) among Bachelor’s Degree Completers by Alignment between Majors



#### IV. FOUR-YEAR REPORT ON PROGRESS IN MEETING THE GOALS OF THE STUDENT TRANSFER ACHIEVEMENT REFORM (STAR) ACT

(P.A. 99-316 EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2016; AMENDED P.A. 100-0824 EFFECTIVE AUGUST 13, 2018).

The STAR Act is composed of several sections listed below. The survey developed for public universities addresses each of these sections.

- Section 10 (a) (110 ILCS 150/10) states that a student with an earned Associate of Arts or Associate of Science is “deemed eligible for transfer into a baccalaureate program of a State 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.”
- Section 10 (b) states that a community college district shall develop and grant associate degrees to facilitate transfer per section (a).
- Section 10 (c-e) encourages cooperation among institutions, particularly through articulation agreements, encourages community colleges to accept credit earned at other institutions as part of degrees for transfer, and specifically allows remedial coursework as necessary to successfully complete a degree for transfer.
- Section 15 (110 ILCS 150/15) states that a “State university shall admit and grant junior status in a program, subject to available program capacity, to any Illinois community college student who meets all requirements of Section 10; has completed all lower-division prerequisites and meets the admission requirement of the State university’s program or major.”
- Section 20 (a) (110 ILCS 150/20) mandates that a “State university may not require a student transferring pursuant to this Act to take more than 60 additional semester units beyond the lower-division major requirements for majors requiring 120 semester units, provided that the student remains enrolled



in the same program of study and has completed university major transfer requirements.”

- Section 20 (b) mandates that a “State university may not require students transferring pursuant to this Act to repeat courses that are articulated with those taken at the community college and counted toward an associate degree for transfer.”
- Section 20 (c) encourages State universities to facilitate the seamless transfer of credits toward a baccalaureate degree pursuant to the intent of this Act.
- Section 23 (ILCS 150/23) requires the IBHE and ICCB to collaborate on a policy to foster the reverse transfer of credit for any student who has accumulated at least 15 hours of credit. Section (d) also directs the boards to adopt a policy regarding the “award of academic credit for military training applicable to meeting a community college’s requirements for awarding an associate degree.”
- Section 25 requires that the IBHE review the implementation of this Act and file a report on that review with the General Assembly on or before May 31, 2017, and file a four-year review reporting the outcomes of the implementation of this Act.
- Section 30 requires, beginning in the 2019-2020 academic year, that all public institutions require students with 30 completed credit hours to inform their institution of all associate or baccalaureate degree programs they are interested in pursuing. The institution shall make a reasonable attempt to conduct an advising meeting with the student to inform the student of the prerequisite requirements of those programs.

## V. PROGRESS IN MEETING THE GOALS OF THE STAR ACT (ILCS 150/25)

### Summary of Responses from Public Universities

**Survey Question 1:** *The STAR Act ([PA 099-0316](#)) states that universities should admit a student from an Illinois community college with a completed baccalaureate-oriented associate degree directly into their requested major with junior status if “the student meets the requirements of the transfer degree.” Programs are allowed to establish minimum GPA for admission and limits on enrollment due to program capacity.*

*Is this in accordance with your campus policy? Please explain if not or if there are exceptions.*

**Section 10 (a) (110 ILCS 150/10)** states that a student with an earned Associate of Arts or Associate of Science is “deemed eligible for transfer into a baccalaureate program of a State 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.”

All twelve public universities indicate that this is reflected in their policies. Some noted that certain high-demand programs have higher admission requirements as specifically allowed in Section 10 and Section 15.

**Section 10 (b)** states that a community college district shall develop and grant associate degrees to facilitate transfer per section (a).

All community college districts in the state offer both the Associate of Arts degree and the Associate of Science degree. Both degrees are designed to facilitate ease of transfer from community colleges to baccalaureate-granting institutions.

**Section 10 (c-e)** encourages cooperation among institutions, particularly through articulation agreements, encourages community colleges to accept credit earned at other institutions as part of degrees for transfer, and specifically allows remedial coursework as necessary to successfully complete a degree for transfer.

The Illinois Articulation Initiative General Education Core Curriculum is a national model for guaranteed acceptance of courses among institutions. Public institutions accept the entire IAI GECC package as fulfilling lower-division general education requirements but also accept individual courses as articulated through IAI.

Additionally, each institution maintains extensive lists of courses articulated by inter-institutional agreement. There is a well-known and long-established process for proposing and approving courses for articulation through ICCB's "Form 13." Form 13 provides a standardized format for the routing and approval of courses between a community college and a baccalaureate-granting institution and documentation of how the course will be applied at the transfer institution.

Institutions also maintain extensive transfer plans of study for specific majors to facilitate good planning and smooth transfer. These take two forms: (1) specific articulation agreements made between two institutions and (2) general guides, including IAI GECC, major, and other graduation requirements that are applicable to all students eligible for the Illinois Articulation Initiative.

*Example from the survey:*

Illinois State University (ISU) lists all articulated courses by community college (<https://registrar.illinoisstate.edu/transfer/courses/>) on its Transfer Credit Website (<https://registrar.illinoisstate.edu/transfer/>). Articulation agreements between ISU and partner community colleges are found at <https://registrar.illinoisstate.edu/transfer/articulation-agreements/>. Guides applicable to all IAI eligible students are found at <https://illinoisstate.edu/academics/majors/>.

**Section 15 (110 ILCS 150/15)** indicates that a "State university shall admit and grant junior status in a program, subject to available program capacity, to any Illinois community college student who meets all requirements of Section 10; has completed all lower-division prerequisites and meets the admission requirement of the State university's program or major."

All twelve public universities indicate that this is reflected in their policies. As in Section 10, some universities noted that certain high-demand programs have higher admission and continuance requirements.

*Example from the survey:*

The University of Illinois Springfield (UIS) had a typical response: “Yes, students who have earned a transferable associate’s degree from an Illinois community college (including the IAI General Education Package) transfer into UIS as juniors and can select an appropriate baccalaureate program major.”

**Survey Question 2:** *The STAR Act states that “a State university may not require a student transferring pursuant to this Act to take more than 60 additional semester units beyond the lower-division major requirements for majors requiring 120 semester units, provided that the student remains enrolled in the same program of study and has completed university major transfer requirements.” (Majors over 120 hours are exempt from this requirement.)*

*Is this in accordance with your campus policy? Please explain if not or if there are exceptions.*

**Section 20 (a) (110 ILCS 150/20)** mandates that a “State university may not require a student transferring pursuant to this Act to take more than 60 additional semester units beyond the lower-division major requirements for majors requiring 120 semester units, provided that the student remains enrolled in the same program of study and has completed university major transfer requirements.”

Public universities will accept for transfer all baccalaureate-oriented coursework completed with a passing grade, or in some instances courses completed with a C or higher, up to limits established by residency and upper-division course requirements of the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Higher Learning Commission. In the narrowly-defined conditions of Section 20 (a), students should be able, with careful planning, to complete their programs in 60 hours if there are no repeat courses as noted in Section 20 (b).

*Example from the survey:*

Western Illinois University’s (WIU) like many public universities, has existing processes and procedures that address the intent of this mandate but has not yet developed a specific policy statement on this relatively new legislation. WIU’s response is as follows:

“This is in accordance with standard University procedure; however, a formal policy limiting the hours to no more than 60 beyond lower division major prerequisites does not currently exist. The work that has been completed with our partner institutions to establish clear transfer guides ([http://www.wiu.edu/student\\_services/undergraduate\\_admissions/transfer/guides/](http://www.wiu.edu/student_services/undergraduate_admissions/transfer/guides/)) and 2+2 agreements ([http://www.wiu.edu/student\\_services/undergraduate\\_admissions/transfer/2plus2/](http://www.wiu.edu/student_services/undergraduate_admissions/transfer/2plus2/)) are aimed at ensuring transfer students are able to complete their major requirements and degrees as efficiently as possible. Information regarding WIU’s program requirement hours may be found at: <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/docs/DegreeProgramSemesterHourCounts.pdf>”

*Example from the survey:*

Eastern Illinois University (EIU) responds that it is already fully compliant with this mandate.

