

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REPORT ON ACCESS AND DIVERSITY:
DEVELOPMENT OF ANNUAL REPORT
ON READINESS FOR COLLEGE AND WORK**

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: Given the increasing importance of high school achievement to Illinois higher education, the state's economy, and high school students themselves, in August 2001 the Board of Higher Education approved the recommendation of the Committee on Access and Diversity to develop an annual report on readiness for college and work. The report will serve as an accountability document providing an annual snapshot of the state of preparation and achievement of high school students at the final point in their elementary/secondary school careers. It will also review how well these students do in their first year of college.

This Board item is put forward to aid in the development of an annual report which will be published at a future date. In the meantime, Board of Higher Education members and staff will engage the higher education community and other interested persons in a discussion about the selection of information for inclusion in the report and about how such a report is best organized and presented.

Action Requested: Direct Board of Higher Education staff to circulate this Board item among the Board's P-16 partners and other interested stakeholders (e.g., business and industry) for discussion and comment. After this consultation, staff will present a model of an annual report to the Joint Committee on Education for its consideration and then present to the Board a final report for approval.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REPORT ON ACCESS AND DIVERSITY:
DEVELOPMENT OF ANNUAL REPORT
ON READINESS FOR COLLEGE AND WORK**

The level of preparation and ability of high school students has never been more important than it is today both for the students themselves and for the wider society in which they live and work. Students with a strong academic preparation are well prepared for the workforce, which is demanding higher level skills of all employees, and for college, which takes about two thirds of all high school graduates. Unfortunately, many high school seniors are not adequately prepared and this presents them with difficulties in subsequent job and college experiences. National studies indicate that increasing numbers of entering employees can not meet rising employer expectations for literacy. At Illinois community colleges, about one-quarter of entering students take at least one remedial course. At Illinois public universities, about 40 percent of entering freshmen do not earn a bachelor degree from an Illinois public university (a small percentage of non-completers transfer and graduate from private and out-of-state institutions).

In an August 2001 report, *Gateway to Success: Rethinking Access and Diversity for a New Century*, the Board of Higher Education recommended the adoption of an “Annual Report on the Readiness for College or Work” to provide information and monitor the state of readiness and progress of Illinois high school students. The Board’s study described the purpose and scope of the proposed report as follows:

Through systemic effort, pre-collegiate academic preparation and achievement can be improved. However, how will state leaders and taxpayers know that progress is being made? To provide such information, we propose the establishment of an annual “Report on Readiness for College or Work”. The Joint Education Committee would develop this report which would provide information about the course-taking patterns and learning of high school students and graduates. The report would also contain information about the academic achievement of students in their first year of college, as reflected in levels of remediation, rates of attrition, and appropriate learning assessments.

This paper is intended to open a discussion among the higher education and business communities about the kind of information to be included in an annual readiness report. The paper proposes a variety of information for consideration. It also proposes developing two indices, one for college and one for work, that will offer a “bottom-line” assessment each year of the overall state of student readiness. This discussion paper will be used by the Board of Higher Education member staff in conversations with various interested groups across the state. Following this consultation, staff will present a new draft to the Joint Education Committee for its consideration and then report back to the Board with a final report for approval.

A Statewide Annual Report on Readiness for College and Work

In recent years, there has been an outpouring of national and state initiatives and studies that focus on pre-collegiate preparation. The adoption of Illinois Learning Standards by the Illinois State Board of Education has given this issue sustained attention during the past decade. The Board of Higher Education has published a number of major studies and adopted a series of recommendations on this topic this past year. *Investing in the Future: College Readiness in Illinois* (October, 2000) broadly reviewed this topic and examined, in particular, the connection between pre-collegiate preparation and the remediation needed at our colleges and universities. The Board's Access and Diversity report identified pre-collegiate preparation as the "most formidable" barrier now affecting student access in Illinois. The report proposed, and the Board has approved, recommendations to improve pre-collegiate preparation, one of which would require all high school students to take a college prep curriculum.

In these October Board materials, the report of the Commission on Persistence and Degree Completion discusses the close connection between a strong pre-collegiate preparation and later success in college. The Commission proposes the creation of a new financial aid program to provide incentives for high school graduates who complete a full college-preparatory curriculum, achieve good grades, and/or attain high scores on the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE). Finally, in these Board materials, *Improving College Readiness in Illinois: A Philosophy and Agenda for Student Success*, summarizes recent Board reports and offers a general orientation and recommendations on this topic.

