

**STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**THE ILLINOIS ARTICULATION INITIATIVE:
HISTORY AND CURRENT STATUS**

In January 1993, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Illinois Community College Board, and the Transfer Coordinators of Illinois Colleges and Universities jointly launched the Illinois Articulation Initiative to facilitate the transfer of students among Illinois institutions--public and independent, associate and baccalaureate degree-granting. The Initiative grew out of the Illinois Board of Higher Education's policies on Transfer and Articulation adopted in September 1990 at the recommendation of the second Committee on the Study of Undergraduate Education. The Board's policies contain two key concepts around which the Initiative was designed: first, that "associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions must be equal partners;" and second, that "faculties must take primary responsibility for developing and maintaining program and course articulation."

The Initiative is a complex undertaking. From the outset, it was agreed that the first task was to develop a transferable general education program, since all associate and baccalaureate degrees require a general education component. Once the general education program was adopted, the next task was to develop agreements on the courses essential for community and junior college students to complete prior to transferring to a particular baccalaureate major in order to be on a par with other juniors in that major. Then, a statewide computer database needed to be established that would identify which courses at each institution correspond to the courses described in each agreement. Finally, it was agreed that the articulation of curricula and courses is never done. Curriculum, and the courses within it, continuously changes in response to new knowledge and new discoveries. Thus, the Initiative must be permanent, with processes established for continuous review and revision.

The transferable General Education Core Curriculum was adopted, institutions have identified their courses, and freshman began enrolling Summer 1998. Twenty-four panels are in the process of developing or have already completed curriculum recommendations for a baccalaureate major or cluster of majors. An information system, including the course database, has been designed and is now available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.itransfer.org>.

To date, about 850 individuals have served on articulation panels. While college and university faculty members comprise the vast majority of panel members, other panel participants are college and university transfer coordinators and academic officers, Illinois State Board of Education staff and high school teachers, employers and practicing professionals, and representatives from state professional organizations.

Each panel elects co-chairs and determines its own method of operation and meeting schedule. Generally, a panel examines any previous articulation documents, compares degree requirements across institutions to identify common elements, and determines whether any special advice to students may be appropriate. Once consensus is reached on the structure of the curriculum and the wording of advice, the panel then develops a description for each course it is recommending.

Panel members are expected to consult with their departmental colleagues between meetings, and often institutions not officially represented on a panel will send observers to participate in discussion, since all meetings are open. When a panel completes a draft of its recommendation, the draft is disseminated to all participating institutions, and comments are requested. Chief academic officers are responsible for coordinating campus communication, including any institutional response to a panel's draft recommendation.

At the end of the comment period, the panel reconvenes to discuss the comments received and to make any necessary revisions. The panel's final recommendation is then submitted to the Steering Panel for its endorsement. The Steering Panel considers the recommendation in light of three criteria: the panel membership is appropriately representative, the recommendation represents consensus of the panel, and the recommendation will facilitate the transfer of students. Recommendations endorsed by the Steering Panel are then submitted to both the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Community College Board for their endorsement, the catalyst needed to initiate the steps to implementation.

General Education Core Curriculum

The transferable General Education Core Curriculum was developed between January 1993 and May 1994 by five faculty panels under the coordination and oversight of the Steering Panel. The Curriculum consists of 37 to 41 semester credit hours in courses selected from the five general fields commonly found in most general education programs: oral and written communication, mathematics, humanities and fine arts, social and behavioral sciences, and physical and life sciences. The Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Community College Board endorsed the transferable General Education Core Curriculum in September 1994. The transferable General Education Core Curriculum was endorsed by the Illinois State Board of Education in May 1997. The Illinois Board of Higher Education revised its policies on transfer and articulation to incorporate the General Education Core Curriculum. The Board also endorsed a time table for implementing the Curriculum statewide for freshmen entering Illinois colleges and universities in summer 1998 and thereafter.

The Board's policies establish three levels of acceptance of completion of the General Education Core Curriculum for students who transfer. First, receiving colleges or universities should grant full credit toward fulfillment of general education requirements to students who completed the Curriculum as part of earning an Associate in Arts or Associate in Science degree from an accredited community or junior college. Second, receiving colleges and universities should grant full credit toward fulfillment of general education requirements to students who completed the entire Curriculum at any accredited college or university, even though the student has not completed a degree program. And, finally, receiving colleges and universities should grant credit toward fulfillment of their own general education requirements to students who complete any individual courses in the Curriculum, if the receiving institution has a comparable requirement.

Baccalaureate Majors

Once the General Education Core Curriculum was completed, panels for specific baccalaureate majors, or clusters of related majors, began to develop a recommended curriculum and to

identify courses essential for students to complete in order to transfer into the major as juniors. Baccalaureate majors are selected based on the number of transfer admissions annually, with those majors with the largest number of transfer students selected first. Likewise, institutions are selected to name panel members based on the relative size of the approved program in the major. Public university, community college, and independent college and university faculty members are selected to serve on panels by the chief academic officer. The community college academic officers select one academic officer, and the Transfer Coordinators select three transfer coordinators, one from each sector, to serve on each panel to provide a broader, institutional perspective. Representatives from certifying agencies, state professional associations, high schools, and industry also are invited to serve on panels, as appropriate.

Each panel is asked to provide its best advice about the preparation needed for transfer as a junior into a baccalaureate major in the discipline when the student does not know the specific institution to which he or she will be admitted. Thus, each panel identifies any courses within the major and any prerequisite or supporting courses from other disciplines that are commonly required or essential for students to complete prior to transfer. Since each baccalaureate major differs from all other majors, the structure and content of the recommended curriculum also differ from one major to another. As with the General Education Core Curriculum, each baccalaureate major curriculum will be reviewed for currency within five years of completion.