**Survey Question 3:** *The STAR Act states that "a State university may not require students transferring pursuant to this Act to repeat courses that are articulated with those taken at the community college and counted toward an associate degree for transfer." The IBHE will note in its reply that a grade of C or better is required in some programs leading to licensure or by accreditors.*

*With the exception for licensure and accreditation noted, are there are other exceptions on your campus?*

**Section 20 (b)** mandates that a "State university may not require students transferring pursuant to this Act to repeat courses that are articulated with those taken at the community college and counted toward an associate degree for transfer."

Articulated courses with an earned passing grade are transferrable for credit. However, there are several reasons why a student may need to repeat a course with a grade below C. Programs leading to licensure may have specific grade requirements. For example, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) requires that all courses taken as part of licensure requirements be completed with a grade of C or better. The same minimum grade standard is true for the requirements of certain specialized accrediting bodies such as the Association for the Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business or the Council on Social Work Education. Rarely, some majors may also impose minimum grade requirements. Again, rarely, some majors may require courses to be completed within a specific time frame (usually within seven years) in order to assure that content is current.

**Section 20 (c)** encourages State universities to facilitate the seamless transfer of credits toward a baccalaureate degree pursuant to the intent of this Act.

As indicated in **Section 10 (c-e)**, Illinois is in many respects a national model for seamless transfer. Beyond the Illinois Articulation Initiative General Education Core Curriculum, each university publishes extensive transfer guides with major-specific transfer recommendations and lists of articulated courses. Universities often have co-advising relationships with their partner community colleges to facilitate planning.

*Example from the survey:*

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's extensive transfer handbook is available online: <https://admissions.illinois.edu/apply/Transfer/handbook>.

It may be important to note here that transferability and applicability often are conflated inappropriately. This causes confusion as to why a course may not "count." The complete IAI GECC package of courses is transferable and guaranteed to satisfy lower-level general education requirements at all participating institutions. An individual GECC course will satisfy the corresponding GECC course category at all participating institutions. However, not all transferred courses are necessarily applicable to students' individual major or graduation requirements. For example, General Education Mathematics (M1 904) will not be applicable to the requirements of the mathematics major or many Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics (STEM) fields. When a student changes majors, it is sometimes the case that a course that was applicable to the first major will not be applicable to the new major. As described in 20 (b), students transferring courses with a grade of D may be required to repeat the course to earn a grade of C or higher.

In the current enrollment environment, universities compete for transfer students. As public institutions seek to serve more students and do so in a manner that improves time to and cost of degree, being “transfer student friendly” is critical. Indeed, each university invests heavily in making sure that transfer plans are updated annually, that transfers students have access to information and advisement, and that courses transfer as seamlessly as possible.

**Section 23 (ILCS 150/23)** requires the IBHE and the ICCB to collaborate on a policy to foster the reverse transfer of credit for any student who has accumulated at least 15 hours of credit.

The two boards drafted a common policy applicable to both two- and four-year institutions. That policy and associated rules were approved by the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) on November 12, 2019. The rules have been published by the Secretary of State in December 2019 and were distributed to all public institutions by the IBHE and ICCB. The full text approved by JCAR appears as Appendix E.

**Survey Question 4:** *The STAR Act as amended ([PA 100-0824](#)) indicates that “beginning with the 2019-2020 academic year each public institution shall require any student who, upon completing 30 academic credit hours, is interested in pursuing an associate degree or baccalaureate degree at the public institution to indicate to the public institution in which he or she is enrolled all of his or her degree programs of interest. The public institution in which the student is enrolled shall make a reasonable attempt to conduct a meeting with the student and an academic advisor of the public institution, who shall inform the student of the prerequisite requirements for the student’s degree programs of interest.”*

*Is this your campus policy? Please explain if not or if there are exceptions.*

**Section 30** requires, beginning in the 2019-2020 academic year, that all public institutions require students with 30 completed credit hours to inform their institution of all associate or baccalaureate degree programs they are interested in pursuing. The institution shall make a reasonable attempt to conduct an advising meeting with the student to inform the student of the prerequisite requirements of those programs.

All twelve public universities describe robust advising programs for students who have decided on a major and for those who are still exploring. While there are numerous models depending on institution and college, a common goal among programs is that students form an ongoing relationship with an advisor or advising center because students’ goals and majors can and do change at various points along a student’s path to a degree.

Advising models take into account university and college admission requirements, for example, the requirement that a student be initially admitted into a specific program or college. Some universities advise all students centrally in their first year to ensure that students make a good transition to the institution and then move students to an advisor in their specific degree program at or around 30 hours.

Advising models must also take into account students' specific needs and circumstances. Transfer students, adult learners, commuter students, traditional-age first-time college students, career and technical training students, and veterans – to name a few – all have different advising needs. Institutions train advisors accordingly and provide appropriate academic and non-academic support.

Currently, institutions do not report that they systematically require students with 30 completed hours to declare a list of potential majors but rather encourage or require advising appointments before each course registration period for the following semester. Consequently, students typically receive advising at key points well before, at, and after the 30 credit hour threshold set forth in this provision.

*Example from the survey:*

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) is one of the campuses that requires mandatory advisement of all degree-seeking students to develop plans for achieving academic goals.

**Survey Question 5:** *The STAR Act requires a policy on awarding credit for military training.*

*Does your campus award credit based on the Joint Services Transcript (JST)?*

*Does your campus award any credit based on the "Separation Agreement" ([DD 214](#))?*

*Does your campus award credit based on [A.C.E. recommendations](#) for military training?*

*Do you publicize credit awarded from the JST or DD 214 on your website or in your catalog?*

**Section 23 (d)** of the STAR Act requires that the Boards "adopt a policy regarding the award of academic credit for military training applicable to meeting a community college's requirements for awarding an associate degree."

American Council on Education (ACE) recommendations form the basis for awarding military credit. Following those recommendations, public universities award credit based on the Joint Services Transcript or JST. Some universities offer credit based on the military "Separation Agreement" (DD214).

ICCB requires all community colleges to have a policy in place to address awarding of academic credit for military training that is considered applicable to the requirements of the student's certificate or degree, consistent with a national higher education association that provided recommendations for military training courses and programs.

The ACE recommendations are complex, given the many possibilities for earning academic credit through military service. Many ACE credit recommendations are below three credit hours, causing mismatch to most university-level coursework. The greatest obstacle to awarding meaningful credit toward graduation is the mismatch between content earned through service and content in most university-level courses. As a result, a significant amount of credit is articulated as general elective hours toward graduation.

IBHE and ICCB are currently exploring statewide policies for awarding of military credit in collaboration with the Midwest Higher Education Compact's Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit (MCMC).

The generally accepted transcripts or documents from which military credit can be awarded are:

- The Joint Services Transcript – JST (formerly AARTS or SMART or Coast Guard Institute Transcript) – Marine Corps, Navy, Coast Guard, Army, National, and Army Reserve. An official copy of the JST request form may be obtained online at SMART-Joint Services Transcript.
- Community College of the Air Force Transcript (CCAF). The Community College of the Air Force Transcript request form is located at CCAF Transcript Request.
- Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education (DANTES).