Given the importance of pre-collegiate preparation for the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the P-16 agenda, it is imperative to summarize, organize, and highlight the performance and capabilities of students at their point of exit from elementary/secondary education. In addition, not only state policy makers but also Illinois residents, are concerned about high school preparation and achievement and seek information on this topic. In recent years, the media has increased such coverage reporting the scores of Illinois students on standardized achievement tests, such as the ACT, Advanced Placement (AP), and the new Prairie State Achievement Exam. However, this test data can be confusing since tests are taken at different times, measure different aspects of student achievement, and the results from one test may contradict, or appear to contradict, results from another test. Also, some highly relevant information about college readiness is not reported at all by the media.

The purpose of the readiness report is to provide annually a source of the most critical information about the readiness of Illinois students for college and work. The report will gather and present information that is published at different times during the course of an academic year, such as information from the ACT, AP, and PSAE, as well as other related, but less well known, data. The report will explain how this information relates to college readiness and will also integrate data to formulate an overall assessment of the state of readiness among Illinois high school students. The report will serve the Board and its P-16 partners as an essential tool in the development and implementation of policies affecting student preparation for college and work.

Indicators of Readiness for College and Work

There is no single measure that can capture whether today's students are well prepared for college or work. A variety of indicators taken together, however, can give a sense of the state of readiness. Below is an array of indicators that measure readiness by examining student

academic behavior and performance in high school and the first year of college. The first year of college is included to ground this report in the post-graduate experience of high school students. The use of multiple indicators is consistent with recent scholarship, such as the work of Clifford Adelman, who, in his book, *Answers in the Tool Box* used a composite of high school curriculum, test scores, and class rank to measure the intensity and quality of high school preparation.

Criteria for Selection of Indicators

Five criteria are proposed to select the indicators: data availability, theoretical or research validity, relationship to the recommended core high school curriculum, possibility of national and/or state comparisons, and ability to breakout indicators by race/ethnicity and income. To be selected for inclusion in the annual readiness report, each indicator should meet at least the first two criteria. The criteria are discussed below.

Criteria 1: Data Availability and Reliability: To assure data validity and reliability, the report will draw on resources from the ACT, College Board, the Prairie State Achievement Exam, and the High School Feedback Survey. This approach will ensure data consistency so that trends can be established and monitored from year to year.

Criteria 2: Grounded in Theory and/or Research: The indicators must demonstrate a theoretical and/or research relationship between high school preparation and first-year college success.

Criteria 3: Relationship to Recommended Core Curriculum: Completion of a college preparation core curriculum has a powerful effect on high school achievement and college success. For more information on this subject, see the item on requiring a college prep core curriculum for all high school students in these Board materials.

Criteria 4: Ability to Conduct National or State Comparisons: Indicators should also provide a link to student performance in other states and provide a means to assess how well Illinois is doing compared with the rest of the nation.

Criteria 5: Ability to Present Indicators by Race/Ethnicity and Income: The ability to present indicators by race/ethnicity and income allows for examination of multiple patterns of academic preparation and performance. Such information is important for policy development and broadening diversity in Illinois.

High School Indicators

Table 1 presents a list of possible high school indicators for inclusion in the annual readiness report. The table indicates which selection criteria each measure meets. The indicators are divided into two categories—preparation and performance. Preparation indicators focus on course-taking patterns which have a strong correlation with college readiness and success. Performance indicators focus on standardized examination results.

A key performance indicator is the percentage of students who meet the Illinois Learning Standards on the PSAT. Other suggested indicators include the percentage of students who meet predetermined cutoff scores on the mathematics and/or English portions of the ACT. Research has shown that students scoring above these threshold levels have a better chance of receiving good grades in college (i.e., B or better). For example, students who achieve an ACT score of at least 22 in English have a 50 percent chance of receiving at least a “B” in advanced composition

in college, while those who achieve an ACT score of at least 23 in mathematics have a 50 percent chance of receiving at least a “B” in college algebra. After additional analysis and discussion, a few indicators in each section will be selected for inclusion in the annual readiness report.

These indicators are similar to those used in the recent national report card, *Measuring Up: 2000*, issued by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. However, since the readiness report provides information about students at the final stage in their elementary/secondary careers, it uses high school data only. The national report card drew on data for all K-12 grade levels. All indicators come from information on Illinois high school students and are not artificially derived from national data bases.

