

**ILLINOIS TRANSFER AND ARTICULATION INITIATIVES  
ANNUAL REPORT 2006-2007**

**Submitted for:** Information.

**Summary:** The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) continues to be the primary statewide vehicle for encouraging transferability among postsecondary institutions in the state of Illinois. A more recent statewide transfer and articulation project, the Illinois Course Applicability System (CAS), is in the process of being implemented. CAS complements IAI and will significantly enhance the availability and accuracy of transfer information to allow even more effective and efficient degree completion. This item reviews the current status of the IAI and CAS projects, highlights the past year's activities, and outlines considerations for the future.

**Action Requested:** None.



STATE OF ILLINOIS  
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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**Executive Summary**

The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) continues to be a primary statewide vehicle for encouraging transferability among postsecondary institutions in the state of Illinois. A more recent statewide transfer and articulation project, the Illinois Course Applicability System (CAS), is entering a third phase of implementation. CAS and IAI are complementary, with both enhancing the availability and accuracy of transfer information and fostering more effective and efficient degree completion.

Planning for the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) began in January 1993 and the General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) was implemented in the summer of 1998. The IAI GECC was designed to ease transfer for students among Illinois colleges and universities. May 2007 marked the end of the ninth year of implementation. In addition to the adoption of the GECC, several major/discipline advisory committees have also been convened to recommend preparatory coursework at the lower division level.

Five years ago, the CAS project was initiated to offer Illinois students specific and detailed information on how their coursework will transfer among institutions and how it may or may not count towards a baccalaureate degree. This web-based program allows students to enter the courses they have completed and compare them to degree requirements at participating schools. A planning guide, which matches courses to degree requirements, is generated and outlines what additional coursework needs to be undertaken to complete the degree.

This report begins with a brief history of the development and implementation of the IAI. It then turns to discussing the current status of IAI, CAS, and other transfer projects; observations about the impact and effectiveness of several broad goals and objectives; transfer issues that have been raised in the past year; and other related transfer concerns.

The report concludes with a summary of highlights from this past year's activities and considerations for future study.



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**Introduction**

**Recent History of Transfer Initiatives in Illinois**

*The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI).* In January 1993, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), and transfer coordinators from Illinois colleges and universities jointly launched the Illinois Articulation Initiative (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 was developed in three phases. Phase I focused on developing a general education package, the General Education Core Curriculum (GECC), that "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." Individual courses may be accepted in transfer at the discretion of the receiving institution.

The IAI GECC does not replace the college or university's own general education curriculum, but rather provides students with a guaranteed pathway among institutions. IAI provides one clear pathway for a large number of Illinois transfer students, while still protecting the distinctive qualities and missions of Illinois colleges and universities.

Through the IAI, Illinois has developed one of the most comprehensive course approval and quality assurance processes in the nation, assuring that all approved courses are comparable and meet the high standards established by faculty panels. As of June 2007, the IAI database tracked 9,503 courses in the GECC. The site had over 2,000,000 hits during the 2006-2007 school year.

Phase II expanded the project to create models for easing transfer into baccalaureate major programs. To date, 25 Major/Discipline Advisory Panels have been established to identify lower division coursework that best prepares students for advanced studies in specific baccalaureate majors. These recommendations include specific lower division courses in the

major and required prerequisite courses or supporting courses that provide the necessary background for success in the major.

Phase III instituted the process of regular five-year reviews designed to ensure that the panels' recommendations continue to be relevant and accurate .

*Illinois Course Applicability System (CAS).* Five years ago, the statewide Course Applicability System (CAS) project was initiated to offer Illinois students more accurate and detailed information on how their coursework will transfer between institutions. Where IAI concentrates on general education and foundational coursework at the lower division, CAS makes information on all courses as well as other degree completion requirements available to students. In FY 2002, Northern Illinois University and the College of DuPage were the first institutions in the state to go online with CAS; the University of Illinois at Chicago and the City Colleges of Chicago followed in FY 2003; and in FY 2004, the remaining public universities were licensed and are currently at varying stages of implementation. Extensive statewide planning was undertaken in FY 2003, resulting in a plan to expand the participation in CAS to all interested institutions in the state on a phased-in timeline. Six additional receiving institutions were licensed in 2006-2007 (Bradley University, College of DuPage, DePaul University, Loyola University, National-Louis University, and West Suburban College of Nursing). Efforts continue to advance the implementation levels of the previously-licensed institutions.