*Example from the survey:*

Northern Illinois University (NIU) is among the institutions that awards credit based on the military separation agreement (DD214):

“Credit for military educational experience may be granted based on recommendations found in A Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experience in the Armed Services. Credit will be awarded at the level recommended by the American Council on Education (ACE). At a minimum, credit will be awarded as elective, although certain courses may be accepted as satisfying major departmental elective or required courses based on the evaluation by and recommendation of the academic unit. Students seeking credit must submit an official transcript from the ACE Transcript Service to NIU.

Students with a minimum of one year of active duty in and an honorable discharge from the U.S. Armed Services will receive 4 semester hours of general university elective credit provided they submit a copy of their DD214 to NIU's Office of Registration and Records.”

**Survey Question 6:** *The Illinois Articulation Initiative Act ([PA 099-0636](#)), section 15, indicates that “all public institutions shall maintain a complete Illinois Articulation Initiative General Education Core Curriculum package, and all public institution shall maintain up to 4 core courses in an Illinois Articulation Initiative major, provided the public institution has equivalent majors and courses.”*

*Is this your campus policy? Please explain if not or if there are exceptions.*

All public universities report that they are full participants (sending and receiving institutions) in the IAI GECC and that they maintain the full GECC package of courses. Universities maintain major courses as appropriate to their curriculum's match to the IAI major descriptors.

*Example from the survey:*

Governor's State University (GSU), because of its recent transition in 2014 to a four-year, comprehensive university, reported the following:

While not a policy on our campus, GSU follows practices that are in accordance with Illinois Public Act 099-0636. GSU transitioned from a receiving only institution to a fully participating institution in the Fall of 2014. GSU has maintained IAI approved courses that meet all GECC requirements since 2014. We also currently have 23 IAI major courses approved within 9 separate majors.

Effective January 2019, community colleges became eligible to award students the GECC (General Education Core Curriculum) Credential, which represents the general education component of the IAI within the associate of arts degree. This both provided evidence that the student completed the core as well as documentation of a significant milestone in the transfer pathway.

## **VI. PROGRESS IN MEETING THE GOALS OF THE ILLINOIS ARTICULATION INITIATIVE ACT (099-0636)**

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Senate Joint Resolution 22 directs the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Community College Board to review the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) and its implementation on Illinois campuses to gauge attainment of the goals of the Illinois Articulation Act, 099-0636, effective January 1, 2017, and to identify any shortcomings in meeting those goals.

A survey was sent by the IBHE to registrars and academic leadership at all public universities in Illinois on November 4, 2019. That survey included questions addressing the various requirements of the STAR Act as well as those of SJR 22. Responses are summarized below.

### **Summary of Responses from Public Universities**

SJR 22 directs "each four-year institution within the IAI to review the transfer credits of all incoming transfer students at its institution to find any instances where courses are not deemed transferable with full credit, including those courses that serve as a prerequisite within a major."

***Survey Question 7:** Please briefly describe your degree audit and advisement process for incoming transfer students. Are there processes in place to apply courses that come in as general electives toward major or other graduation requirements? (Substitution/ waiver petitions? Departmental authority to count courses toward major requirements? PLA?).*

All twelve universities respond that evaluation of transfer coursework takes place upon receipt of official transcripts. All respond that courses articulated with IAI are automatically accepted for credit through each campus' student information system. Courses not in IAI but previously articulated as equivalent courses are also applied automatically to graduation requirements. Students are provided with a copy of their transfer evaluation report that outlines how their credits will transfer.



Universities vary in their responses as to how courses that transfer as general electives are handled, but all report that there are mechanisms by which these courses can be reviewed for specific credit through departmental review. In many cases, that review is triggered by either the Admissions or Registrar's Offices. Students have the option of presenting syllabi for transfer courses to furnish additional evidence of content.

*Example from the survey:*

Chicago State University (CSU) transparently provides a link in its catalog to the form used to petition for and approve courses that may be substituted for required courses.

If a course is articulated through departmental review, the student information system is updated to reflect that articulation so it will be available automatically to future transfer students. Some universities also report that proficiency examinations are available to students in many content areas.

*Example from the survey:*

Western Illinois University (WIU)'s response is:

"Transfer Admissions reviews transcripts for incoming transfer students and applies direct equivalent WIU credit for courses that have already been articulated by Western's academic departments. Transfer Admissions collects the catalog description for any courses that have not already been articulated and sends the description to the respective department(s). General Elective credit is awarded in the meantime, pending the final decision of the department, and a notation is made on the student's transfer evaluation that the course is under review. The student has access to the transfer evaluation through the Student Information System (SIS).

If the department determines that the course is equated to a WIU course, then the student will receive direct equivalent credit for that course. If the course does not have a direct equivalent at WIU, then the course will be given either departmental elective credit or general elective credit. In some cases, upper-division elective credit, or general education credit may be awarded.

If the department determines that a direct equivalent does not exist and elective credit is awarded, the student may send a course syllabus to Transfer Admissions in order to provide additional details for a second departmental review. This notation is also available for the student to see on the transfer evaluation through the SIS.

Departments have the authority to substitute elective credit within their major graduation requirements. Students have the ability to appeal to the Council on Admission, Graduation and Academic Standards to have courses substituted or graduation requirements waived, if they believe the intent of a requirement was met with a transfer course. Students also have access to Proficiency Exams in many departments (<http://www.wiu.edu/registrar/forms/Proficiency%20Application.pdf> and <http://www.wiu.edu/registrar/forms/Proficiency%20Course%20List.pdf>). The University does not charge a fee to students for processing an Application for Proficiency Examination.

Students have access to their degree audit and the student degree plan through the SIS. The student degree plan utilizes the degree audit to identify which courses the student needs to take in each future term. The student degree plan is based on the respective model degree plans, which are published on the Office of the Registrar website at: <http://www.wiu.edu/registrar/mdplan.php>. In addition, academic departments identify their projected course offerings for the next two years, so that students and academic advisors can plan efficient degree completion.”

Universities report (Question 7) that they have advising in place for transfer students. A transfer credit audit report is made available to transfer students which serves as the basis for advisement.

*Example from the survey:*

Governors State University (GSU) responded with the following process:

“Per university Policy 29, students are required to meet with their academic advisor to generate a study plan. The Undergraduate Academic Advising Center will review the students’ degree audit with them during this appointment. In addition, the advisor will explain which courses were applied directly to the degree, which courses were applied to general electives, and which courses are needed to meet the graduation requirements. Our degree audit system has pre-established exceptions for courses that can meet the graduation requirement when it would have been an elective. For example, communication has courses that will meet the foundation requirement, even if it is not a course that GSU offers in residency. The academic advisor will explain program accreditation requirements where and when a “C” or better is required and make note of any instances where a student may have received a “D” and the course is not being applied.”

**Survey Question 8:** *Please provide a link or catalog reference to your GECC course list with course codes.*

Senate Joint Resolution 22 directs that four-year institutions list all IAI GECC courses with their corresponding IAI course code.

All universities provide lists of courses aligned with their IAI GECC course codes either in their catalog or on a website.

*Example from the survey:*

Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIU) “also maintains a search engine of transfer course equivalencies organized by state and institution that reflects the SIU course, the IAI GECC and IAI Major course equivalency. <http://tss.siu.edu/PROD/campus/articulation/articulation/>”

*Example from the survey:*

The University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) relies on the IAI website as its listing of courses and codes but has a particularly complete and transparent policy statement on IAI:

The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) is a statewide agreement that allows transfer of the completed IAI General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) between

participating Illinois institutions. Successful completion of the GECC at any participating college or university in Illinois assures students that general education requirements for the baccalaureate degree have been satisfied. The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) is a participating university. At UIC, students attain junior standing upon the completion of 60 credit hours. Completion of an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree typically requires an earned credit total beyond 60 hours. Please note that some test credit may not be transferable to UIC.

IAI policies, including GECC requirements, course codes and course descriptions, are presented on the IAI website and UIC's implementation requirements are published below. Students who transfer out of UIC will be held to the requirements of their transfer institution.

