

**REPORT ON THE EVALUATION OF
THE ILLINOIS ARTICULATION INITIATIVE**

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: This item is a report on the recently completed evaluation of the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI). This examination included discussions among the General Education Core Curriculum and major panels, the IAI Steering Panel, Illinois Board of Higher Education and Illinois Community College Board staffs, the Technical Taskforce, Illinois transfer coordinators, institutional Chief Academic Officers, the Student Advisory Committee, and others; a report on the major panels commissioned by the IAI Steering Panel; a report commissioned by the Illinois Community College Board and Illinois Board of Higher Education and conducted by Dr. Ivan Lach and Dr. Kathleen Kelly; as well as feedback to these reports. This document presents proposed revisions to the IAI processes and procedures based upon the findings of this comprehensive evaluation.

Action Requested: That the Board accepts and endorses the report, *Evaluation of the Illinois Articulation Initiative*, and directs the Illinois Board of Higher Education staff to collaborate with staff of the Illinois Community College Board to implement the recommendations contained in this report as they deem appropriate.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**REPORT ON THE EVALUATION OF
THE ILLINOIS ARTICULATION INITIATIVE**

Background

In January 1993, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), and transfer coordinators of Illinois colleges and universities jointly launched the IAI to ease the transfer of students among Illinois public and independent, associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions. The IAI grew out of the IBHE's 1990 undergraduate education policies on transfer and articulation. Three key concepts in these policies provided the underlying foundation for IAI: (1) that "associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions are equal partners" in educating college freshmen and sophomores, (2) that "faculties should take primary responsibility for developing and maintaining program and course articulation," and (3) that "institutions are expected to work together to assure that lower-division baccalaureate programs are comparable in scope, quality, and academic rigor."

The IAI has unfolded in four phases. The first phase developed a General Education Core Curriculum (GECC). The second phase established major panels. The third phase instituted a five-year review process. The fourth phase initiated a comprehensive review of the initiative and its processes.

The first phase developed a general education package, the GECC, that as part of a completed transferable associates degree, "would be acceptable in transfer at all IAI participating institutions in lieu of each college or university's own campus-wide lower division general education curriculum of comparable size." Since the GECC was transferred as a package replacing the general education requirements of the receiving institution, it did not guarantee the articulation of individual courses, credits, or degree, program, or institutional requirements beyond campus-wide lower-division general education requirements from the sending institution to the receiving institution. Such articulation of course, credit, or particular requirement remains at the discretion of the receiving institution. The IAI GECC is not intended to replace a college or university's general education curriculum, but rather to provide transferring students with a guaranteed pathway among institutions. IAI provides such a pathway for a large number of Illinois transfer students, while still protecting the distinctive qualities and missions of Illinois colleges and universities.

The second phase expanded the project to create models for easing transfer into baccalaureate major programs. Major panels were established with the intent of providing general advice to students who had decided upon a field of study but not upon a baccalaureate institution. Panels were to develop recommendations for lower-division coursework that would best prepare the student to transfer into that major in a baccalaureate program. Recommendations were to include courses a transfer student would need in order to be admitted to a receiving institution with "junior" status, courses among the GECC package options that could be used by the student to meet the prerequisite or foundational requirements of the major, major or related

discipline courses that a native student would normally take in the first two years of study, and additional information a student should know in order to prepare for transfer (e.g., grade point average (GPA), entry exam, portfolio or other requirements).

The third phase instituted a process of regular five-year reviews designed to evaluate the efficacy of the panels' recommendations. The five-year review process for all panels is to include a review of the core competencies, standards, and outcomes recommended by the panels. For the GECC panels, the review should also include a review of the objective outcomes by which the panels approve courses for inclusion in the GECC package and a general review of institutional offerings to ensure current course offerings are aligned with the course descriptions provided by the institution when those courses were initially approved.

The fourth and current phase included a comprehensive evaluation of the IAI processes, procedures, and goals and the roles of the individual components, and recommendations for adjustment of these. This evaluation included discussions among the GECC and major panels, the IAI Steering Panel, IBHE and ICCB staffs, the Technical Taskforce, Illinois transfer coordinators, institutional Chief Academic Officers, the Student Advisory Committee, and others; a report on the major panels commissioned by the IAI Steering Panel; a report commissioned by the ICCB and IBHE and conducted by Dr. Ivan Lach and Dr. Kathleen Kelly (attached); as well as feedback to these reports. This document presents revisions to the IAI processes and procedures based upon the findings of this comprehensive evaluation.

Review Findings

The IAI is a significant statewide cooperative effort designed to facilitate student transfer among Illinois institutions. Ease of transfer is a central aspect of increased access, and the maximization of credit in transfer is key to reducing time-to-degree and thereby increasing affordability.

The IAI GECC has provided transferring students with a guarantee for acceptance of lower-division work as meeting general education requirements at IAI participating institutions. Consensus among all stakeholders is that the IAI GECC has benefited thousands of transferring students and has helped facilitate discussions of the nature of general education. However, the processes in place for review of courses and approval for inclusion in an institution's GECC package may take as long as six months to a year, and sometimes even longer. Therefore, the review findings suggest that use of the IAI GECC be continued, but that the process be streamlined.

The review of the major panel processes found that the efforts of the panel members were not justified by the benefits realized by the students. Considerable resources, reflected in the time devoted to syllabi review by panel members and in the institutional processes for submission of syllabi for review, were expended. However, the resulting recommendations were having little or no effect on the actual transfer of students or credits among institutions. Therefore, the review findings suggest a restatement of the charge to the major panels with a focus on recommendations for undecided students.

The review of institutional and staff roles and responsibilities suggested minor changes aimed at streamlining processes and ensuring a fair and equitable review of course submissions by the GECC panels. Additionally, the review suggested a restatement of the roles and responsibilities of all constituent groups, including the Steering Panel, the Technical Taskforce, board staffs, and the institutions.

Recommended Revisions

The proposed revisions to the IAI process are listed below:

1. Draft a statement of general purposes;
2. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the GECC faculty panels;
3. Revise the GECC course review and approval processes;
4. Redefine the roles and responsibilities of the major field panels;
5. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of participating colleges and universities;
6. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the ICCB and IBHE;
7. Recommend that Illinois colleges and universities allow students to complete the GECC package after transfer. For example,
 - When the transfer student has completed a statewide articulated associate degree such as the Associate of Fine Arts (AFA), Associate of Engineering Sciences (AES), or Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT), or;
 - When the transfer student has completed 30 semester hours of transfer credit without having completed the GECC;
8. Revise the iTransfer.org website to serve as a general transfer information site.

After reviewing the attached report and consulting with the various interest groups, the staffs of the IBHE and the ICCB are collaborating to implement the changes they deem appropriate.

Timetable

Spring 2006

- Current course review and approval processes remain in effect.
- GECC panel reviews will migrate to the iTransfer.org course review site.
- IBHE and ICCB staffs will communicate process changes to participating institutions.
- Website staff will begin revision of site.
- Institutions will identify institutional process for course submission.

Fall 2006

- Course review for GECC panels will begin phasing in a rolling schedule.
- IBHE and ICCB staffs will work with GECC panels to identify objective criteria for course review.
- IBHE and ICCB staffs will work with major panels to identify lower-division recommendations for students undecided about baccalaureate institution.
- Website staff will present proposed site revisions to IBHE and ICCB staff.

Spring 2007

- Complete transition to new processes and procedures.

Recommendation

The staff recommends that the Illinois Board of Higher Education adopt the following resolution:

That the Board accepts and endorses the report, Evaluation of the Illinois Articulation Initiative, and directs Illinois Board of Higher Education staff to collaborate with staff of the Illinois Community College Board to implement the recommendations contained in this report as they deem appropriate.

**Evaluation of the Illinois Articulation Initiative
Report and Recommendations
January 2006**

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Evaluation of the Illinois Articulation Initiative

Executive Summary

Drawing on several studies of the Illinois Articulation Initiative and consultations with individuals and groups involved in the Initiative, this report provides recommendations to improve the elements of the IAI that best serve students and to streamline the process for participating institutions and staffs of the coordinating boards. Recommendations include the following:

- ◆ Clarifying the purposes of the Illinois Articulation Initiative
- ◆ Refining the role and responsibilities of the GECC panels to focus on developing content guidelines and learning outcomes and making the approval of individual courses more objective and efficient
- ◆ Calling upon faculty at individual colleges and universities to certify that courses meet IAI guidelines before submission to panels
- ◆ Refocusing the roles and responsibilities of the major field panels
- ◆ Reorganizing the Steering Panel and the Technical Task Force to form a statewide transfer advisory committee that would advise the boards on all transfer initiatives
- ◆ Defining the roles and responsibilities of participating colleges and universities, the Illinois Community College Board, and the Illinois Board of Higher Education, consistent with changes to the roles of the panels
- ◆ Improving representation and participation in panels
- ◆ Encouraging institutions to expand options for students who have not completed the GECC prior to transfer
- ◆ Implementing a common website to guide students to appropriate transfer information
- ◆ Developing methods for the continuous evaluation of the transfer of students among Illinois colleges and universities.