*Other Transfer Pathways.* The IAI and CAS initiatives are not the only transfer pathways available to students. Other options include individual agreements between associate and baccalaureate institutions that allow for transfer of completed associate degrees; specially designed and named associates degrees such as the new Associate of Arts in Teaching (A.A.T.) degree; 2+2 agreements between specific institutions; course-by-course transfer of credits; and the transfer of credits in completion of the general education requirements of the receiving institution.

### **Statewide Transfer: Outcomes and Accomplishments**

Transferability among institutions continues to be an important focus of state and national policy. States are rightfully concerned about easing transferability to help students save time and money toward baccalaureate degree completion. Most state-level transfer agreements incorporate traditional general education objectives similar to the IAI model. However, Illinois' statewide transfer program is unique in its focus on quality assurance, its website design and usefulness, and the voluntary nature of participation. In addition to regular meetings of panels and committees dealing with IAI and CAS, several other venues have offered the opportunity to fine tune transfer and articulation initiatives across the state.

- At the April 2007 Allerton Community College and University English Articulation Conference, transfer issues were discussed. A variety of panels were convened that discussed the issues of dual credit, revisions to the IAI process, the Course Applicability System, and transfer patterns. Panel participants were drawn from a wide range of Illinois institutions represent both the public and independent sectors.
- IBHE and ICCB staff and the [iTransfer.org](http://iTransfer.org) website team members have made numerous presentations at state and national meetings on IAI and the [iTransfer.org](http://iTransfer.org) website, further raising national awareness about Illinois' program, as well as the design and use of the web in advising. Programs were presented at conferences sponsored by the National Academic Advising Association, the Illinois Academic Advising Association, the Illinois

Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, and the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, among others.

- IAI continued to coordinate transfer activities across the state. Participation in IAI is entirely voluntary and currently there are 113 participating institutions from all sectors. In addition, over 700 faculty members, transfer coordinators, and institutional administrators have actively participated in IAI. Through their activities on the various panels and committees, faculty members have undertaken meaningful communication about curriculum with their colleagues statewide.
- The [iTransfer.org](http://iTransfer.org) website continues to be an essential tool for current and potential students. In addition to students, this site serves parents, faculty and advisors, administrators, planners, registrars, admissions staff, and the public at large. Over the past year, the [iTransfer.org](http://iTransfer.org) site has been dramatically updated to serve as a portal for transfer information.

### Evaluating Student Transfer in Illinois: Multiple Measures

Student transfers within Illinois totaled 54,215 for the fall semester of 2006, some 8.64 percent of total undergraduate enrollments in the state. Of these, 22,697 transferred from a community college, 5,683 transferred from a public university, 4,278 from an independent not-for-profit institution, 563 from an independent for-profit, and 20,994 from other institutions, including out-of-state and foreign institutions.

Sector Students Transferred From	Number of Students	Percent of Total Transfer Students	Percent of Total Undergraduate Students
Community Colleges	22,697	42.0%	4.34%
Public Universities	5,683	10.4%	0.09%
Independent Not-for-Profit	4,278	7.9%	0.07%
Independent For-Profit	563	1.0%	0.01%
Other Institutions	20,994	38.7%	4.13%
<b>Total All Sectors</b>	<b>54,215</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Approximately the same numbers of students transferred to a public university (15,697) as to a community college (18,408). Additionally, 13,883 transferred to independent not-for-profit institutions and 4,519 transferred to independent for-profit institutions. Some 1,708 Illinois students transferred to out-of-state institutions operating in Illinois.