#### Eligibility

- Only transfer students entering UIC for the first time are eligible for IAI consideration. IAI policies do not apply to students who are readmitted to UIC or students who take courses elsewhere after enrolling at UIC.
- New transfer students who enter UIC with the GECC completed will be considered to have completed UIC's General Education requirements as defined in the General Education section of the catalog. However, additional General Education requirements that have been approved for specific UIC colleges may still be required.
- New transfer students with 30 hours of accepted transfer work who have not completed the GECC may consult with a college advisor to review options for completing General Education requirements. Depending on the number of remaining courses required, a student may be allowed the option of completing either UIC's General Education program or the GECC."

UIC provides additional information at: <https://catalog.uic.edu/ucat/admissions-registration-finances/admissions/#IAI>

Senate Joint Resolution 22 directs that each public institution "accept, with full credit, toward a baccalaureate degree any courses students have taken in the GECC Package [at] other public institutions in Illinois." The Resolution also directs that each public institution "not require transferring students to retake general education [core curriculum] courses as prerequisites that were part of the IAI curriculum package or take additional general education courses beyond the package."

**Survey Question 9:** *Understanding that GECC courses will transfer for credit but may not be applicable to certain requirements and also that a certain minimum grade may be required in some cases, is this your campus policy? Please explain if not or if there are exceptions.*

All universities respond that this is their policy. The full GECC package will satisfy all lower-division general education requirements at all universities. For students who have not completed the full package, individual articulated courses will be counted per IAI GECC agreements.

Some transferred courses will not satisfy requirements of some majors. For example, a non-major general education chemistry course taken to satisfy the IAI physical science requirement will not be consistent with the beginning sequence of courses in the chemistry major. The general education science course has different goals and outcomes than the introductory course in the major. As another example, the lowest level IAI math class will not satisfy the campus prerequisite for Calculus I as students with that background will be very unlikely to succeed in a first-level calculus course and will not have satisfied the prerequisite for that course.

Minimum grades may also be required as outlined in the response to Section 20 (b) of the STAR ACT.

*Example from the survey:*

Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) provided the following response:

Yes, NEIU accepts, with full credit toward a baccalaureate degree, any courses a student has taken in the GECC Package at other Illinois public institutions with the understanding that the courses may not be applicable to certain requirements and also that a certain minimum grade may be required in some cases. Additionally, NEIU does not require transferring students to retake general education [core curriculum] courses as prerequisites that were part of the IAI curriculum package or take additional general education courses beyond the package. However, students pursuing teacher education may need to take additional general education courses to meet teacher licensure requirements.

## VII. OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

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In fall 2019, both the transfer working group and IBHE's Academic Leadership group comprised of provosts or their designees from each public university, board staff, and representatives from among the community colleges' chief academic officers had far-ranging discussions of opportunities for improvement. The two groups identified similar areas of concern that will require further discussion. Two common threads surfaced in discussions:

- 1) The concept of maximizing student success often provided the framework and focus for discussing areas for improvement and possible approaches. Student success must not be confused with lowering standards or diluting curriculum lest students be unprepared for the workforce or further study. Rather, models of student success emphasize the need to provide students with sufficient supports—both academic and non-academic; curricular and co-curricular programming that encourages student engagement with their major and institution; as well as an institutional focus on student retention, including efforts to maintain affordability and appropriate levels of financial aid.
- 2) There was also general agreement that resources for advisement are often insufficient and that advisors' caseloads are too large. Academic advisement is complex because of the many paths students take. For example, traditional-age college students are often initially undecided as to major and career path or discover that an initial path is not appropriate for them; they may move

among institutions; depending on life circumstances, they may “stop out” for a semester or return to higher education years later as an adult learner with a family and career. Technology such as MyCreditsTransfer and ittransfer.org are essential tools, but they do not replace the partnership of student and advisor in charting the best path toward attainment of the student’s individual goal. Achievement of that individual goal is the ultimate measure of student success.

Several potential areas of improvement were considered and are briefly described below. Meetings scheduled in spring 2020 under the auspices of the two boards will allow the transfer working group to refine approaches and propose action steps to further improve the transfer process and maximize transfer student success. Proposals will be taken to IBHE’s Academic Leadership group, Illinois Community College Chief Academic Officers, related stakeholders and advisory groups, as well as to the leadership of the two boards.

**i. Improving Transparency to Improve Advising and Maximize Student Success**

***Increase the transparency of what is typically required for admission to high-demand majors.*** By virtue of high student demand and limitations on program capacity due to resource availability and accreditation requirements, admission to some programs is very competitive. While universities list minimum requirements for admission to high-demand majors, those minimum requirements do not always reflect the actual qualifications of students typically admitted. One solution is to provide inter-quartile or “middle 50%” admission statistics together with transfer requirements and transfer plans of study. Students would then be informed of the GPA band in which most transfer students are admitted. 25% would have lower qualifications and 25% higher, but the middle 50% range provides a student and advisor a way to discuss reasonable expectations for admission. For example, a 2.75 transfer GPA may be the minimum, but a middle 50% range may be from 3.5 to 3.75 in very high-demand programs. The student with a 2.75 GPA would have a very low probability of admission and could be advised into a related field or career path.

***Ensure that advising includes discussion of all graduation requirements at the receiving institution.*** Universities and specific colleges within them may require courses beyond those required by the major and general education. Foreign language requirements are frequently cited as an example. Advisement can help students understand the full range of graduation requirements.

A particular case in point is the fact that the Associate of Science (A.S.) degree no longer contains the full transferable GECC package. In, 2014, the Associate of Science degree was modified and two courses in the GECC (one humanities course and one social science course) were removed as requirements for the A.S. degree. This change allowed students additional space for an additional course in math and one in science that would better facilitate transfer to STEM fields at the baccalaureate-granting institution. At that time, some universities elected to require students earning an A.S. degree to take the missing social science and humanities courses to complete the full GECC package to fulfill their general education requirement, while others chose to accept only those GECC courses required by the A.S. degree in fulfillment of general education. This is a potential cause of confusion that should be handled through advisement before transfer. As noted below, reverse transfer also provides

an opportunity for significantly rethinking transfer pathways particularly in STEM disciplines.

***Ensure that students are aware of the consequences of grades below C.*** ISBE rules as well as those of certain accreditors require courses to be completed with a grade of “C or better” to count towards graduation/licensure. Students with grades lower than C should be informed through advisement that they will need to repeat the course. A low grade, particularly repeated difficulty in certain areas, should initiate honest discussion between student and advisor about opportunities for academic support and possible alternative paths.

## ii. Refining Processes and Strategies

***Develop strategies for maximizing transfer of degree-applicable credit and courses.*** There are various approaches currently in use to address maximizing degree-applicable credit hours in transfer, including IAI major courses, pathways, and meta-majors. All have benefits and drawbacks depending on individual student circumstances. For example, a student who has decided on a major and a transfer-to institution is best served by using that institution’s major transfer plan, while a student who has not decided where to transfer should use IAI major courses. As students may change majors or are as yet undecided, a pathway or meta-major may be the most helpful. All agree that a solid partnership between student and academic advisor is key to student success and minimizing lost credit hours.

***Collaborate with institutions to develop best practices for students with a large number of transfer credits (dual credit, AP, IB, military).*** Transfer students bringing many hours of credit may not be eligible for some scholarships and may not benefit from the full range of transition programs for new/beginning students. Institutions should examine their scholarship and advisement policies in order to assure that transfer students are eligible for all appropriate scholarship programs and have access to academic and student life transition programming. It should be noted that college credit received in high school or the summer before a student’s first enrollment at a four-year institution does not affect their admission status as a first-year student.