The recommendations are based on the principle that the benefits of a process should be commensurate with the effort involved, and that students should be the beneficiaries. The recommendations also recognize that individual colleges and universities have the primary responsibility for the quality of instruction and that they participate in IAI by choice. Finally, the recommendations are designed to promote alignment of IAI with the several other methods for facilitating transfer for students.

Evaluation of the Illinois Articulation Initiative

Part 1

Introduction and Background

Introduction

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) have always placed highest priority on providing access to higher education for the state's diverse population. The establishment of the statewide community college system provided higher education opportunities within an easy commute for all Illinois citizens. Among the primary roles of community colleges is providing the first two years of a bachelor's degree program—a lower-cost, convenient, high-quality alternative to attending a four-year institution.

However, Illinois has a tradition of autonomy for public colleges and universities, as well as a large sector of independent colleges and universities. As each of the over 180 colleges and universities develops and improves programs and curricula, the differences among programs increase and the chances decline that the courses students take at one institution will match the degree requirements at another. For this reason, colleges and universities, the Transfer Coordinators of Illinois Colleges and Universities, and the ICCB and IBHE have used several approaches to assist students in transferring among institutions and advancing toward a degree without loss of credit or time, while protecting institutional autonomy.

This report provides an evaluation of the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) and related recommendations for consideration by the higher education community. The IAI is one of several efforts to facilitate transfer for students. It is designed to assist students who plan to transfer to pursue a bachelor's degree, but who have not chosen a destination institution or a major. The first part of this report provides background about transfer and articulation in Illinois, development of the IAI, and transfer patterns. The second part provides a summary of IAI issues drawn from recent studies of the IAI, interviews with IAI leaders and staff members of the Boards, responses to an informal survey, and meetings with IBHE and ICCB advisory groups. These sources also provided the advice reflected in the recommendations.

History of Transfer and Articulation Initiative in Illinois

Community Colleges Designed for Transfer

To understand the Illinois Articulation Initiative it is essential to review a brief history of articulation in Illinois. Articulation of courses and programs in Illinois goes back to the establishment of the first two-year junior college, Joliet Junior College, in 1901. The University of Chicago and the University of

Illinois articulated the two-year program of study at Joliet and accepted the graduates of that program as juniors (Hardin, Thomas L., *The University of Illinois and the Community-Junior College Movement, Illinois Historical Journal, Vol. LXXIX, Number 2, Summer 1986*). The University of Illinois developed similar articulation agreements with the additional junior colleges that were established in Chicago between 1911 and 1915 and in other parts of Illinois in the 1920s. For example, when La Salle-Peru Junior College opened in 1924, examiners from the University of Illinois visited the college and approved the curriculum there as being equivalent to the first two years at the University (Hardin 2).

Additional institution-to-institution articulation of courses and programs was established with the four-year colleges and universities as the two-year colleges produced more and more transfer students. These institution-to-institution agreements were and continue to be very useful to students who transferred to a particular four-year college or university.

After the establishment of the Illinois public community college system in 1965, the number of community colleges in the state more than doubled. Community colleges were sending their transfer students not just to one specific university but to several four-year colleges and universities throughout the state. While the institution-to-institution articulation was useful to some students (and to some extent to the community colleges in designing their courses), it was not useful to students who were undecided about their major field of study and/or their transfer institution. In addition, colleges were often unable to provide the very different courses required by the various four-year colleges and universities. As a result, the need to articulate courses and programs with a group of four-year colleges and universities became a high priority.

Early Program Articulation Initiatives

To address this need, during the 1970s and 1980s the Illinois Community College Board created articulation panels consisting of faculty members from universities and community colleges in a number of discipline areas. These panels were asked to develop guidelines for courses and programs within each discipline that would be accepted for transfer by all of the participating universities. While community colleges were not required to conform to the guidelines developed by these panels, and universities were not required to accept courses meeting these guidelines, the work of these panels was generally accepted by both community colleges and universities. This was an important step forward for articulation among multiple institutions.

In 1971, the Transfer Coordinators of Illinois Colleges and Universities was formed to address and resolve transfer problems among colleges and universities. This group continued to use articulation panels to address the articulation of general education and major field courses in specific disciplines throughout the 1970s and the 1980s.

One example will illustrate how these articulation panels operated. In 1985, the community colleges had a problem with the computer course for business majors required by the public universities. Each university specified a different computer language. The ICCB and the Transfer Coordinators formed an articulation panel of business and computer faculty to resolve this problem. In just one meeting, this panel recognized that graduates of business programs would encounter the use of a variety of computer languages in businesses and industries and no one language is the best preparation. The faculty agreed that it is important for students to have experience with a structured computer language to ensure these concepts could be used in working with a variety of computer languages in the future. As a result, the panel recommended that the universities should accept, in transfer, any introductory computer course for business majors that uses a structured computer language. This recommendation was accepted by all the universities and community colleges. It is important to note that the articulation panels developed general guidelines for courses and programs that were accepted by universities without related review of all individual courses offered by the colleges.

The Articulation Compact and Model Associate Degrees

In the late 1960s, there was another articulation initiative, commonly called the Articulation Compact, among the community colleges and the public universities in Illinois to better address the needs of the large proportion of community college transfer students who were undecided about their major field of study and/or their destination institution. The Articulation Compact proposed that community college transfer students who complete the Associate in Arts or the Associate in Science degrees be accepted as juniors and as having satisfied the general education requirements of the public universities in Illinois. The Articulation Compact was formally approved as an Illinois Board of Higher Education Resolution in 1970.

The Articulation Compact was accepted by nine of the 12 public universities in Illinois. This articulation initiative enabled students to complete the AA or the AS degree at the community college while they were deciding on a major, and to have all their general education requirements completed when they transferred to a regional public university. It was a step toward meeting the transfer needs of students who were undecided or unsure about their major or their destination institution (the four-year institution to which they planned to transfer). It is important to note that the universities accepted the community colleges' AA and AS degrees as satisfying their own general education degree requirements without any guidelines and without the review of individual courses.

By the late 1980s, the public universities accepting the Articulation Compact were making significant changes in their general education requirements and could not continue to honor the Compact unless the community colleges

upgraded their general education requirements for the AA and AS degrees. As a result, the ICCB, working with its Program Advisory Committee and the Transfer Coordinators, developed the Model AA and AS Degrees that contained general education requirements comparable to those at Illinois public universities. The community colleges adopted the model AA and AS degree guidelines, and the public universities, destination institutions for most of the community college students, continued to honor the Compact with the provision that the colleges followed the AA and AS model degree guidelines.

Although the regional universities that enrolled the large majority of the transfer students honored the Articulation Compact, the University of Illinois campuses in Urbana-Champaign and Chicago did not. Many community college leaders wanted to expand and enhance the transfer articulation to include not only the University of Illinois but also the independent colleges and universities in the state.

Development of the Illinois Articulation Initiative

Strengthening Undergraduate Education

In addition to concerns about acceptance of the Compact, two factors influenced the development of the Illinois Articulation Initiative. First, strengthening undergraduate education became a high priority both nationally and in Illinois during the 1980s. As part of this effort, many Illinois universities strengthened and focused the general education component of their programs. Second, during the same period, higher education was serving increasing numbers of non-traditional students—part-time commuter students with family and/or work responsibilities; students who were not well prepared for college and needed remedial work; and students who delayed entry or “stopped out” and re-entered college. Community colleges offered significant opportunities to these students, but many of them had not formulated a plan to complete a bachelor’s degree.

In 1992, the IBHE received a status report on transfer articulation issues prepared by its staff. Following discussion of this report, the IBHE directed the staff to address transfer articulation among Illinois colleges and universities and to develop a system that would include the participation of all public colleges and universities and as many of the independent colleges and universities as possible.