*Review of Transfer Initiatives.* In a program that seeks balance among three key principles — respect for curriculum richness and diversity in 113 separate institutions, the vagaries of individual student course-taking patterns, and an effort to meet transfer expectations for multiple majors — the alignment of goals and outcomes requires a great deal of coordination. There is a commitment on the part of participating institutions to find the best way to resolve concerns and align transfer efforts whenever feasible. Most of the concerns that have avoided resolution are not necessarily related to IAI. These issues are specific to baccalaureate major programs. The process of dialog and discussion among the participating institutions in the state has generally resulted in consensus, though not always unanimity.

Ongoing review of transfer initiatives in the state continued this past year, focusing in particular on Phase II of the IAI — the baccalaureate major/discipline advisory committee recommendations. The effectiveness of the baccalaureate major/discipline advisory committee recommendations has become a concern and a discussion of their status was initiated during the 2003-2004 year at the request of the IAI Implementation Advisory Council (IAC) and continued through the 2004-2005 and 2006-2007 academic years. In April of 2006, the IBHE endorsed the “Evaluation of the Illinois Articulation Initiative: Report and Recommendations January 2006” and charged the Board staff with implementing the report’s recommendations as they saw fit. In May of that year, the ICCB also endorsed the report and provided their staff with a similar charge. The two staffs have cooperated to formulate a series of revisions that were initially implemented during 2006-2007, with continued efforts ongoing. Among the notable revisions are several efforts to streamline and clarify the GECC course approval process and a refining of the charge to the Major/Discipline Advisory Committees.

Each of the GECC panels has been charged with developing a list of objective criteria to be used in evaluating courses for inclusion in the GECC. These criteria will clarify the evaluation process and aid institutions in curricular development. The Major/Discipline Advisory Committees have been asked to identify no more than 4 courses that serve as the common core in that major or discipline and are generally required by baccalaureate programs at the lower division. Committees will restrict their course approval activities to this core.

### **Development of a Transfer Portal – iTransfer.org**

During the past year, the iTransfer.org website was redesigned and further developed to serve as a portal for transfer information. The new design places a single umbrella over the Illinois Articulation Initiative and the Illinois Course Applicability System. The redesigned site also provides a single entry point for students, parents, faculty and administrators seeking information on the types of transfer, resources for financial aid, and programs offered at Illinois institutions.

The website has a new look, the result of input from student focus groups. Additional functionalities and categories of information were also added as a result of suggestions from students and campus administrators.

Marketing efforts were undertaken by marketing students at Illinois State University, resulting in a more focused campaign to bring the benefits of the Transfer Portal to its constituents.

### **Illinois CAS**

Making transferability an important part of student information and decision-making has always been a primary goal of transfer initiatives in Illinois. Activities this past year in continuing the implementation of the Illinois Course Applicability System (CAS) have focused on better serving student needs for current and accurate information about transfer issues.

Planning for the CAS project was initiated in 2001. In 2002, Northern Illinois University and the College of DuPage were the first institutions in the state to go online; the University of Illinois at Chicago and the City Colleges of Chicago followed in 2003; in FY 2004, the remaining public universities were licensed and are currently at varying stages of implementation; and in FY 2005, state funds were used to license six additional institutions: Bradley University, College of DuPage, DePaul University, Loyola University, National-Louis University, and West Suburban



College of Nursing. Extensive statewide planning was undertaken in 2003, resulting in a plan to expand the participation in CAS to all interested institutions in the state on a phased-in timeline. All public universities were identified as a priority in the first round because they are the destination of the majority of transfer students in the state. Because of a variety of factors including the current status of the institutions' student information systems, rates of CAS implementation vary across the public universities. While this process continues, the system has been expanded to include other institutions that serve large numbers of transfer students and are willing to make the necessary investments to implement CAS.

Once CAS-licensed institutions have uploaded their baccalaureate degree requirements and course articulation guides, any student in the state transferring to these institutions will be able to compare courses they have taken at any college or university in Illinois with degree and graduation requirements at the target institution.

A brief description of CAS implementation activities is included in the chart below.