***Consider the financial aid implications.*** A related issue is that a student transferring many hours of general electives, as is sometimes the case with military credit, may see their financial aid reduced before completing their degree. Students may not receive federal financial aid after they have completed 150% of credit hours required for a degree. It is therefore not always in the student’s best interest to have all general elective credit applied immediately upon admission. Students with many hours of elective credit should be fully apprised of federal aid policy as soon as possible and before credit is transcribed. Any general elective hours needed to complete a degree can be posted at the time a student has completed all other requirements.

***Develop recommendations on the transfer of credits earned by Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate scores.*** Three sets of credit policies potentially apply to AP/IB scores for transfer students: those of the sending institution; those of the receiving institution; and IAI GECC recommendation. There are at least two approaches that can help alleviate confusion:

- 1) The policy of the final receiving institution should apply. Presumably, that institution has based its policy on an analysis of curriculum match and student success in sequent courses. However, a transfer student may have already successfully taken articulated sequent courses at the transfer from institution. Would the receiving institution still want to enforce its own policy in light of demonstrated student performance? Credit for prior learning may be appropriate in these circumstances.
- 2) Transcribed course credit based on an AP or IB score should be honored at the receiving institution as it would honor any transcribed transfer or dual-credit course. However, registrars' best-practice is to require original copies of AP or IB scores and apply credit by their institutions' specific policies based on the scores.

This is an area for further work by the transfer working group and the two boards in 2020.

***Increase campus coordination for submission of courses to IAI faculty panels.*** Faculty panels receive syllabi that are not aligned with IAI descriptors (content criteria required for approval). While these are excellent courses, they are not appropriate for the IAI category for which they were submitted or are missing key required elements. These syllabi are returned often with extensive comments, but syllabi are sometimes resubmitted without addressing those comments. In cases where there are other factors that appear to be affecting the process, the state boards' representatives in coordination with the IAI staff must investigate issues and mediate, as appropriate, responses to both the panel and in the institution. Panels indicate that campuses with designated, experienced personnel responsible for submitting courses and reviewing returned courses have a higher approval rate and a smoother process for campuses and panels alike.

### **iii. Creating and Improving Pathways**

***Leverage reverse transfer to structure new academic pathways.*** With new reverse transfer rules in place and in collaboration with their principal community college partners, universities should review their transfer plans of study. Reverse transfer provides a win-win solution for students and institutions to resolve issues of course-taking patterns and best time to transfer. For example, particularly in sequential programs often in STEM areas, it may be most efficient for students to transfer before completion of their A.S. degree to engage in the major course sequence at their transfer-to institution. Community colleges may not have the demand or resources to offer specialized courses in the major that are, in any event, transferable only at the senior college level. Reverse transfer allows students to transfer coursework back to their community college to complete their IAI GECC package, now certified on the community college transcript, and their associate degree as they take major courses and complete degree requirements at their university.

***Use Math Pathways to improve student success in non-STEM related fields.*** Math Pathways is an approach that allows non-STEM college students to accelerate their path through developmental mathematics and enable them to complete the “gateway” or required math course in their curriculum. Historically, all students were required to take algebra classes as remedial math skills courses and/or as basic college courses to prepare for calculus-based math courses. While this math pathway is appropriate for STEM-bound students, most non-STEM students do not need an understanding of calculus principles for their major or to perform well in their projected career. If students were instead guided into a quantitative reasoning and or statistics math pathway, the need for students to take developmental math courses and the time to get into gateway courses would be dramatically reduced.

As an even earlier alternative, some Illinois high school juniors who are projected to be not-yet-ready for college-level math could enroll in Transitional Math courses offered in the senior year. Successful completion of a Transitional Math course guarantees the student’s placement into credit-bearing college math courses – and eliminates the need for development math course – at all Illinois community colleges and at participating Illinois universities. Students can choose from three transitional math pathways that may align with their college plans: STEM, Quantitative Literacy/Statistics, and Technical Math. To be clear, these transitional courses do not result in any type of placement into advanced math courses such as calculus because they are *high school* courses that prepare students for college-level math concepts, rigor, and class expectations. For example, an identified under-prepared student who wants to be an engineer would enroll in the STEM transitional math pathway in her senior year. Then, as a first-year college student, she would be qualified to transition into College Algebra, which would put her on track to complete Calculus, the “gateway” required course for engineering. It should be noted that College Algebra is a fully credit-bearing, non-developmental course, but is below the level of math that is usually expected as entry level for STEM majors. Conversely, some students intending to pursue non-STEM fields may be well-served by the STEM transitional pathway, depending on their area of interest. The choice of which math pathway to pursue is, thus, an important one that requires careful consideration by students, parents and counselors.

***Applied Associate degrees may not fully articulate to university programs.*** While the Applied Associate of Science (AAS) degree allows students to gain skills that make them employable in a number of skilled professions, there are challenges for a smooth transfer to a baccalaureate degree. For example, the AAS degree in accountancy is specifically designed to prepare graduates for bookkeeping and payroll certifications. It does not contain the IAI GECC and does not align well with accredited university accounting programs leading to the CPA. A related concern is that some careers require an associate degree at entry level but a baccalaureate degree for promotion above a certain level. For example, the Illinois State Police accepts an associate degree for entry-level positions, but a bachelor’s degree is required to advance to higher ranks. Students may not be aware of these distinctions or may change their career goals while enrolled in an AAS program. Advisement can help students understand requirements of different career paths.

In selected fields and with careful market analysis, bridge programs may allow students with AAS degrees or other preparation including military experience to transition to a baccalaureate degree program. The transfer working group identified



certain areas and degrees that could potentially benefit from bridge programs to serve workforce needs. These include but are not limited to: Nursing (RN to BSN), early childhood education, computer science and related IT fields, engineering technology/robotics, criminal justice, construction management, accounting, and business. While bridge programs are potentially advantageous in certain fields and for certain groups of students, given the expense and complexity of offering such programs, market research must establish a justifiable demand and any subsequently developed bridge programs must be carefully designed to ensure viability. Successful programs can provide models to build upon, while well-intentioned but ultimately non-viable programs provide equally valuable cautionary lessons.

#### iv. Ensuring Appropriate Resources to Maximize Transfer Student Success

***Provide stable funding for MyCreditsTransfer (MCT) and Transferology.*** The Illinois MyCreditsTransfer (MCT) project is a statewide initiative to provide a web-based transfer information system that aids students who intend to transfer credit among Illinois higher education institutions. It also aids colleges and universities with transfer advising tools and resources to develop and maintain transfer agreements. The online system used, Transferology™, is licensed by the State through funding from the IBHE via an Inter-Governmental Agreement with the University of Illinois (UI) System. The project is strongly supported by the UI System. MCT works collaboratively with IBHE, the ICCB, IAI, all Illinois public colleges and universities, and several Illinois independent not-for-profit colleges and universities.

Nationwide, Illinois is the largest user of Transferology.

- In 2018 Illinois had 217,060 unique visitors and 413,073 total visitors to Transferology, including returning visitors.
- The number of unique and total visitors in Illinois has increased every year.
- Illinois has 79 Transferology licensed participating institutions from among its 209 degree-granting institutions (340 nationwide).
- In 2018 through Transferology, Illinois published information on 4,470,962 transfer equivalencies (20,707,000 nationwide).
- Illinois students completed 1,424,096 searches in Transferology in 2018.
  - Those searches yielded 64,724,154 results viewed.
- Illinois schools were also viewed in 55,195,335 search results nationwide.

Success of the MCT project has continued to grow, even as State funding has dwindled. The cost of the grant now just barely covers the cost of annual license renewal, plus approximately 0.25 FTE of the technical coordinator and 0.5 FTE of the project coordinator. Restoration and stability of funding is critically needed to sustain the success of MCT in the future.