The Illinois Articulation Initiative was developed in response to this IBHE directive. It was designed to expand and improve the previous multi-institutional articulation efforts in Illinois. The Illinois Articulation Initiative was designed to serve primarily the students who start college being undecided or unsure about their major field of study and/or the destination institution, as well as the many students who change their major and/or decide to transfer to a different institution from the one they originally

planned to attend. It was also designed to help community colleges meet the many different specific course requirements of multiple four-year colleges and universities by being able to offer the courses that would be acceptable for transfer by all colleges and universities in Illinois.

The development of the IAI was divided into two main segments: a General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) and lower-division courses in each major field that would meet the lower-division degree requirements in that major at all universities offering that degree.

General Education Core Curriculum

The General Education Core Curriculum was intended to encompass the basic core requirements needed to meet the general education objectives at all Illinois colleges and universities, ensuring that this curriculum would be accepted as satisfying the lower-division general education requirements for transfer students at all colleges and universities. Each institution could have its own unique general education curriculum, but would be expected to accept the IAI GECC as satisfying its lower-division general education curriculum for transfer students.

Just as faculty are primarily responsible for developing the general education requirements at colleges and universities, the IBHE and the ICCB decided that faculty panels from Illinois colleges and universities should have the primary responsibility for developing the IAI GECC. Panels consisting primarily of faculty members, academic administrators, and transfer coordinators were formed in each of the general education disciplines to identify the core requirements in each discipline. A Steering Committee, consisting of the chairs of each discipline panel and additional members-at-large, was formed to coordinate the construction and development of the GECC.

Major Field Articulation

The IAI major field articulation was intended to identify the lower-division general education and major field course requirements within each major that students should complete prior to transfer. The IAI major field articulation did not start until the IAI GECC was completed. The IAI Steering Panel that was formed to coordinate the development of the GECC also coordinated the work of the major field panels.

IAI Development 1993 to 2005

The Illinois Board of Higher Education's annual progress reports on the Illinois Articulation Initiative provide a history of the development and implementation of the program since it was launched in 1993. These reports show steady progress and substantial cooperation and participation by

colleges and universities and the staffs of the ICCB and IBHE. (See attached chronology of reports and policy statements.)

During 1993 and 1994, the General Education Core Curriculum was developed by faculty panels—in communications, humanities/fine arts, mathematics, physical and life sciences, and social and behavioral sciences. The GECC was approved by the Steering Panel, and subsequently endorsed by the IBHE and ICCB. Public and private colleges and universities were then invited to participate in the initiative, and by March of 1995, the presidents of all community colleges and public universities and 37 private institutions had indicated their intent to participate in the implementation of the GECC. In 2005, 48 community colleges, 6 private 2-year colleges, 12 public universities, and 44 4-year independent institutions were participating in the IAI.

The transferable GECC became effective for students entering college as first-time freshmen in the summer of 1998. In 1999-2000, faculty panels conducted fifth-year reviews of the five general education subject areas. A key component of the IAI was the development of a web-based information system available to students, advisors, faculty, and academic administrators throughout the state.

Between 1994 and 2005, 206 generic course descriptions were developed and refined in the five general education subject areas. These descriptions have been used to identify specific courses offered by colleges and universities that meet the guidelines for inclusion in a transferable core. Over 7,000 general education courses have met these guidelines and are listed by participating institutions on the ITransfer website.

In 1994 the first panels were established to develop recommendations for “course essentials for students transferring into specific baccalaureate majors.” The first models for majors—nursing and engineering—were endorsed in 1995. Additional models were developed and endorsed each year. By 2005, guidance for students in 27 major fields had been developed.

iTransfer Website

In advance of the implementation of the GECC, the iTransfer Website became available to the public in May of 1997. The site provided course descriptions for the GECC and opportunities for students to identify the courses at each college that met the requirements. As the major panels completed their work, course descriptions and lists of approved courses were added in each field. In 2005, the site provides information for students, parents, and college and university faculty and advisors. It serves as a central site for communications and resource materials for members of panels and committees.

Other Transfer and Articulation Processes

The IAI did not replace other transfer processes. During the past 13 years, colleges and universities have continued to develop and improve 2 + 2 arrangements, which serve students who have decided on a major and destination institution. Dual admission programs have been developed allowing students to be admitted simultaneously to a community college and to bachelor's degree granting institution to pursue a specific curriculum.

The usefulness of 2 + 2 and other articulation agreements has been enhanced by the development of the Course Applicability System (CAS). This system provides detailed information to individual students about the transferability of courses between specific institutions. Updated annually, CAS allows students to identify the specific courses at their home college that have been approved by their destination college for the degree program they have selected. Currently, 29 community colleges and seven public universities have course descriptions and articulation information available on the transfer.org website. All public universities and five independent institutions have been licensed and are developing articulation guides for inclusion in the system.

IAI faculty panels found that the traditional transfer degree programs—the Associate in Arts and Associate in Science—did not allow students in some fields to take lower division prerequisites in the major and still complete a full GECC. Typically, these majors were very structured and required sequences of courses that needed to be taken in freshman and sophomore years. To meet the needs of students majoring in these fields, specialized associate degrees have been developed, including the Associate in Fine Arts, the Associate in Engineering Science, and the Associate in Art in Teaching. These programs do not include a full GECC curriculum.

Transfer Trends and Patterns

It is difficult to assess directly whether IAI has been effective in assisting students with transferring smoothly from one Illinois institution to another. The initiative was founded on anecdotal evidence that students were losing credit, particularly those who transferred from a community college to a public university. While there are no quantitative measures of credit transfer, people involved with the initiative—faculty, transfer coordinators, academic administrators, and IBHE and ICCB staffs—believe that students have benefited from the initiative, particularly from the development of the GECC.

As shown in Table 1, in fall 1991 prior to the January 1992 launching of the IAI, over 48,000 students transferred into Illinois public and private colleges and universities. About 16,200 transferred to an Illinois institution from "Other Institutions" including out-of-state, foreign, and unknown institutions. Therefore, over 32,000—about two-thirds of these students—were known to have transferred from one Illinois institution to another. Between 1991 and

2004, the total number of transfer students enrolling for the first time in Illinois institutions declined only slightly. However, transfers from community colleges to public universities (initially the focus of the IAI) declined 10%.

Since the IAI was implemented in the fall of 1998, the total number of students transferring into Illinois institutions has increased 8%. Much of the increase may be attributed to substantial increases in transfers from "Other Institutions" to community colleges and to independent for-profit institutions. There was also a substantial increase in the number of students transferring from one community college to another. In contrast, transfers from community colleges to public universities and not-for-profit independent institutions declined 8% and 5% respectively.

Basic transfer data shown in Table 1 does not reveal changes associated specifically with the beginning of the IAI or its implementation in 1998. There are many factors that influence transfer patterns. Enrollment trends provide a partial explanation. Table 2 shows the substantial increase in undergraduate enrollment in independent for-profit institutions that parallels the increases in transfers to and from these institutions shown in Table 1. However, the increases in enrollment in community college baccalaureate transfer programs are not reflected in the numbers of transfers from community colleges.

Table 1
Patterns of Inter-institutional Undergraduate Transfer
Fall 1991, 1998, and 2004

| | Fall 1991 Total | Fall 1998 Total | Fall 2004 Total | % Change 1991 to 2004 | % Change 1998 to 2004 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Total Transfers | 48,359 | 43,726 | 47,165 | -2% | 8% |
| From Public Universities | 6,755 | 5,976 | 5,329 | -21% | -11% |
| To Public Universities | 1,681 | 1,304 | 1,129 | -33% | -13% |
| To Community Colleges | 3,697 | 3,426 | 3,051 | -17% | -11% |
| To Independent NFP Institutions | 1,350 | 1,172 | 955 | -29% | -19% |
| To Independent For-Profit Institutions | 27 | 74 | 194 | 619% | 162% |
| From Community Colleges | 19,990 | 20,702 | 20,405 | 2% | -1% |
| To Public Universities | 10,999 | 10,807 | 9,937 | -10% | -8% |
| To Community Colleges | 4,014 | 3,481 | 3,969 | -1% | 14% |
| To Independent NFP Institutions | 4,844 | 6,126 | 5,844 | 21% | -5% |
| To Independent For-Profit Institutions | 133 | 288 | 655 | 392% | 127% |
| From Independent NFP Institutions | 5,360 | 4,141 | 4,203 | -22% | 1% |
| To Public Universities | 1,317 | 1,005 | 928 | -30% | -8% |
| To Community Colleges | 2,726 | 2,048 | 2,071 | -24% | 1% |
| To Independent NFP Institutions | 1,285 | 981 | 993 | -23% | 1% |
| To Independent For-Profit Institutions | 32 | 107 | 211 | 559% | 97% |
| From Independent For-Profit Institutions | 411 | 314 | 556 | 35% | 77% |
| To Public Universities | 45 | 30 | 30 | -33% | 0% |
| To Community Colleges | 229 | 120 | 203 | -11% | 69% |
| To Independent NFP Institutions | 116 | 140 | 235 | 103% | 68% |
| To Independent For-Profit Institutions | 21 | 24 | 88 | 319% | 267% |
| From Other Institutions | 15,843 | 12,593 | 16,672 | 5% | 32% |
| To Public Universities | 3,938 | 3,730 | 3,896 | -1% | 4% |
| To Community Colleges | 6,603 | 4,582 | 7,417 | 12% | 62% |
| To Independent NFP Institutions | 4,582 | 3,948 | 4,224 | -8% | 7% |
| To Independent For-Profit Institutions | 720 | 333 | 1,135 | 58% | 241% |
| Total From All Institutions | | | | | |
| To Public Universities | 17,980 | 16,876 | 15,920 | -11% | -6% |
| To Community Colleges | 17,269 | 13,657 | 16,711 | -3% | 22% |
| To Independent NFP Institutions | 12,177 | 12,367 | 12,251 | 1% | -1% |
| To Independent For-Profit Institutions | 933 | 826 | 2,283 | 145% | 176% |