Table 1
Possible High School Indicators

Indicators of High School Preparation	Meets Criteria				
	1	2	3	4	5
Percent of hs grads that have completed the college core curriculum	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Percent of hs grads that have taken Algebra 2	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Percent of hs grads that have taken advanced mathematics beyond Algebra 2	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Percent of hs grads that have taken advanced level science courses	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Percent of hs grads that have taken at least one lab science (biology, chemistry, physics)	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Percent of hs grads that have taken three years or more of science.	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Percent of hs grads that have taken 10 to 12 courses in the core curriculum (13 courses = core curriculum)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Percent of public high schools that have at least one student taking an AP exam.	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Performance Indicators					
Percent of students meeting or exceeding PSAE standards in each of five content areas (writing, math, reading, science, and social studies).	Y	Y	N	N	Y
Percent of students meeting or exceeding PSAE standards in all five content areas	Y	Y	N	N	Y
Percent of high school graduates who score 23 or above on the English part of the ACT	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Percent of high school graduates who score 22 or above on the mathematics part of the ACT	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Percent of AP test takers scoring 3 or better	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Proportion of Illinois students scoring in the top 20 percent nationally on English ACT score	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Proportion of Illinois students scoring in the top 20 percent nationally on mathematics ACT score	Y	Y	N	Y	Y

Because of the use of information from State Board of Education, ACT, and College Board resources, data are available on all proposed high school level indicators. Information will also be available later in the year from the Prairie State Achievement Exam, first administered by the State Board of Education this past spring. The PSAE results will include information never before collected on the Illinois high school population. For instance, until this year course-taking information was available only for students taking the ACT (about 70 percent of high school

graduates). Now this information will be available on the one third of high school graduates who previously did not take the ACT, most of whom did not go to college.

WorkKeys

As part of the PSAE, students are required to take two ACT WorkKeys assessment tests—Reading for Information and Applied Mathematics. ACT WorkKeys assess preparation for specific jobs and careers with test questions based on problems found in everyday work rather than in academia. Results of the WorkKeys assessment tests can be used as a measure of how well high school students are prepared for the workplace. The annual readiness report will highlight changes in the performance of Illinois students on the WorkKeys test.

College Indicators

Another measure of college readiness is how well students do when they get to college. College-level indicators are proposed, even though it is recognized that non-educational factors also influence students’ decisions and success in the first year. Table 2 presents a list of possible indicators that focus on admissions, remediation, and first year performance. In contrast to the high school indicators, some college information is not now available. Staff will discuss with college and university officials whether it is possible to collect such information and whether other information might be included. Again, indicators will be selected from each category after additional analysis to determine data availability and appropriateness.

Table 2
Possible College Level Indicators

	Meets Criteria				
	1	2	3	4	5
Indicators on Entering Students					
Percent of entering freshmen requiring English remediation at public universities	Y	Y	N	?	?
Percent of entering freshmen requiring mathematics remediation at public universities	Y	Y	N	?	?
Percent of entering freshmen meeting regular public university admissions requirements	?	Y	N	?	?
Indicators on First-Year Performance					
Percent of entering freshmen receiving A or B in mathematics at public universities for core and non-core completers	Y	Y	Y	?	?
Percent of entering freshman receiving A or B in English at public universities by core and non-core completers	Y	Y	Y	?	?
Percent of previous year freshmen returning for second year	Y	Y	N	?	Y

Creating an Index of College Readiness and an Index of Work Readiness

The purpose of the annual statewide readiness report is to present a variety of relevant information so that the higher education community, policy makers, business and industry, and the general public are better informed about this topic. While more complete and accurate information will offer a rich context for considering the topic of pre-collegiate preparation and achievement, many readers will want an informed judgment about whether student readiness for college and work is improving or declining. To provide such information, the creation of two

annual readiness indices is proposed, that is, an Index of College Readiness and an Index of Work Readiness. Each index will provide a professional measure that will examine yearly trends in readiness and, ideally, compare these trends with changes in other states.

The annual college readiness index will combine multiple indicators from the high school and college level indicators listed above to create a single college readiness score. The work readiness index will combine multiple indicators from the high school and WorkKeys indicators. Each index is analogous to combining pieces of a puzzle to form a complete picture. The first step in creating each index is to determine the importance of selected indicators in the assessment of college or work readiness. Each selected indicator will be assigned a weight based on its importance relative to the other indicators in the index. The weighted indicators will be combined to form a single value. This procedure will be followed separately for each index. Each index will become the starting point for subsequent trend analyses.

A variety of general and technical questions will be considered as the Board proceeds with the development of statewide indices on college and work readiness. For instance, will both public and private high school students and/or home schooled students be included in the report and grouped together? Also, what weights will high school, college, and WorkKeys indicators receive and how should weights be determined between and within each of these groups? More technically, how should scores be calculated for the index (i.e., will the index be based on an average of 100?). Staff will discuss these and other questions with interested persons and groups as the consultation process unfolds. A primary goal will be to communicate information critical to readiness for college and work in a manner that is straightforward and easily understood by the general public.

Recommendation

The staff recommends adoption of the following resolution:

Board of Higher Education staff will circulate this item among the Board's P-16 partners and other interested stakeholders (e.g., business and industry) for discussion and comment. After this consultation, staff will present a model of an annual report to the Joint Committee on Education for its consideration and then present to the Board a final report for approval.