***Maintain stable funding for the Illinois Articulation Initiative.*** Because IAI has successfully leveraged technology to minimize expenses, the IAI budget received via Illinois State University's annual budget allocation is sufficient for operations but may need moderate increases to account for changes in fees and personnel costs. Small investments in IAI and Transferology/ MyCreditsTransfer ultimately lead to higher retention and completion rates for Illinois students.

***Maintain adequate funding for essential data systems.*** In order to better measure the outcomes of transfer students, it is necessary to sustain current levels of funding to the IBHE and ICCB for each agency's component of the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS). Predictable funding for data systems and research staff would allow the agencies to quickly move forward with adding more outcome information specific to transfer students in public-facing data tools such as the [Interactive Transfer Enrollment Dashboards](#) and the [Illinois Postsecondary Profiles](#) sites.

Further, to reduce the risk and technical burden associated with matching across the agency datasets, it is also necessary to sustain the Illinois Longitudinal Data System's, Common Demographic Dataset Administrator (CDDA). The CDDA provides identity resolution services across all of the state agencies participating in the ILDS and eliminates the need to share personally-identifiable information in projects involving student-level data.

***Fund an inter-agency program to enhance professional development for advisors at the secondary and post-secondary levels.*** SJR 22 points to the importance of providing high school counselors with information on IAI and transfer in general. Outreach efforts to high school counselors are underway with the assistance of the Illinois Association of College Admission Counseling. However, given the centrality of academic advisement at all levels to transfer student success, a coordinated statewide effort should be undertaken by IBHE, ICCB and ISBE to ensure that advisors can tailor the many resources available to them to best serve the various populations of students they serve. Counselors and advisors are also best positioned to inform students and their families that Illinois is a national leader in transfer student success as measured by degree completion. Counselors and advisors are critical to a strategy to minimize student out-migration to other states for higher education.

APPENDIX A: TRANSFER SUCCESS IN ILLINOIS

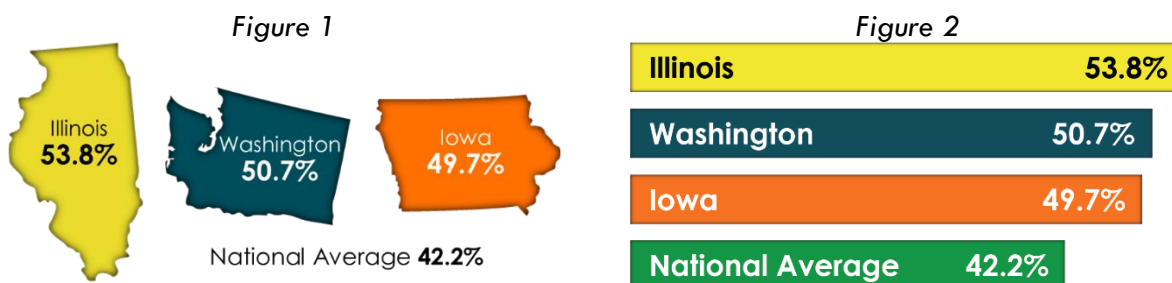


Transfer Success in Illinois

Illinois now leads the nation in bachelor’s degree completion rates among community college students who transfer to four-year colleges. With the latest cohort (students who entered a community college in 2010), Illinois is not only the national leader but it exceeds the national average by a noticeable margin. In fact, 53.8% of Illinois community college students who transferred to four-year colleges completed a bachelor’s degree within six years. As shown in *Figure 1*, this bachelor’s degree completion rate was 11.6 percentage points higher than the national average of 42.2%.

Washington, Iowa, and Illinois have recently been among the top states for bachelor’s degree completion among community college students who transfer to four-year colleges. In a previous iteration of this information<sup>5</sup> that used an earlier cohort of students, Illinois was a close third in the nation behind only Washington and Iowa. According to a report released by the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC)<sup>6</sup> Illinois has recently surpassed both Iowa and Washington by a noticeable margin (See *Figures 1 and 2*).

Figures 1 and 2: Rates of Bachelor’s Degree Completion among Community College Transfer Students



Relative to the other national leaders, Illinois serves significantly more community college transfer students and has a more robust transfer system inclusive of significantly more higher education institutions (see *Table 1*). Illinois community college students also experience higher rates of transfer to four-year institutions (transfer-out rates) relative to their counterparts from public two-year colleges in Washington and Iowa. The success of transfer students in Illinois could be traced to two complementary statewide transfer tools that have been in existence for several years. Illinois has had the Illinois Articulation Initiative in place since 1993 and it currently serves as an overarching transfer agreement between 113 participating colleges and universities, both public and private. MyCreditsTransfer is a student-centered

<sup>5</sup> Jenkins, D. & Fink, J. (2016). *Tracking transfer: New measures of institutional and state effectiveness in helping community college students attain bachelor’s degrees*. Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York. <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/tracking-transfer-institutional-state-effectiveness.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Shapiro, D., Dundar, A., Huie, F., Wakhungu, P.K., Yuan, X., Nathan, A. & Hwang, Y. (2017, September). *Tracking Transfer: Measures of Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students to Complete Bachelor’s Degrees (Signature Report No. 13)*. Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. <https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/SignatureReport13.pdf>

tool that provides detailed information on the transferability of coursework among Illinois institutions including how courses apply towards a bachelor’s degree at one’s desired transfer institution.

*Table 1: State-wide Comparison of Illinois, Washington, and Iowa*

	<b>Illinois</b>	<b>Washington</b>	<b>Iowa</b>
<b>Community Colleges</b>	48	33	14
Community College Cohort	33,267	17,371	10,267
Rate of Transfer-Out	35.0%	27.8%	30.5%
<b>Public Universities</b>	12	6	3
Transfer-in Students	6,233	3,600	1,845
<b>Private Nonprofit Colleges</b>	58	15	30
Transfer-in Students	4,072	514	1,158

Note: Two of the Illinois community colleges were not included in the NSC study. The NSC study did not include all of the private nonprofit colleges with operating authority in Illinois (Shapiro, et al., 2017).

It is also important to note that the cohort in the recent NSC study includes both full-time and part-time students and the inclusion of part-time students likely had a negative effect on the rate of degree completion. Also, the cohort does not include students who had taken dual credit or dual enrollment courses and this too likely suppressed the rate of bachelor’s degree completion. Community college students who have participated in dual credit have a significantly higher likelihood of transferring to four-year institutions and earning a bachelor’s degree when compared to their peers who did not participate in dual credit.<sup>7</sup> Therefore the community college students with arguably the highest likelihood of completion were not included from the study. This makes the results even more impressive.

<sup>7</sup> Blankenberger, B., Lichtenberger, E., and Witt, M.A. (2017). Dual credit, college type, and enhanced degree attainment. *Educational Researcher* (46)5, 259-263. <https://doi.org/10.3102%2F0013189X17718796>

**APPENDIX B: TRANSFER WORKING GROUP MEMBERS**

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## APPENDIX C: SURVEY SENT TO ALL PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

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University:

Name of the person responding for the university:

Title:

Contact information (email and phone):

Please respond to each question below adding additional lines as needed. Thank you.

- 1) The STAR Act ([PA 099-0316](#)) states that universities should admit a student from an Illinois community college with a completed baccalaureate-oriented associate degree directly into their requested major with junior status if "the student meets the requirements of the transfer degree." Programs are allowed to establish minimum GPA for admission and limits on enrollment due to program capacity.

Is this in accordance with your campus policy? Please explain if not or if there are exceptions.

- 2) The STAR Act states that "a State university may not require a student transferring pursuant to this Act to take more than 60 additional semester units beyond the lower-division major requirements for majors requiring 120 semester units, provided that the student remains enrolled in the same program of study and has completed university major transfer requirements." (Majors over 120 hours are exempt from this requirement.)