Sources: IBHE, *1992 Data Book*, Table V-1; *1999 Data Book*, Table V-1; and *2005 Data Book*, Table V-1)

Table 2
Fall Enrollment of Undergraduate and Baccalaureate Transfer Students by Sector
1991, 1998, and 2004

| | Fall 1991 | Fall 1998 | Fall 2004 | % Change 1991 to 2004 | % Change 1998 to 2004 |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Public University - Undergraduate | 151,189 | 145,903 | 149,355 | -1% | 2% |
| Community College - Baccalaureate Transfer | 114,006 | 111,126 | 127,321 | 12% | 15% |
| Independent NFP - Undergraduate | 112,743 | 115,647 | 127,967 | 14% | 11% |
| Independent For-Profit - Undergraduate | 12,241 | 15,287 | 26,782 | 119% | 75% |

Sources: IBHE, *1992 Data Book*, Tables I-2, II-9, I-4; *1999 Data Book*, Tables I-2, II-10, I-4; and *2005 Data Book*, Tables I-5, II-10, I-7)

Because Northern Illinois University annually accepts more students in transfer than any other university, its study of 805 transfer students provides some useful insights. The study indicated that most students are satisfied with their transfer experience and that both the community colleges and the University provided appropriate assistance. As Table 3 shows, a majority of students did the following: planned to transfer when they entered the community college, completed an associate degree, and transferred credit in the major. While only 22% of the NIU transfer students were aware of IAI specifically and only 3% had used the website, all students seemed to have benefited from the development of the GECC. Among students who transferred before receiving an associate degree, a majority had completed some or all of the GECC. Despite the overall satisfaction with the transfer process, a substantial proportion of students reported that they had some lost credit in transfer, and most of them did not know why.

| Table 3 Selected Results of NIU Study of Transfer Students | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| | Percent of Respondents |
| Planned to transfer | 92 |
| Aware of IAI | 22 |
| Completed an Associate Degree | 69 |
| Among Students who did not complete a degree | |
| Completed the GECC | 30 |
| Completed part of the GECC | 58 |
| Transferred credit in the major | 72 |
| Lost some credit in transfer | 43 |
| | |

Part 2

Evaluation and Recommendations

The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) is a significant statewide cooperative effort among all colleges and universities in Illinois and is designed to facilitate the transfer process for the many college students who are undecided about their major, who change their major during the first two years of college, who are undecided about their destination institution, or who transfer to an institution different than the one they initially planned to attend. Although the number of students and patterns of transfer may vary over time, the ability to transfer among institutions is an increasingly important factor in assuring access, particularly for non-traditional students.

While there are other articulation efforts in Illinois designed to facilitate the transfer of students from one institution to another, most serve only students who know their major and their destination institution and who do not change either of those decisions. However, the IAI is the only articulation initiative that involves the cooperation of all Illinois colleges and universities in developing guidelines for a common lower-division general education core curriculum that is accepted for transfer by participating Illinois institutions. This is a remarkable accomplishment that is worth preserving and continually improving.

Approaches to the Evaluation and Sources of Information

The following evaluation and recommendations are based on information drawn from several sources. Recent studies of the IAI were reviewed. Of particular interest was the *Review of Baccalaureate Major Panel Roles*, a report submitted to the IAI Steering Panel in April 2005. A list of other studies is attached. Information was also drawn from IBHE policy studies and IAI status reports listed in the attached chronology.

In addition to review of formal studies, meetings were held with IBHE and ICCB staffs, advisory committees of both boards, and selected college and university representatives who have provided leadership throughout the initiative. In addition, public and private college and university representatives provided written responses to informal discussion questions distributed at meetings. Some colleges convened meetings of staff responsible for transfer activities and provided summaries of their comments.

A report and preliminary recommendations were distributed by IBHE and ICCB staffs to faculty, academic officers, transfer coordinators and others involved in the IAI at college and universities. Over 50 individuals and groups—representing community colleges, public universities, and independent institutions—responded to the preliminary recommendations. All of the comments and suggestions were thoroughly reviewed and discussed with IBHE and ICCB staffs. The final recommendations include some substantial changes and clarifications based on these comments and

suggestions. For example, the recommendations related to the role and responsibilities of the GECC panels were substantially revised.

The recommendations presented in this report are intended to support the elements of the IAI that best serve students and to streamline the processes for institutions and the staffs of the coordinating boards. The recommendations are based on the principle that the benefits of a process should be commensurate with the effort involved, and that students should be the beneficiaries. The recommendations also recognize that individual colleges and universities have the primary responsibility for the quality of instruction and that they participate in IAI by choice. The IAI panels and committees derive their roles and responsibilities from participating institutions with the support of IBHE and ICCB staffs. Finally, the recommendations are designed to promote alignment of IAI with the several other methods for facilitating transfer for students. Recommendations include the following:

- ◆ Clarifying the purposes of the Illinois Articulation Initiative (Recommendation 1)
- ◆ Refining the role and responsibilities of the GECC panels to focus on developing content guidelines and learning outcomes and making the approval of individual courses more objective and efficient (Recommendations 2 and 3).
- ◆ Calling upon faculty at individual colleges and universities for certifying that courses meet IAI guidelines before submission to panels. (Recommendations 3 and 5)
- ◆ Refocusing the roles and responsibilities of the major field panels (Recommendation 4 and 5).
- ◆ Reorganizing the Steering Panel and the Technical Task Force to form a statewide transfer advisory committee that would advise the boards on all transfer initiatives. (Recommendation 6, 7, and 8)
- ◆ Defining the roles and responsibilities of participating colleges and universities, the Illinois Community College Board, and the Illinois Board of Higher Education, consistent with changes to the roles of the panels. (Recommendations 9 and 10)
- ◆ Improving representation and participation in panels. (Recommendations 11 and 12)
- ◆ Encouraging institutions to expand options for students who have not completed the GECC prior to transfer. (Recommendation 13)
- ◆ Implementing a common website to guide students to appropriate transfer information. (Recommendation 14)
- ◆ Developing methods for the continuous evaluation of the transfer of students among Illinois colleges and universities. (Recommendation 15)

Clarifying Purposes of IAI

There is general consensus that the primary purpose of the IAI is to facilitate students' transfer from one institution to another with minimal loss of credit. IBHE policies state that transfer students "should be able to progress toward baccalaureate degree completion at a rate comparable to that of students who entered the baccalaureate institution as first-time freshman."