Fully Implemented	College of DuPage DePaul University Illinois State University Northern Illinois University University of Illinois at Chicago University of Illinois at Springfield University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Implementation coming soon	Chicago State University Eastern Illinois University Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville West Suburban College of Nursing
Course Equivalency Guides and other information	Bradley University Governors State University Loyola University Chicago National-Louis University Northeastern Illinois University Southern Illinois University at Carbondale Western Illinois University

The best measure of CAS usage is the number of accounts that have been created. There are currently just over 20,000 active student accounts in Illinois. Of these, 1,780 were created during the past 3 months. Students are quick to recognize the benefit of CAS and the figures illustrate their readiness to use the system.

A major CAS initiative is to bring the Request Import function to more students. The CAS Request Import function allows students to automatically download their course history into their personal CAS accounts with information from their school's records system. This simple process allows students to update their accounts with complete and correct information instantaneously. Illinois CAS has made this project a priority in part because a student panel at the most recent Illinois CAS Statewide Meeting said that from their perspective it should be a major priority. Illinois CAS has entered into an agreement with Interface Management Services, Inc. (IMS) to work with any CAS-participating institution to implement this functionality. Using Project grant funds, the cost of purchasing the Request Import interface from IMS, as well as the installation costs and the maintenance costs owed to IMS for the first year, have been paid by

Illinois CAS. Thus, for those schools that choose to and are ready to participate, costs to the institution are expected to be limited to staff time. Illinois CAS and IMS are currently soliciting statements of interest and readiness from CAS-participating institutions and will begin implementing the function this fall. For those not currently ready to participate in this program, the interface will remain available.

CAS will promote greater inter-institutional cooperation and information-sharing among Illinois institutions. This, in turn, will increase the likelihood that transfer students will select the most appropriate courses for transfer and degree completion. Several outcomes could result: an increase in the number of students who transfer; efficient use of the resources of Illinois higher education; and a decrease in the amount of time it takes transfer students to complete their baccalaureate degrees. Strengthened by the use of technology, opportunities for success will extend to all transfer students in Illinois, but particularly to students from underrepresented groups and first-generation students who are more likely to begin their postsecondary education at a community college.

### **Increasing Program Coordination—IAI and CAS Working Together**

As noted above, the revision of the [iTransfer.org](http://iTransfer.org) website brings IAI and CAS together as a part of a comprehensive Internet transfer resource for all Illinois students, parents, and others. In addition, IAI and CAS staff members are working to take advantage of the information-access functionality of CAS to best inform students, advisors, and admissions representatives of individual students' progress toward completion of the IAI General Education Core Curriculum.

The Illinois Board of Higher Education provided additional funding to CAS this year for the purchase of the CAS license to cover the Illinois Articulation Initiative's General Education Core Curriculum. With this license expansion, students, advisors, parents, institutional administrators and others will be able to run CAS Planning Guides—unofficial degree audits—that will instantly evaluate the courses entered into users' accounts against IAI GECC requirements.

IAI and CAS have a history of working toward similar state goals from different perspectives. IAI has been instrumental in the development of the GECC package by bringing together faculty from across sectors to develop course-transferability agreements considered a national model. CAS has worked to make information about agreements—those that are part of IAI as well as other institution-to-institution agreements—and their implications clear to students, thus allowing the best college planning possible to take place. The two programs have increasingly worked together to maximize the realization of shared goals and make the best use of the state funding that supports both projects. This project furthers those efforts by capitalizing on CAS' information-delivery capacity to make IAI-developed agreements fully transparent to anyone wanting to plan and chart progress toward completion of the package. Implementation is planned for fall 2008, at which time users of varied types—students, advisors, admissions officers, degree evaluation specialists—will be able to see easily and rapidly where students stand relative to GECC requirements.

In addition, this IAI-CAS collaboration aids in the efforts to improve IAI policy implementation across the state. The CAS IAI Planning Guide has the potential to directly impact the implementation of the Initiative's "30-hour rule." When the IAI Planning Guide is in place, it can be used as a convenient and widely-available tool by institutions to do quick, informal evaluations of student progress toward the IAI GECC, thereby taking that burden off of the

resources of the institution. Additionally, students will be able to use the CAS GECC Planning Guide to plan their completion of the IAI.