Is this in accordance with your campus policy? Please explain if not or if there are exceptions.

- 3) The STAR Act states that "a State university may not require students transferring pursuant to this Act to repeat courses that are articulated with those taken at the community college and counted toward an associate degree for transfer." The IBHE will note in its reply that a grade of C or better is required in some programs leading to licensure or by accreditors.

With the exception for licensure and accreditation noted, are there are other exceptions on your campus?

- 4) The STAR Act as amended ([PA 100-0824](#)) indicates that "beginning with the 2019-2020 academic year each public institution shall require any student who, upon completing 30 academic credit hours, is interested in pursuing an associate degree or baccalaureate degree at the public institution to indicate to the public institution in which he or she is enrolled all of his or her degree programs of interest. The public institution in which the student is enrolled shall make a reasonable attempt to conduct a meeting with the student and an academic advisor of the public institution, who shall inform the student of the prerequisite requirements for the student's degree programs of interest."

Is this your campus policy? Please explain if not or if there are exceptions.

- 5) The STAR Act requires a policy on awarding credit for military training.

Does your campus award credit based on the Joint Services Transcript (JST)?

Does your campus award any credit based on the "Separation Agreement" ([DD 214](#))?

Does your campus award credit based on [A.C.E. recommendations](#) for military training?

Do you publicize credit awarded from the JST or DD 214 on your website or in your catalog?

- 6) The Illinois Articulation Initiative Act ([PA 099-0636](#)) indicates that “all public institutions shall maintain a complete Illinois Articulation Initiative General Education Core Curriculum package, and all public institution shall maintain up to 4 core courses in an Illinois Articulation Initiative major, provided the public institution has equivalent majors and courses.”

Is this your campus policy? Please explain if not or if there are exceptions.

- 7) [Senate Joint Resolution 22](#) directs "each four-year institution within the IAI to review the transfer credits of all incoming transfer students at its institution to find any instances where courses are not deemed transferable with full credit, including those courses that serve as a prerequisite within a major."

Please briefly describe your degree audit and advisement process for incoming transfer students. Are there processes in place to apply courses that come in as general electives toward major or other graduation requirements? (Substitution/ waiver petitions? Departmental authority to count courses toward major requirements? PLA?)

- 8) Senate Joint Resolution 22 directs that four-year institutions list all IAI GECC courses with their corresponding IAI course code (does not specify website or catalog).

Please provide a link or catalog reference to your GECC course list with course codes.

- 9) Senate Joint Resolution 22 directs that each public institution "accept, with full credit, toward a baccalaureate degree any courses students have taken in the GECC Package [at] other public institutions in Illinois." The Resolution also directs that each public institution "not require transferring students to retake general education [core curriculum] courses as prerequisites that were part of the IAI curriculum package, or take additional general education courses beyond the package."

Understanding that GECC courses will transfer for credit but may not be applicable to certain requirements and also that a certain minimum grade may be required in some cases, is this your campus policy? Please explain if not or if there are exceptions.

- 10) The Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act (PWR ACT) ([PA 099-0674](#)) states that “each public university must adopt and publicize transparent criteria adopted by the university for student placement into college-level mathematics courses. IBHE must publicly report on the adoption of such criteria and the extent to which public universities are utilizing strategies to minimize placements into non-credit-bearing remedial mathematics course sequences.”

Please respond with a link to your publicized criteria for math placement. Also, briefly describe any strategies, including corequisite remediation and use of multiple measures of competency for placement, your university is using to minimize placement into non-credit-bearing courses.

- 11) The Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act (PWR Act) includes “Transitional Math (TM), which is built around courses, standalone or embedded, that increase college readiness for high school seniors. Their key feature is the guaranteed placement [into a credit-bearing non-developmental math course]

a student receives upon successful completion at all Illinois community colleges and accepting Illinois universities" (<http://www.iltransitionalmath.org/>).

Does your university guarantee placement into a credit-bearing non-developmental math course for students who have successfully completed a transitional math course? If yes, what courses and under what conditions? Where do you publicize this information for prospective students?

- 12) [Senate Joint Resolution 41](#) mandates the creation of an advisory council charged with an inventory and analysis of “all instructional models and developmental course sequences...in math or English.” That Council (now established) will produce a report by January 1, 2020, including: “an update on the implementation of corequisite remediation and alternative evidence-based developmental education models at every college and university and include data on enrollment and throughput, defined as the percent of students initially enrolled who have progressed through gateway-level courses, by institution and disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender and Pell status.”

Unlike the preceding, this item is provided for informational purposes only. IBHE will provide updates as implications for universities become clearer, but we anticipate a data request to universities is likely forthcoming. Legislative interest in certain approaches is clear. No response required.

Thank you for your time in completing this survey. Please return to Kim Midden at [Midden@ibhe.org](mailto:Midden@ibhe.org) by November 27, 2019.



## APPENDIX D: DATA METHODOLOGY

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To fulfill the reporting requirements set forth in the STAR Act, Illinois Board of Higher Education staff worked collaboratively with Illinois Community College Board staff to develop and execute a plan for data analysis that involved matching information across their respective data systems. First, a file of new transfer students who enrolled at all twelve of the Illinois public universities from Academic Year (AY) 2014-15 through AY 2017-18 was developed using IBHE's component of the Illinois Longitudinal Data System. Through a creative and mutually beneficial data sharing agreement between the IBHE and ICCB, that file was provided to ICCB and matched to key tables within their Centralized Data System. When matches occurred, records in the original IBHE file were appended with enrollment and degree completion information specific to Illinois community colleges, such as whether the given individual earned an associate degree, and if so, during which semester, at which community college, and in which major.

The matching process involved a direct match using the master client index ID produced by Common Demographic Dataset Administrator (CDDA) at Northern Illinois University. The master client index ID is produced for the purpose of safely matching and merging datasets across the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) agencies. However, some of the IBHE records lacked a master client index ID due to the timing of IBHE collections and the submissions to the CDDA. For such records, a secondary matching process was used that involved a combination of first name, last name, middle initial and date of birth. Overall, 57,227 IBHE records were provided to ICCB for potential matching, of which 92.3% had a master client index ID. It should be noted that within the IBHE file, the 2016 cohort had the best coverage (99.8%) with the master client index ID; and therefore, the 2016 cohort likely had better match rates to the community college information than other cohorts. The analyses included in the report only reflected the students that matched across the ICCB and IBHE data systems.

Cohorts were established by examining the information on new transfer students emanating from Illinois community colleges who enrolled at Illinois public universities. For example, former Illinois community college students who enrolled full-time at an Illinois public university in 2014, were part of the 2014 cohort. The time horizon for measuring degree completion varied by cohort and limits the potential comparisons. For example, the 2014 cohort transferred and enrolled earlier than the more recent cohorts and therefore would have additional time to potentially complete a bachelor's degree and have that completion measured. Bachelor's degree completion within two years of initial transfer enrollment was calculated for all four cohorts and bachelor's degree completion within three years of initial transfer enrollment was calculated for the 2014, 2015, and 2016 cohorts. For most of the analyses specific to bachelor's degree completion, cumulative rates of degree completion were used which is a common in some survival or time-based studies.

The analysis was limited to new transfer students who initially enrolled full-time during their first semester at an Illinois public university. This approach is standard when establishing cohorts of students and tracking their retention and completion outcomes. This approach was also used because of some of the language within the STAR Act that specified metrics related to time to degree as well as the limited time horizon to track degree completion for the more recent cohorts. As the time horizon increases for all cohorts, IBHE and ICCB should consider developing parallel information for transfers that begin at four-year universities as part-time students.