IAI was designed primarily to serve undecided and self-advising students who planned to transfer but had not selected an institution or a major. Students who have selected their next institution and major (or narrowed their choices) are better served by other transfer tools, such as 2+2 inter-institutional agreements, dual admission plans, specialized transfer degree programs, and the Course Applicability System (CAS). Despite the original purpose and the continued development of other transfer tools, IAI is seen by some as the primary conduit for transfer information and the primary solution for nearly all transfer problems.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Statement of Purposes

The general goals of the Illinois Articulation Initiative are:

- a. To enhance the transfer among all Illinois colleges and universities in Illinois for students who change or are undecided about their destination institution or major.**
- b. To promote cooperation among all regionally accredited Illinois community colleges, public universities, and independent colleges and universities in this articulation effort.**
- c. To involve faculty in discussion and consideration of developments in disciplines, content guidelines and learning outcomes for college students.**
- d. To enable community colleges to develop their own general education courses that will be accepted by all receiving institutions in Illinois.**
- e. To provide comprehensive information on the equivalency of courses for college and university advisors.**
- f. To identify the minimum content and performance standards for a general education curriculum that will be accepted as meeting the lower-division general education requirements for transfer students at all Illinois colleges and universities.**

Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities

As the purposes of IAI have evolved, so too have the roles and responsibilities of the organizations contributing to the success of the

initiative. The coordinating boards and their staffs; the colleges and universities including their faculties and academic leadership; and the IAI panels and committees each have responsibilities for the initiative. In addition, the Transfer Coordinators have played a major role in solving transfer and articulation issues and in developing the IAI and other transfer tools. During the 1990s, IBHE's Academic Leadership Group provided policy leadership during the implementation of IAI and was available to assist in the resolution of transfer problems between institutions when needed.

| Coordinating Boards | IAI Units | Colleges and Universities |
|--|--|--|
| Board of Higher Education IBHE Staff Community College Board ICCB Staff | Steering Panel Technical Task Force 5 General Education Panels 24 Major Field Panels Website staff | Faculties Academic leadership Student services personnel |
| Transfer Coordinators IBHE Academic Leadership Group | | |

As the IAI has taken on additional purposes, responsibility has shifted from the boards and their staffs and the colleges and universities to the IAI panels and committees. Some of those interviewed raised concerns, not about what each group was doing, but about the apparent lack of definition and common understanding about the respective roles and responsibilities. The following recommendations suggest refined definitions of the roles and responsibilities of the key IAI groups.

The evaluators recognize that the Transfer Coordinators will continue to play a major role in facilitating transfer for students and improving communications among all institutions. Because this is an independent group, the following recommendations do not address their roles and responsibilities.

Roles and Responsibilities - General Education Panels

Our evaluation revealed that the IAI GECC was well accepted by the institutions and that the goals and objectives of the GECC are being achieved. The IAI GECC is serving many transfer students very well, especially those who are undecided about a major and/or their transfer institution. The IAI GECC discipline panels consist primarily of faculty, but also include Transfer Coordinators and Chief Academic Officers. This seems to be a good balance of faculty and academic administrators that has enabled the IAI GECC panels to be effective. These panels were successful in developing the IAI GECC which is being accepted as satisfying the lower-division general education requirements for transfer students by all Illinois public universities, all public community colleges, and many independent colleges and universities in the state. In addition, the panels have identified the courses in each discipline area that would meet the objectives of the GECC.

While the goals and objectives of the IAI GECC are being achieved, there are a number of processes and functions that need to be improved to make the articulation of general education courses more efficient and more objective. One of the major problems is that the roles and responsibilities of the IAI panels are not clearly articulated and monitored. As a result, panels have gradually assumed responsibilities that are much different from their original purposes.

Quality Control. Some of the panels have assumed the role of quality control for courses on a statewide basis, extending their purview beyond what is to be taught to how it will be taught, and beyond an institution's course standards to the syllabi of individual faculty members. Assuring quality control is the responsibility of individual colleges and universities, and is not an appropriate role for IAI panels. Assuming this role leads to micro-management of the quality controls of instruction at the local institutions, delays course approvals, and impinges on institutional authority. Comments received during the evaluation of the IAI suggested that some panels require institutions to submit materials that go beyond the description of a course or ask for the syllabi of individual faculty members, rather than the institution's master syllabus. Some panels ask for evidence of the quality of a required writing assignment, rather than simply confirm that a writing assignment is included. The Marshall and Kerber study indicated that some panel members wanted to expand the quality control role.

In addition, a primary role and responsibility of the panels is to develop clear and well-written general guidelines and learning objectives for courses in their particular disciplines. However, some panels rely on unwritten subjective criteria to review courses. As a result, their decisions may be inconsistent and depend on who is attending the meeting rather than on objective guidelines. Currently the IAI GECC panels review all courses submitted by the institutions to determine if the courses are equivalent to those already described by the panel or, in the case of unique new courses, to determine if they satisfy the content guidelines and learning objectives for the GECC requirements in that discipline. While this process is working, it is often very inefficient and courses are frequently not reviewed in a timely manner. It is not uncommon for the process to take a year or longer. During the first half of 2005, each of the general education faculty panels met once. The decision reports from these meetings show that the panels considered 144 courses and approved 67 for inclusion in the GECC. For 42 of the 77 courses not approved, the panels indicated that more information or clarification was needed.

Course Approval. Some panels do not have clearly written content guidelines, learning objectives, and course descriptions. Other panels seem to dictate the courses with too much specificity, prohibiting local college and university faculty to meet course objectives in diverse ways. The panels should ensure that the content guidelines and learning objectives for the

GECC are met but should also recognize that these can be accomplished in many different ways by creative faculty.

Poor attendance at panel meetings and lack of participation in the course review process was frequently cited as a problem. As a result, some of the course review decisions are made by only a few of the panel members. In addition, while some panels have been successful in using electronic means to review courses, other panels have had great difficulty in utilizing this method.

The primary responsibility for ensuring that courses meet the content guidelines and learning objectives developed by the IAI panels for meeting the requirements of the IAI GECC should be that of the faculty at the local colleges and universities. Some institutions do not fully consider the guidelines and objectives for transfer when developing new courses and some do not conduct an internal review of a course to certify that it meets GECC course criteria and to assure that the materials appropriately reflect this. By understanding the IAI GECC content guidelines and learning objectives, local faculty can not only develop appropriate course descriptions and course syllabi, but they can also incorporate materials and lesson plans to enhance these objectives in their courses.

The IBHE and ICCB have the authority and responsibility for coordinating statewide efforts in higher education in Illinois and can facilitate the approval process. Using the course content guidelines and learning objectives developed by the IAI panels, the IBHE and ICCB staffs can screen the courses submitted by the colleges and universities before the courses are forwarded to the panels.

The following recommendations address the roles and responsibilities of GECC faculty panels and suggest revisions to the course approval process.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Roles and Responsibilities of GECC Faculty Panels

The roles and responsibilities of the IAI GECC panels should be the following:

- a) Provide a forum for faculty from public and private colleges and universities to guide the transferable General Education Core Curriculum, to develop common understandings about general education objectives and curriculum content, and to monitor changes and developments in the disciplines.**
- b) Develop the general content guidelines and learning objectives for courses to meet the GECC requirements in the particular discipline area. The content guidelines and learning objectives should identify the essential concepts, objectives, and**

competencies to meet minimum standards for courses in this area.

- The descriptions should be clear enough for faculty or the department chair in this discipline at the local institution to easily determine whether or not a local course meets these guidelines.
 - These descriptions should be specific enough to ensure that the courses in this category meet the minimum standards for satisfying the GECC requirements, but should be general enough to allow for local institutional diversity.
- c) Articulate the rationale for the content guidelines and learning objectives for courses to meet the GECC in this discipline area to faculty in this field at all Illinois colleges and universities.
- d) Conduct the final review of courses to determine if they meet the IAI content guidelines and learning objectives for courses in this discipline area.
- e) Identify new trends in the discipline area that go beyond meeting the standards of the GECC and disseminate these as suggestions to colleges and universities in Illinois.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The IAI Course Review and Approval Process should be revised as follows:

- a) The primary responsibility for determining if courses developed by local institutions satisfy the content guidelines and learning objectives developed by the IAI panels should belong to the faculty at the local institutions.
- b) The IBHE and ICCB staffs should screen courses submitted by the colleges and universities prior to review by the IAI panels and send back courses that do not contain all the needed information and/or clearly do not meet the IAI guidelines.
- c) The IAI GECC panels should review courses submitted for IAI approval during the first week of six scheduled months using electronic means.
- d) Colleges and universities should develop appropriate local process for faculty to review courses and certify that they meet the IAI GECC content guidelines and learning objectives prior to submission for posting on the iTransfer website if such a process is not currently in use.

- e) **The IBHE and ICCB staffs should maintain an up-to-date log on their websites showing the status of all courses submitted for approval by colleges and universities.**

Roles and Responsibilities - Major Field Panels

The original charge given to the IAI major field panels as stated in IBHE and ICCB documents was:

"Each baccalaureate major panel is charged to develop a recommendation for prospective students who have decided upon their major but who have not yet decided upon their destination institution. Each panel needs to identify those courses that incoming transfer students would have completed in order to be admitted as a junior into the baccalaureate major. The panel should identify and describe:

1. Any additional general education courses beyond those in the GECC that students need to complete to meet degree or college requirements (e.g., should students have completed a foreign language?)
2. Any courses in the major or related discipline that "native" students commonly take as freshmen and sophomores.
3. Any other information the prospective student should know about transfer into the major (e.g., what sub fields or disciplines does the major include? Is there a minimum GPA required for admissions? Are there entry exams? Is there a performance criteria required (e.g., audition, portfolio, etc.)?"

