

**ILLINOIS TRANSFER AND ARTICULATION INITIATIVES
ANNUAL REPORT 2007-2008**

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. Due to cuts in the state's budget, both projects are under serious threat. This item reviews the current status of the IAI and CAS projects, highlights the past year's activities, and outlines the challenges facing the projects in the near 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.

Six 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. CAS has been funded through a series of Higher Education Cooperation Act (HECA) Grant appropriations. This grant category has been cut from the state budget, putting the future of the CAS project in question.

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, concerns relative to funding, 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 would 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.

- IBHE and ICCB staff and the iTransfer.org website team members have made numerous presentations at state and national meetings on IAI and the 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. Additional training and informational presentations were provided by CAS and iTransfer staff at Oakton Community College as well as multiple other IAI and CAS related activities during the year.

- 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 website continues to be an essential tool for current and potential students. In addition to students, this site serves parents, faculty, advisors, administrators, planners, registrars, admissions staff, and the public at large. Over the past year, the 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 53,327 for the fall semester of 2007, some 9.5 percent of total undergraduate enrollments in the state. Of these, 23,783 transferred from a community college, 5,804 transferred from a public university, 4,206 from an independent not-for-profit institution, 669 from an independent for-profit, and 18,865 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	23,783	44.6%	4.2%
Public Universities	5,804	10.9%	1.0%
Independent Not-for-Profit	4,206	7.9%	0.7%
Independent For-Profit	669	1.3%	0.1%
Other Institutions	18,865	35.4%	3.4%
Total All Sectors	53,327	100%	9.5%

Approximately the same numbers of students transferred to a public university (15,767) as to a community college (16,826). Additionally, 13,838 transferred to independent not-for-profit institutions and 5,147 transferred to independent for-profit institutions. Some 1,749 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	DePaul University Illinois State University University of Illinois at Chicago University of Illinois at Springfield University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign West Suburban College of Nursing
Nearly implemented	College of DuPage Eastern Illinois University Northern Illinois University Western Illinois University
Implementation planning underway	Chicago State University Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville Southern Illinois University at Carbondale
Course Equivalency Guides and other information	Bradley University Governors State University Loyola University Chicago National-Louis University Northeastern Illinois University

The best measure of CAS usage is the number of accounts that have been created. There are currently almost 23,000 active student accounts in Illinois, up nearly 20% since last April, some 3,600 more accounts. Since CAS was instituted, just under 47,000 student accounts have been created and forty percent are currently active. (Accounts are deleted after one year of inactivity.) 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 have solicited statements of interest and readiness from CAS-participating institutions and have installed the feature at several institutions this past year. A few slots remain and will be allocated to institutions ready to implement. For those not currently ready to participate in this program, the interface will remain available but installation and maintenance costs will be assessed to the institution. The Request Import feature is now available at:

Request Import Implemented	Blackhawk College Carl Sandburg College College of DuPage City Colleges of Chicago Richard Daley Kennedy King Malcolm X Olive Harvey Truman College Harold Washington Wilbur Wright Elgin Community College Heartland Community College Lewis and Clark Community College Sauk Valley Community College
Implementation underway	Moraine Valley Community College

One of the major efforts this past year has been implementation of an updated national system. Miami University of Ohio, the institution that authors CAS, overhauled CAS early this calendar year, creating a completely new look and feel of the website. The new system was deployed throughout the Illinois institutions with a very small window of system down time. In June 2008, the unit at Miami University that distributes CAS rebranded itself as redLantern, reminiscent of Miami University's logo, and renamed all of its products -- including CAS. At the time of this writing the product renaming is in transition and so the former name is used in this report; however, in October the name CAS will officially become u.select Illinois. Installation of the new interface has already occurred in Illinois and was implemented over a few hours with minimal down time. The new website is cleaner, more appealing, and easier to use. However, with the new look and new name, requisite changes must follow in the promotional materials, presentations, trainings, web addresses, and so on, but the CAS team must orchestrate this complete overhaul of its marketing with almost no resources. This challenge is daunting but with creative re-use of printed materials and reliance on electronic notification, the CAS Team believes it can produce the necessary information to communicate the new identity.