When possible, the results were disaggregated by the potential alignment between one's pre- and post-transfer majors. The pre-match majors were provided by the Illinois Community College Board, while the post-transfer majors were provided by the Illinois Board of Higher Education. In certain instances, the post-transfer majors were examined at two points: 1) the first semester at an Illinois public university post-transfer; and 2) the major associated with one's bachelor's degree, among degree completers. The

alignment was established by examining the 2-digit classification of instructional programs (CIP) codes both pre- and post-transfer. The overwhelming majority of the pre-transfer 2-digit CIP codes linked to associate degrees were somewhat general in nature and fell into the Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities (24) or the Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies (30) 2-digit CIP families. As shown in the chart below, roughly 90% of all community college majors fell into one of the two aforementioned majors (24 or 30). This was consistent across all four cohorts and is characteristic of the general nature of the majority of associate degrees.

Distribution of Community College Majors by Cohort

Major	2014		2015		2016		2017	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Agriculture	37	1%	41	1%	52	1%	33	1%
Natural Resources	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%
Communication	3	0%	7	0%	2	0%	6	0%
Communications Technologies	4	0%	5	0%	9	0%	12	0%
Computer Information Systems	20	1%	27	1%	22	1%	14	0%
Personal and Culinary Services Education	4	0%	6	0%	6	0%	5	0%
Engineering	7	0%	5	0%	1	0%	3	0%
Engineering Technologies	53	2%	65	2%	78	2%	98	3%
Foreign Languages	23	1%	26	1%	21	1%	24	1%
Family and Consumer Sciences	1	0%	1	0%	2	0%	1	0%
Legal Professional	4	0%	4	0%	5	0%	7	0%
Liberal Arts	3	0%	4	0%	3	0%	4	0%
Library Science	1,839	57%	1,835	55%	2,119	56%	1,991	58%
Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Parks and Recreation	1,065	33%	1,106	33%	1,283	34%	1,096	32%
Protective Services	-	0%	5	0%	3	0%	2	0%
Public Administration	41	1%	52	2%	44	1%	29	1%
Social Sciences	7	0%	1	0%	7	0%	6	0%
Mechanic Technologies	3	0%	-	0%	2	0%	3	0%
Precision Production	30	1%	42	1%	49	1%	38	1%
Visual and Performing Arts	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	4	0%
Healthcare	18	1%	23	1%	13	0%	15	0%
Business	58	2%	48	1%	53	1%	47	1%
<b>Total</b>	25	1%	34	1%	25	1%	19	1%
	3,248	100%	3,338	100%	3,800	100%	3,458	100%

ICCB's Centralized Data System includes individual-level information on students enrolled and completing transfer degrees. Students completing an Associate in Arts and Associate in Science degree fulfill the General Education Core Curriculum as part of the Illinois Articulation Initiative. Indication and collection at the student-level of transfer degree major (i.e. area of concentration) varies within community college student information systems. For transfer degree students on a path with a specific area of concentration in mind, students consult with identified community college staff for appropriate course selection that apply to the bachelor's degree as indicated in the transfer program guides. Of note, ICCB recently introduced a data element as part of its Centralized Data System for students in transfer degree programs which includes the 6-digit Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code that best

corresponds with the student's area of concentration. ICCB will continue to collect and evaluate the feasibility of utilizing transfer degree area of concentration with IBHE as it pertains to examining major and transfer. While the IAI focuses on assisting students with no chosen transfer institution or a goal to transfer without certainty of major, tracking students by CIP code may potentially enhance the ability of ICCB and IBHE to track both students with an identified major and destination school as well as those who have yet to decide.



### **Section 1502.20 Definitions**

"Act" means the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act [110 ILCS 150].

"Admissions Office" means an office within a community college or State university responsible for recruiting and communicating with new and transfer students.

*"Community College" means a public community college in this State. (Section 5 of the Act)*

"Eligible Student" means a student who meets the criteria in Section 1502.30.

"Registrar's Office" means an office within a community college or State university responsible for registering students, keeping academic records, and corresponding with applicants and evaluating their credentials.

*"Reverse Transfer of Credit" means the transfer of earned academic credit from a State university to a community college for the purpose of obtaining an associate degree at the community college. (Section 23 of the Act)*

"Reverse Transfer Data Sharing Platform" means a national electronic data sharing and exchange platform that meets nationally accepted standards, conventions and practices, such as the National Student Clearinghouse or similar platform.

"Reverse Transfer Agreement" means an institutional agreement between one or more community colleges and a State university to share student transcripts when a student requests a reverse transfer of credit.

"Opt-in" means the student's decision to seek a reverse transfer of credit.

*"State University" means a public university in this State. (Section 5 of the Act)*

### **Section 1502.30 Student Eligibility**

The reverse transfer of credit option is available to a student who is currently enrolled in a State university and has:

- a) Transferred to the State university from, or previously attended, a community college;
- b) Earned at least 15 credit hours of transferrable course work completed at a community college;
- c) Earned a cumulative total of at least 60 credit hours for transferrable course work successfully completed at the student's current or previously attended postsecondary institutions; and
- d) Submitted a request to the State university at which the student is currently enrolled.

### **Section 1502.40 Student Request**

A student who meets the eligibility criteria in Section 1502.30 may request a reverse transfer of credit from the State university to the community college previously attended.

- a) The opportunity to opt-in may be taken at enrollment or at any time thereafter while enrolled at the State university. The student shall provide the information required in Section 1502.30 (a), (b) and (c) and authorize the release of his or her transcript information, pursuant to State university procedures.
- b) In the event that the student has earned credit hours at more than one community college or State university, the student shall:
  - 1) Identify the community colleges and State universities at which any credit hours have been earned; and
  - 2) Authorize release of his or her transcript information from the community colleges and State universities to the community college identified for the purpose of earning an associate degree through a reverse transfer of credit.

#### **Section 1502.50 Institutional Responsibilities**

- a) Each State university and community college shall make available an opt-in process for the reverse transfer of credit, pursuant to this Part.
- b) Each State university shall notify students who meet the eligibility criteria in Section 1502.30 each academic year. The notification shall include information about the State university's process to reverse transfer of credit.
- c) State universities and community colleges shall comply with the following process:
  - 1) Information about reverse transfer of credit shall, at a minimum, be clearly identified on the institution's Internet website and printed in course catalogs. This information shall also be made available through the admissions office and the registrar's office.
  - 2) After verifying student eligibility, the student information may be transferred through a reverse transfer data sharing platform or a reverse transfer agreement, or by contacting the institution directly.

Institutions are encouraged to use a Reverse Transfer Data Sharing Platform as a cost-effective method to exchange course level data. Any student information obtained from the platform must be accepted as official documentation of the student record.
  - 3) Transcript fees assessed to prepare and send student transcripts to community colleges may be waived to help promote the reverse transfer of credit. Community colleges may waive fees assessed to conduct degree audits and to process graduation applications as part of the reverse transfer of credits.
  - 4) After receiving the student information, the community college shall review the information and, if the community college determines the student has earned the credits required to receive an associate degree, may award the associate degree.
  - 5) *No later than 30 business days after receiving an application for reverse transfer of*

credit and all required transcripts, a community college shall notify an applicant if he or she qualifies for an associate degree based on the total earned credits. (Section 23 of the Act) The community college shall send the same notification to the State university.

- 6) In the event that the community college awards an associate degree pursuant to this Part, the community college shall send a student transcript to the State university. The transcript shall include the award of an associate degree.

#### **Section 1502.60 Community College Determination to Award Degree**

*In awarding an associate degree, the community college shall evaluate the applicant's course work completed, along with the transfer credit earned, and shall determine whether the associate degree requirements have been met.* (Section 23 of the Act) Nothing in this Part affects the ability of the community college to determine the course work required to earn an associate degree awarded by that institution.

#### **Section 1502.70 Voluntary Participation by Others**

This Part does not preclude private colleges and universities from voluntarily participating in the reverse transfer of credit.