Roles and Responsibilities of Major Field Panels. While the charge to the major field panels is subject to some different interpretations, it appears that in the 1990s the IBHE and ICCB staffs expected similar results from the major field panels as from the GECC panels. The fact that a list of IAI courses was developed in each major field area and the major field panels reviewed and approved courses indicates that the intent was to articulate individual major field courses on a statewide basis.

This intent, however, had two major problems. First, IBHE policy allowed universities to decide whether or not to participate in each IAI major field articulation. As a result, many public universities chose not to participate. Second, while there seems to be consensus on the objectives and structure of general education, there is considerable diversity in the objectives, structure, and course sequences among baccalaureate majors. As a result, many universities that accept the GECC as a package may not accept an individual course as being equivalent and for this same reason do not accept many major field courses as equivalent to their courses.

The many students undecided about their majors greatly benefit from the IAI GECC. However, by the time students decide on a major, most have identified one or two destination institutions. As a result, the program articulation with the specific university provides much better information for these students. The new Course Articulation System (CAS), when fully developed, will provide very good information for these students.

Transfer coordinators have indicated that the IAI major guidelines are often not the best advice for the majority of students, particularly students who not only know their major but have narrowed their choices of degree institutions. There are also reports that some four-year institutions have been slow to submit courses for approval by the major panels in order to avoid having to accept all other panel-approved courses in substitution for their own. (Marshall and Kerber)

Field panels may also work to identify unique differences in lower division course and admission requirements among the baccalaureate degrees in the major at the various universities. They might assure that students are provided with any other information about transfer into the major (i.e., GPA requirements for admission, entry exams, required auditions or portfolios, etc.). Panels might also identify new and/or innovative trends in the lower division curriculum in the major field and disseminate these trends to colleges and universities in Illinois.

Approval of Major Courses. During 2005, 16 major field panels met and took action on courses that had been submitted for approval. Reports from these meetings indicate that collectively the panels reviewed 195 courses, 55% were approved, 26% rejected, and 19% returned for clarifications or specifications. The number of courses and approval rates varied considerably among panels.

In responses to a survey, over 70% of the faculty participating in major field panels indicated that course review was extremely important and should be conducted annually. The survey indicated that faculty panelists consider course review to be the most important role of the major panels. The purposes cited for course approval reflected interests in expanding quality control activities. (Marshall and Kerber)

There are complaints about low participation by some panels in meetings and online course review, as there are with some of the general education panels. Decisions may be made by a small number of faculty, who may not be representative, and approval may take months, sometimes more than a year. Decision criteria have not been developed for all panels. Even with criteria, decisions may be inconsistent from one meeting to the next because of participation levels. There are differing opinions among panels and within panels about the materials to be submitted for approval of courses.

The study of the role of the major panels concluded, "...the efforts required to process and maintain the data on the IAI major course-to-course equivalencies does not warrant continuing the process as it has evolved. Much of the time and effort now spent on administering IAI, both by the institutions and the board staff, is used in dealing with the course-to-course equivalencies in the majors." The course matrix for the majors has been removed from the iTransfer website in response to concerns that the information was misleading to students. The consultants concur that the effort required to sustain the course approval process is not commensurate with the benefits to students.

For these reasons, the charge to the IAI major field panels needs to be focused on providing the best advice for students who know their major but are undecided about a transfer institution rather than developing specific IAI course descriptions and reviewing major field courses.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Roles and Responsibilities of Major Field Panels

The charge to the IAI major field panels should be revised to the following:

- a) Providing a forum for faculty from public and private colleges and universities to develop common understandings about lower-division objectives and curriculum content in the majors, and to monitor changes and developments in their respective fields that may affect students' preparation for upper division work.**
- b) Providing the best advice for students who know their major but are undecided about a destination institution by identifying the lower division courses in the major or related discipline and any additional elective courses that are generally expected of native students as freshmen and sophomores in that major at most universities in Illinois.**
- c) Developing general content guidelines and learning objectives for lower division courses in the specific major that identify the essential concepts students should learn and the competencies they should develop.**
- d) Considering statewide articulation issues and problems with particular requirements in the major field and advising colleges and universities on appropriate options or resolutions.**

RECOMMENDATION 5: Review of Courses in the Major

The review and approval of major field course by the IAI panel should be discontinued and IAI lower-division major field courses should not be maintained on the iTransfer website. Community colleges should articulate new major field courses with the universities to which most of their students transfer in accordance with ICCB rules.

Roles and Responsibilities – Steering Panel and Technical Task Force

The IAI Steering Panel was established to coordinate the development of the IAI GECC and to ensure that the work of the IAI GECC faculty panels was consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the IAI. For this reason the Panel included the co-chairs of each of the five GECC panels along with other representatives from colleges and universities in Illinois. After the IAI GECC panels developed their recommendations, they were reviewed and acted upon by the IAI Steering Panel. Sometimes the Steering Panel sent the recommendations back to the panels for revisions prior to approving them and forwarding them to the ICCB and IBHE for action. Since the Steering Panel included the co-chairs of all the IAI GECC panels, it was ideally constituted to address the overall and consistent goals of the IAI GECC.

The IAI Technical Task Force was established to address the technical aspects of implementing the IAI GECC recommendations at the local institutional level and to provide assistance in developing the iTransfer website. The IAI Technical Task Force consisted of college staff members who were very involved with the more detailed aspects of working with transfer students and prospective transfer students such as transfer coordinators, admission officers, registrars, and academic advisors. The IAI Technical Task Force made a great contribution to the success of the IAI by developing many needed processes for local institutions that enabled the IAI GECC recommendations to be implemented and, as a result, to serve transfer students.

While the IAI Steering Panel was well constituted to coordinate the development of the IAI GECC, the composition of the Panel was not changed when the IAI addressed the major field articulation. As a result, it was less effective in coordinating the development of the major field recommendations and evaluating the usefulness of the recommendations major field panels to transfer students. In addition, the IAI Steering Panel is not appropriately constituted to deal with many policy issues associated with the transfer and articulation that involve administrative processes and procedures, although they have been asked to do so. While the IAI Technical Task Force has been a great help in addressing many of these administrative procedures and processes, the policy decisions of the IAI Steering Panel could be greatly enhanced if the Panel members would have a better understanding and appreciation of some of the administrative processes and procedures.

The work and role of the IAI Steering Panel has greatly changed since the IAI GECC was developed over ten years ago. Currently, the IAI Steering Panel is being requested to address and resolve a variety of transfer articulation issues and problems that are only slightly related to the IAI. While this is a very important function, the IAI Steering Panel was not constituted to serve this role. Currently, there is a need for a statewide transfer advisory committee to address the broader policy issues involving articulation and transfer in Illinois. This committee would not deal with detailed development and implementation of specific initiatives such as CAS and hence is not intended to replace the CAS Advisory Committee.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Statewide Transfer Advisory Committee

The IBHE and ICCB should merge the IAI Steering Panel and the IAI Technical Task Force into one statewide transfer advisory committee that would advise to the IBHE and the ICCB about the IAI, and all other transfer articulation efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Transfer Advisory Committee Representation

The composition of the IBHE/ICCB Transfer Articulation Advisory Committee should include faculty, chief academic officers, student service administrators, transfer coordinators from all three sectors of higher education in Illinois (community colleges, independent colleges and universities, and public universities), and a representative from the CAS Advisory Committee.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Charge to the Transfer Advisory Committee

The charge of the IBHE/ICCB Transfer Articulation Advisory Committee should be to advise the IBHE and ICCB on the following matters:

- a) Statewide policies and articulation efforts that would enhance the transfer process for students.**
- b) Resolution of statewide transfer articulation issues.**
- c) Coordination of the work of the IAI panels and the implementation of the IAI policies and recommendations.**
- d) Development of an easy-to-use information system about all transfer information for students and academic advisors.**
- e) Planning and development of future transfer initiatives.**

Roles and Responsibilities – Colleges and Universities and Coordinating Boards

Given the proposed changes to the roles of the GECC and major panels, the roles of colleges and universities and the ICCB and IBHE need to be amended and clarified. Consistent with recent practices, the recommendations call for a shift in responsibility from the panels to the faculty of individual colleges and universities. In addition, the IBHE and ICCB staff will collaboratively support the process and handle the listing of courses using content guidelines and learning objectives developed by panels.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Roles and Responsibilities of Colleges and Universities