Another accomplishment of the past year, and one that is ongoing, has been an extensive evaluation of the function and utility of Illinois CAS, particularly from the viewpoint of students using CAS. Through a study of transfer credit flow commissioned by the Illinois Shared Enrollment and Graduation System (ISEG) and conducted by Linda Owens and Sowmya Anand of the University of Illinois Survey Research Lab, the team discovered that certain functions, specifically the course catalogs stored in the system, need more careful scrutiny in the loading of the course data, in error checking, and in the instructions sent to the institutions. Put simply, some of the staff supplying the catalog data did not understand the use of the data; they had provided accurate but, for this application, incorrect data. The CAS Team conducted intensive training at the statewide meeting, is making error checking tools more widely available, and have

diligently and painstakingly shadowed the data entry steps students would perform while using CAS in order to verify the accuracy of the data submissions. The CAS Team is working with the external evaluators of the project to garner specific recommendations for identifying and addressing potential data collection problems in the future.

In addition to the findings regarding the catalog data in CAS, the ISEG transfer credit flow study provided important new understanding of the pervasiveness and complexity of transfer in Illinois. Because the institutions participating in CAS provide robust information back to students, that same process can be used to describe -- in general terms -- the behavior of transfer students in moving from institution to institution and in how their credit is accepted and applied at a receiving institution. In the study, the courses taken by twenty randomly chosen transfer students were examined in transfer at five institutions that utilize CAS. The wealth of information that this fairly small sample of student transcripts has provided is instructive, presenting hard evidence to what is often a picture illustrated only by anecdotal stories.

Of the sample of 100 students, just under half had attended more than one institution prior to transferring in Fall 2007, and this snapshot surely undercounts the number of moves from institution to institution as these same students may transfer several more times before graduating. The data illustrate the scope of information needed to adequately advise students, a depth and breadth of data that is possible to distribute with CAS if the infrastructure is in place. The following table illustrates these data.

- 100 students attended 158 institutions prior to transferring in Fall 2007 (153 were useable in the study)
- 84 unique institutions are represented by the 100 students
- 5 receiving institutions provide a relatively narrow band of transfer institutions

Number of Previous Insts	Number of Students
1	57
2	33
3	10

Beyond the sheer number of transfers from one institution to another, the complexity of transfer in Illinois is illustrated by the sectors represented by those institutions. CAS licenses were initially awarded to Illinois public universities and the transfer from Illinois community colleges to those public universities was the focus of CAS activity. However, the transfer credit flow study shows that support for transfer students must encompass not only the Illinois institutions in the public sector but private and out of state institutions as well as the Military system of transfer credit.

Characteristics of the 84 insts	Number
Illinois insts	54
Out of state insts*	30
States represented	18
Public Insts	68
Indpnt and Property Inst	16

Includes Military sectors.

Following release of the results of the ISEG Transfer Credit Flow study, the CAS Team recognized the need to greatly expand the footprint of CAS. Part of the necessary expansion could be accomplished by increasing the number of course banks (course listings similar to course catalogs) available from Illinois independent institutions and by attempting to target out of state institutions in providing course catalogs. Currently, several independent institutions participate in CAS at varying levels of implementation, but given the large share of Illinois independent institutions represented by transfers to just the five receiving institutions in this study, the team decided to refocus its efforts. Because the CAS Team is small, the usual method of institution-by-institution course bank submissions would require resources beyond that available in the Illinois CAS staff. A potential source of course data is a company, College Source, that collects and distributes catalog information for most institutions across the U.S. Preliminary discussion with the company suggested that the College Source data could be used in CAS to populate institutional course banks but that capability would entail a statewide license that would include other benefits to institutions in Illinois in addition to the service of making CAS data available. Though an actual funding level was not determined, those negotiations were abandoned when FY2009 HECA was eliminated. For the time being, staff have ceased effort toward this initiative.