### **2006-2007 Summary of Transfer Initiatives**

In general, the year 2006-2007 can be characterized as a year during which issues related to transferability were addressed, new statewide initiatives were undertaken, and recommendations were brought forward.

- ICCB and IBHE staff initiated several revisions to the IAI based on directives from the boards.
- Revisions to the [iTransfer.org](http://iTransfer.org) website to create a general transfer information portal are near completion.
- The Board staff is continuing discussions with institutional representatives to finalize revisions to the IAI process that take into account the recommendations endorsed by the IBHE and ICCB in early 2006 and the needs of the institutions and their students.
- The implementation of CAS by public universities was well underway and a request for additional funding was submitted.

### **Considerations for the Future**

As part of the Board's ongoing commitment to enhancing transferability in the state, a variety of activities will continue into the near future.

Staff will continue to monitor the findings of independent studies undertaken by institutions of their own transfer students or on small, statewide studies. In addition, as more institutions are available to students on CAS, a variety of user survey data will provide a picture of student use and satisfaction with CAS. CAS staff are working with external evaluators from the University of Toledo who have launched a CAS user survey; in the first three months since its launch, 350 users have evaluated Illinois CAS. CAS and IBHE staff will keep the user survey live indefinitely, allowing for a comparison between user satisfaction with the current program and the updated version of CAS that is scheduled for launch in early 2008. Additionally, the evaluators' work includes systematic communication with staff at all non-implemented CAS-licensed institutions. A report of their findings will be delivered to the IBHE in the fall of this year.

Illinois students are benefiting from an array of transfer options and services designed to assist them in their degree planning. The IAI has achieved an important level of stability and is respected across the state and the nation. When compared to similar statewide transfer projects in other states, the Illinois transfer network is one of the strongest, most inclusive, and the most focused on quality assurance. The active and voluntary involvement of 113 institutions in the Illinois Articulation Initiative reflects a shared commitment to helping students prepare at the lower division to transfer easily and smoothly into baccalaureate degree programs. CAS will build upon these strengths and provides students with even more accurate and timely information about how completed courses transfer to specific institutions and fulfill specific degree requirements. As the awareness of the IAI and CAS grow, students will come to depend upon having access to even more information to assist them in making decisions about academic

programs and institutions. The iTransfer.org transfer web portal will undoubtedly prove to be a valuable asset in bringing this important information to students, parents, faculty and higher education administrators.

Although considerable efforts have been expended in the area of student transfer, a number of challenges remain. No clear measure currently exists of the impact of IAI, CAS and other transfer initiatives on post-secondary success. This is, in no small part, due to the lack of a metric that will allow such an assessment. Clearly, a valid measure of transfer success demands the implementation of a standard student identifying number that will allow comprehensive tracking of students across sectors and levels from Preschool through post-graduate education. This tracking mechanism will open the door to a wide variety of research projects that could shed light on the transfer and articulation process, best practices, and the validity of various initiatives.

A clear understanding of the impact of Illinois initiatives on transfer success requires both an examination of success rates among Illinois transfer students when compared to first-time, full-time students at baccalaureate institutions and a comparison of Illinois' transfer population with populations in states that do not have a statewide core curriculum.

Additional interest should be shown to innovative baccalaureate completion projects across the state that serve as a new form of transfer, such as dual admissions/enrollment programs and baccalaureate completion programs offered by senior institutions on community college campuses. Research should be conducted to identify the relative need for such programs, such as identifying any unique populations that would be served.

Efforts should be made to leverage state and institutional funds with external funding sources to pilot innovative transfer and baccalaureate completion programs targeted at increasing graduation rates, decreasing time to degree, and introducing new opportunities for underrepresented and underserved groups.

The course descriptors for General Education courses in the Illinois Articulation Initiative were developed by faculty panels and identify an agreed-upon content and level of rigor for lower-division courses. These descriptors should be used as a foundation upon which to craft college-readiness standards and to inform high school curricula.