Colleges and universities participating in the Illinois Articulation Initiative and other articulation initiatives should:

- a) Maximize students' opportunities for successful transfer either as a receiving institution, sending institution, or both.**
- b) Assure that students are well informed of transfer opportunities and options.**
- c) Consider IAI guidelines in developing new general education or major courses.**
- d) Develop a process for campus faculty to certify that a new course meets statewide guidelines prior to submission of the course to the IBHE or ICCB.**
- e) Support time and travel for faculty and staff serving on panels and committees.**
- f) Designate a contact person for IAI communications.**

RECOMMENDATION 10: Roles and Responsibilities of ICCB and IBHE

The IBHE and ICCB and their staffs should coordinate statewide efforts to serve students who transfer among Illinois institutions including:

- a) Develop policies on transfer and articulation in consultation with public and private colleges and universities and coordinate and support implementation of these policies.**
- b) Conduct orientation session for all new panel members so they are clear about their roles and responsibilities on the IAI panels.**

- c) **Provide adequate staff support and facilitate communications among members of faculty panels, advisory groups, and individual colleges and universities.**
- d) **Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of transfer and articulation policies, identify issues that need to be addressed, and seek the advice of advisory committees in resolving problems and concerns.**
- e) **Provide information about transfer and articulation efforts to governmental leaders and the general public as appropriate.**
- f) **Support transfer and articulation initiatives in budget development, program approvals, and grant administration.**
- g) **Screen courses submitted by colleges and universities for posting on the iTransfer website to assess that the materials are complete and the courses meet the content guidelines and learning objectives prior to review by the IAI panels.**

Panel Membership and Participation

Currently, the IBHE and ICCB do not have policies governing the appointment and length of service expected for IAI panel members. In the absence of policies, the practice has been lifetime appointments unless someone resigns, and in that case the position is filled by a faculty or staff from the same institution. This practice is not ideal for either the panel members or for prospective panel members from other Illinois colleges and universities. It is also not the best policy for obtaining statewide input and commitment on important academic decisions. Individuals are much more willing to serve on panels for a definite period of a few years. Having a rotating term of service for panels enables the IBHE and ICCB to get different institutional representation on panels gradually and still maintain a majority of members for consistency. While the IBHE and ICCB should generally appoint new members when the term of an exiting panel member expires, they can reappoint some panel members who continue to show interest and provide leadership for the work of the panel.

RECOMMENDATION 11: The IBHE and ICCB should implement a policy for three-year staggered term of appointment for all IAI panel members and request nominations from institutions when new members are needed for panels.

RECOMMENDATION 12: The chief academic officers should nominate faculty to IAI panels who are willing to attend as many as 4 panel meetings each year if needed and replace individuals serving on panels who are not attending and/or participating in panel meetings. Nominations for transfer coordinators and chief academic

officers should continue to come from the statewide organizations of these groups.

Other Considerations and Recommendations

Acceptance of Incomplete General Education Core

The GECC is accepted as a package in lieu of a receiving institution's general education curriculum. While this policy works well for many, some students transfer before completing the GECC and many universities accept the GECC in place of their own general education requirements only if the entire GECC is completed by the transfer student.

This is a particularly significant problem for students in major fields that require many major-specific courses at the lower division. In these fields, students are not able to complete all general education requirements and lower division requirements in the major in two years of full-time study. Students at community colleges should be able to complete similar course patterns during the first two years as native students in a particular major without being penalized. Since all community colleges' general education requirements meet the GECC requirements, the universities need to recognize a partial GECC for these students.

RECOMMENDATION 13: Completion of GECC

Under the following circumstances, institutions should offer transfer students the option of satisfying lower-division general education requirements by completing a GECC curriculum with the receiving institutions GECC courses.

- ◆ **When the transfer student has completed a statewide articulated associate degree such as the AFA, AES, ATT; or**
- ◆ **When the transfer student has completed 60 semester hours of transfer credit without having completed the GECC; or**
- ◆ **When the transfer student has completed a minimum of 24 semester credit hours of the GECC.**

Coordination of IAI with other Transfer Mechanisms

While the IAI is designed to serve students who are undecided about their major and/or the transfer institution, there are several other excellent articulation efforts in Illinois designed for students who know their major and transfer institution. Many universities in Illinois have articulated 2+2 agreements with community colleges. These agreements specify two years of courses at the community college followed by two years of courses at the university that leads to a baccalaureate degree in four years without any loss of credit. These articulation agreements are ideal for students seeking these particular degrees from those particular universities. Dual admission programs have extended 2+2 agreements to enable students to be admitted to a college and a university simultaneously, providing students with specific guidance and guaranteed admission to upper-division programs.

Almost all universities in Illinois have articulated their courses and programs with individual community colleges for decades. These institution-to-institution articulations are used extensively by students and academic advisors. For years, this type of articulation information has been available in paper documents such as articulation handbooks. Recently, some institutions have made this information available electronically. Finally, this institution-to-institution articulation is being combined with an unofficial degree audit and is being made available on a statewide basis via a website. This system, called the Course Articulation System (CAS), promises to provide excellent information for students who know their major and their transfer institution.

No single articulation effort is best for all students. In fact, all of these efforts are serving individual transfer students very well. Academic advisors know they need to use different articulation information to meet the different needs and objectives of individual students. To facilitate the transfer for students, each of the various types of articulation efforts needs to be developed and continually enhanced. In addition, the information about each of these articulation efforts needs to be easily accessible and understandable to prospective transfer students. Currently, the iTransfer website contains excellent information about the IAI, and the CAS website contains course and program articulation information for the institutions that are in this system. Information about 2+2 articulation agreements is generally available in documents and on the websites for the two institutions involved. Since the IAI articulation is best for students who are undecided about their major and transfer institution, and the CAS and 2+2 information is best for students who are decided about their major and transfer institution it would be ideal if all of the state's articulation information was merged onto one website. This website would need to be well designed so that it would be very easy for students to use. It would guide students to the most appropriate transfer information for their particular situations.

RECOMMENDATION 14: Consolidated Transfer Website

A consolidated transfer website should be developed that would guide students to the most appropriate transfer information for their particular needs.

The recommendations provided in this report are based on several studies of the IAI and on the considerable professional judgment of many individuals who have provided leadership for the initiative. However, there are no statewide data or system to evaluate the effectiveness of the IAI. In consultation with the transfer advisory committee, transfer coordinators, and colleges and universities, IBHE and ICCB might consider ways to evaluate the IAI on a continuing basis so that well-informed policy decisions can be made in the future. This effort would be consistent with the current interest on the state level about providing a "seamless educational system" for students.

RECOMMENDATION 15: Evaluation of the IAI

A method should be developed for the systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the IAI, focusing on students' ability to transfer among institutions with minimal loss of credit.

Summary and Implementation Considerations

Drawing on several studies of the Illinois Articulation Initiative and consultations with individuals and groups involved in the Initiative, this report provides recommendations to improve the elements of the IAI that best serve students and to streamline the process for participating institutions and staffs of the coordinating boards.

Included in the recommendations is a statement of the purposes of the IAI. The roles and responsibilities of the General Education Core Curriculum panels are refined and the process for approving courses is refined. These recommendations suggest that panels develop clear, objective content guidelines and learning objectives and that colleges and universities take greater responsibility for assuring that their courses meet the appropriate guidelines and objectives. ICCB and IBHE staffs can facilitate the course approval process by assuring that the materials forwarded to the panels are complete. To support the recommendations related to the GECC, the roles of colleges and universities and the staffs of the coordinating boards are described.

Implementation of changes in the process for acceptance of GECC courses will require that

- ◆ IAI general education panels review content guidelines and performance objectives to assure that they are clearly defined and objective. The ICCB and IBHE staff's may identify models that might be used by all panels.
- ◆ Individual colleges and universities identify the point in their internal course-approval process when faculty will certify that a new course meets the panel's guidelines and objectives. Certification may take place at the department, division, or college levels and should be specified on the materials submitted for panel consideration.
- ◆ IBHE and ICCB staffs develop procedures for processing and monitoring the progress of course approvals.

The report also refocuses the roles and responsibilities of the major field panels on developing recommendations for lower division courses including general content guidelines and learning objectives in the major that can serve as guidance to students who know their major but are undecided about a transfer institution. Primarily because the effort involved was not commensurate with the time and effort required, the panels would no longer review and approve individual courses. While faculty rate the review of

courses as an important function, the system is not being used effectively to the benefit of students.