Also, illustrated by the attendance patterns shown in the study, Illinois transfer students would benefit if more community colleges and private institutions became “receiving” institutions in CAS, that is connect their degree audit and course articulation systems to CAS. For most institutions that level of activity would require funding to expand the CAS license, to develop an interface between the institutional data systems and CAS, and to install CAS and the interfaces. The Team is proceeding with implementation of the licenses already purchased and, though no funding is available to assist additional community colleges and independent institutions with receiving status, is pursuing collaboration among institutions in Illinois that run the same student information systems and degree audit packages. Several institutions would like to raise their participation level in CAS because they see the benefit of that participation both as an advising tool for the students they serve and as a recruitment tool to potential students. An exciting direction for expansion of the institutions in CAS is just developing.

The Team is pursuing a new effort to forge an interstate alliance with other institutions that are also in the process of developing similar interfaces to CAS, initially with schools in

Indiana. By banding together, institutions might be better equipped to develop the interfaces necessary to bridge CAS with the different student data systems, degree audit systems, and course articulation systems of the primary vendors. The efficiency of grouping schools with like needs can be realized if state boundaries are put aside in favor of functional groupings such as the schools using SCT/Banner, PeopleSoft, or Datatel, for example. Initial discussions are promising in these early stages.

As Illinois CAS matures, it 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 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 for the purchase of the CAS license to cover the Illinois Articulation Initiative's General Education Core Curriculum. With this license expansion and completion of the design of the iGet CAS Planning Guide – an unofficial degree audit, students, advisors, parents, institutional administrators, and others are able to 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. One collaborative effort has been the development of a CAS IAI Planning Guide known as iGet. 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. iGet is functional and implemented on the CAS website. iGet will allow users of varied types—students, advisors, admissions officers, degree evaluation specialists—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 (iGet) has the potential to directly impact the implementation of the Initiative's "30-hour rule." iGet is 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 can use iGet to plan their completion of the IAI.

2007-2008 Summary of Transfer Initiatives

In general, the year 2007-2008 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 website to create a general transfer information portal are complete, although efforts to keep the website current and useful to students are ongoing.
- 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 is well underway and continues to increase. Plans were in place to expand the number of institutions participating in CAS but these plans will be slowed due to funding issues. The system is growing and improving, but increased marketing and expansion of participation have been decidedly curtailed with the elimination of the HECA funding that supports CAS.

Funding Concerns

When HECA funding was eliminated, the CAS Team immediately suspended spending in many efforts and diverted available funds to cover only the most critical expenses. This revised plan is possible only through a diminished project scope – the current project is not the same project as initially funded – and support from the University of Illinois and Northern Illinois University. Particularly the funding for marketing materials, expenses for travel to train and market, and funding to cover an increased number of licenses and support for implementation expenses have all been either eliminated entirely or drastically cut. While the University of Illinois has committed to maintain CAS and the staff on the project, Northern Illinois University agreed to forego expected compensation for grant coordination and the University of Illinois will not receive remuneration for directing the grant, will provide partial funding for ongoing overhead, and will defray some costs for travel, supplies, and other routine expenses. In spite of the increased one-time support from the two institutions, under this new scenario the Illinois CAS project will suffer and some students will not be served. However, efforts continue –albeit on a smaller scale, more slowly, and possibly with less savvy materials – to expand CAS, to better reach students, to assist institutions with the cost of supporting the infrastructure of CAS, and to manage coordination of a system of many moving parts and diverse needs.

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.

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 would build upon these strengths and provide 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 (student unit record) 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. Such studies are only possible through the implementation of a student unit record and shared data files.

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 public 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, particularly by locating public university baccalaureate degree programs at community college campuses.

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 as part of Illinois' participation in the America Diploma Project.