In addition, the recommendations address improving representation and participation of faculty on panels. To implement these recommendations, the consultants suggest that a term of three years be assigned to new members on the panels and that terms of one, two, and three years be assigned to current panel members so that the rotation of members begins immediately.

In order to promote coordination of the various initiatives that facilitate the transfer of students among institutions, the recommendations call for establishment of a statewide transfer advisory committee that would advise the boards on all transfer initiatives. The development of a single website is recommended to guide students to the appropriate transfer tools based on the decisions they have made about major and destination institution. The recommendations also call for systematic evaluation of the IAI so that appropriate policy decisions can be made.

Finally, the recommendations encourage institutions to expand options for students who have not completed the GECC prior to transfer, particularly those who have completed a statewide articulated degree such as the AFT, AES, or AAT.

List of Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1: Statement of Purposes

The general goals of the Illinois Articulation Initiative are:

- a. To enhance the transfer among all Illinois colleges and universities in Illinois for students who change or are undecided about their destination institution or major.
- b. To promote cooperation among all regionally accredited Illinois community colleges, public universities, and independent colleges and universities in this articulation effort.
- c. To involve faculty in discussion and consideration of developments in disciplines, content guidelines and learning outcomes for college students.
- d. To enable community colleges to develop their own general education courses that will be accepted by all receiving institutions in Illinois.
- e. To provide comprehensive information on the equivalency of courses for college and university advisors.
- f. To identify the minimum content and performance standards for a general education curriculum that will be accepted as meeting the lower-division general education requirements for transfer students at all Illinois colleges and universities.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Roles and Responsibilities of GECC Faculty Panels

The roles and responsibilities of the IAI GECC panels should be the following:

- a) Provide a forum for faculty from public and private colleges and universities to guide the transferable General Education Core Curriculum, to develop common understandings about general education objectives and curriculum content, and to monitor changes and developments in the disciplines.
- b) Develop the general content guidelines and learning objectives for courses to meet the GECC requirements in the particular discipline area. The content guidelines and learning objectives should identify the essential concepts, objectives, and competencies to meet minimum standards for courses in this area.

- The descriptions should be clear enough for faculty or the department chair in this discipline at the local institution to easily determine whether or not a local course meets these guidelines.
 - These descriptions should be specific enough to ensure that the courses in this category meet the minimum standards for satisfying the GECC requirements, but should be general enough to allow for local institutional diversity.
- c) Articulate the rationale for the content guidelines and learning objectives for courses to meet the GECC in this discipline area to faculty in this field at all Illinois colleges and universities.
 - d) Conduct the final review of courses to determine if they meet the IAI content guidelines and learning objectives for courses in this discipline area.
 - e) Identify new trends in the discipline area that go beyond meeting the standards of the GECC and disseminate these as suggestions to colleges and universities in Illinois.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Course Review and Approval

The IAI Course Review and Approval Process should be revised as follows:

- a) The primary responsibility for determining if courses developed by local institutions satisfy the content guidelines and learning objectives developed by the IAI panels should belong to the faculty at the local institutions.
- b) The IBHE and ICCB staffs should screen courses submitted by the colleges and universities prior to review by the IAI panels and send back courses that do not contain all the needed information and/or clearly do not meet the IAI guidelines.
- c) The IAI GECC panels should review courses submitted for IAI approval during the first week of six scheduled months using electronic means.
- d) Colleges and universities should develop appropriate local process for faculty to review courses and certify that they meet the IAI GECC content guidelines and learning objectives prior to submission for posting on the iTransfer website if such a process is not currently in use.
- e) The IBHE and ICCB staffs should maintain an up-to-date log on their websites showing the status of all courses submitted for approval by colleges and universities.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Roles and Responsibilities of Major Field Panels

The charge to the IAI major field panels should be revised to the following:

- a) Providing a forum for faculty from public and private colleges and universities to develop common understandings about lower-division objectives and curriculum content in the majors, and to monitor changes and developments in their respective fields that may affect students' preparation for upper division work.
- b) Providing the best advice for students who know their major but are undecided about a destination institution by identifying the lower division courses in the major or related discipline and any additional elective courses that are generally expected of native students as freshmen and sophomores in that major at most universities in Illinois.
- c) Developing general content guidelines and learning objectives for lower division courses in the specific major that identify the essential concepts students should learn and the competencies they should develop.
- d) Considering statewide articulation issues and problems with particular requirements in the major field and advising colleges and universities on appropriate options or resolutions.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Review of Courses in the Major

The review and approval of major field course by the IAI panel should be discontinued and IAI lower-division major field courses should not be maintained on the iTransfer website. Community colleges should articulate new major field courses with the universities to which most of their students transfer in accordance with ICCB rules.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Statewide Transfer Advisory Committee

The IBHE and ICCB should merge the IAI Steering Panel and the IAI Technical Task Force into one statewide transfer advisory committee that would advise to the IBHE and the ICCB about the IAI, and all other transfer articulation efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Transfer Advisory Committee Representation

The composition of the IBHE/ICCB Transfer Articulation Advisory Committee should include faculty, chief academic officers, student service administrators, transfer coordinators from all three sectors of higher education in Illinois (community colleges, independent colleges and

universities, and public universities), and a representative from the CAS Advisory Committee.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Charge to the Transfer Advisory Committee

The charge of the IBHE/ICCB Transfer Articulation Advisory Committee should be to advise the IBHE and ICCB on the following matters:

- a) Statewide policies and articulation efforts that would enhance the transfer process for students.
- b) Resolution of statewide transfer articulation issues.
- c) Coordination of the work of the IAI panels and the implementation of the IAI policies and recommendations.
- d) Development of an easy-to-use information system about all transfer information for students and academic advisors.
- e) Planning and development of future transfer initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Roles and Responsibilities of Colleges and Universities

Colleges and universities participating in the Illinois Articulation Initiative and other articulation initiatives should:

- a) Maximize students' opportunities for successful transfer either as a receiving institution, sending institution, or both.
- b) Assure that students are well informed of transfer opportunities and options.
- c) Consider IAI guidelines in developing new general education or major courses.
- d) Develop a process for campus faculty to certify that a new course meets statewide guidelines prior to submission of the course to the IBHE or ICCB.
- e) Support time and travel for faculty and staff serving on panels and committees.
- f) Designate a contact person for IAI communications.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Roles and Responsibilities of ICCB and IBHE

The IBHE and ICCB and their staffs should coordinate statewide efforts to serve students who transfer among Illinois institutions including:

- a) Develop policies on transfer and articulation in consultation with public and private colleges and universities and coordinate and support implementation of these policies.
- b) Conduct orientation session for all new panel members so they are clear about their roles and responsibilities on the IAI panels.
- c) Provide adequate staff support and facilitate communications among members of faculty panels, advisory groups, and individual colleges and universities.
- d) Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of transfer and articulation policies, identify issues that need to be addressed, and seek the advice of advisory committees in resolving problems and concerns.
- e) Provide information about transfer and articulation efforts to governmental leaders and the general public as appropriate.
- f) Support transfer and articulation initiatives in budget development, program approvals, and grant administration.
- g) Screen courses submitted by colleges and universities for posting on the iTransfer website to assess that the materials are complete and the courses meet the content guidelines and learning objectives prior to review by the IAI panels.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Appointment of Panel Members

The IBHE and ICCB should implement a policy for three-year staggered term of appointment for all IAI panel members and request nominations from institutions when new members are needed for panels.

RECOMMENDATION 12: Nomination of Panel Members

The chief academic officers should nominate faculty to IAI panels who are willing to attend as many as 4 panel meetings each year if needed and replace individuals serving on panels who are not attending and/or participating in panel meetings. Nominations for transfer coordinators and chief academic officers should continue to come from the statewide organizations of these groups.

RECOMMENDATION 13: Completion of GECC

Under the following circumstances, institutions should offer transfer students the option of satisfying lower-division general education requirements by completing a GECC curriculum with the receiving institutions GECC courses.

- ◆ When the transfer student has completed a statewide articulated associate degree such as the AFA, AES, ATT; or
- ◆ When the transfer student has completed 60 semester hours of transfer credit without having completed the GECC; or
- ◆ When the transfer student has completed a minimum of 24 semester credit hours of the GECC.

RECOMMENDATION 14: Consolidated Transfer Website

A consolidated transfer website should be developed that would guide students to the most appropriate transfer information for their particular needs.

RECOMMENDATION 15: Evaluation of the IAI

A method should be developed for the systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the IAI, focusing on students' ability to transfer among institutions with minimal loss of credit.

⌘ January 2006

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