

# U On Research and Leadership PDATE

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## Update on Articulation: A Conversation with Jan Ignash

by Judith Sunderman

[Dr. Jan Ignash](#) is a noted scholar in the areas of transfer and articulation, college curriculum, and state-level governance of colleges and universities. She is an Associate Professor in the Department of Adult, Career, and Higher Education at the University of South Florida. Her research interests relate to transfer and articulation, college curriculum, and state-level governance of colleges and universities.

**UPDATE:** You have an interesting background that includes experience teaching high school. Those experiences add depth and understanding to your research in higher education. How have those experiences impacted your perspective on articulation and transfer, and how were you drawn to this research agenda?

**Dr. Ignash:** I started out in Michigan as a high school teacher. I did that for about 4 years. It was during that time the state started getting Vietnamese refugees in the high schools. Counselors would put them in my French classes because many of them spoke French better than they spoke English. I was intrigued by teaching individuals with native languages other than English. But, I realized if I intended to pursue that direction in education I really needed additional training. So, I went back to school and pursued a master's in TESOL.

After completing the degree, I joined an Indiana University education program. That program sent 120 U.S. faculty from Midwestern universities like Illinois State, Michigan State, Indiana University, and others to teach college freshman and sophomores in Malaysia. We worked with Malaysian students toward completing the A.A. degree with the expectation that the successful graduates could then transfer to U.S. bachelor's programs. The Malaysian government had oil money back then and felt that by importing faculty and engaging in a large scale education program they could maximize the number of educated citizens. Through this program the Malaysian government hoped to create a middle class. Because of what I observed in that program, I became interested in the whole idea of transfer and articulation. So, I looked around for graduate programs and found UCLA and [Arthur Cohen](#). The rest is history.

**UPDATE:** In a 2003 article in [New Directions for Community Colleges](#) you and Barbara Townsend examined the role of community colleges in providing teacher education. In that article you covered factors influencing the discussion at that time and made some predictions. Could you update us on the status of that topic?

**Dr. Ignash:** Your question is timely, because right now we are working on updating the chapter on the Associate in Teacher Education for a special issue of the *Community College Review* that should be published this spring. [Barbara Townsend](#) is acting as guest editor for that particular issue. Not every state calls that program by the same name. Let me give you a preview of what we are finding.

*Editor's Note: This issue of UPDATE focuses on articulation from community colleges to 4-year institutions. OCCRL is pleased to welcome Judith Sunderman, Research Assistant at OCCRL, who provided creative insight and served as guest editor for this edition.*

*This issue and back issues of UPDATE can be found on the web at: <http://ocrl.ed.uiuc.edu>.*

The teacher shortage that we discussed in 2003 continues. More states are turning their attention to articulating teacher education programs. There are several routes community colleges can take to help ease the shortage. Some states have passed a provision allowing 2-year colleges to offer 4-year degrees, although that may not be an appropriate solution in other states. States tend to be influenced in that regard by population growth which, of course, increases the need for teachers. In Florida, for example, we have three colleges that are predominately community colleges but also offer bachelor's degrees. [St Petersburg College](#) is an example. I believe they have approximately 800 students currently enrolled in that teacher education program, and they have already graduated over 300. This whole discussion is being driven by demographics. In states like Florida the population has blossomed, and predictions are that it will continue to grow. K-12 schools are being pushed to find enough teachers. In other states where the population is more stable, the need is reduced and so is the discussion about the community college role in teacher education.

There is a caution in this demand-driven environment. I do think that community colleges need to look down the road and forecast how long demand is likely to last in their particular state. For example, we expect the baby boom bubble will start to decline between 2006-2012 in most states. If colleges have ramped up to offer 4-year degrees and that demand abates significantly, if enrollment drops off, issues are going to arise about excess resources and faculty. [Harold Hodgkinson](#), one of our nation's premier demographers, puts it really well; he indicates that this isn't really rocket science. We can accurately predict the number of traditional age students who will be in the pipeline for the next 18 years because they have already been born. So it is possible to make some pretty good projections 15 years in advance or more.

One of the reasons state level research interests me is because the situation in every state is different. Population patterns have enormous influence on program needs. In Florida, the I-4 Corridor between Tampa and Orlando is experiencing phenomenal growth. We don't see that growth slacking off at all. In that part of the state there are K-12 students in little pod classrooms that have been assembled in a hurry just to meet classroom demands for new students. There will be as many as 30 or 40 of these set-ups in addition to the main classroom buildings because the existing facilities cannot accommodate all the students.

Nevada and Utah are examples of other states that have passed legislation permitting community colleges to offer 4-year degrees in selected areas, including teacher education. [Deborah Floyd](#) at [Florida Atlantic University](#) is a good resource for additional information, as is the [Community College Baccalaureate Association](#). Florida is one of the states that has approved offering 4-year degrees at traditional community colleges. Right now, a number of Florida community colleges are looking at offering 4-year degree programs in seven different discipline or degree areas. In majors like early childhood education, math and science, or nursing, some community colleges are making a case to their state offices that added programs would increase access

to high demand occupations. If community colleges can show there is sufficient demand not being met by the 4-year institutions, approval may be given by the state for such development. In a few cases, where there is still capacity at the 4-year institutions, community colleges are being asked to cooperate more fully to promote access and transfer.

**UPDATE:** Alternative certification programs are a big issue right now in teacher education. What do you see is the community college role in that area?

**Dr. Ignash:** Out of all the routes we can take to facilitate the training of more teachers, this is the one that engenders the most controversy. I think that has mostly to do with the wide variety of alternative certification programs available. Some of these programs are truly quality programs and others have been accused of using a rubber stamp approach to certify people without really training them to teach. These people are then thrown into the classroom without either the knowledge or support that promotes good teaching. You get the greatest range of programs and program quality under alternative certification systems. The number and status of these programs keeps changing. [National Center for Education Information](#) conducts a state-by-state annual analysis of alternative teacher certification and is a good resource for information on this. The results of these surveys are available either through their web site or through their sister organization, National Center for Alternative Certification (<http://www.teach-now.org>).

The other area in which community colleges do quite well is professional development for teachers. The biggest problem here is that in most states teachers want to receive graduate credit for completing programs because salary increases and promotions are typically linked to advanced training. Community colleges can provide wonderful professional development opportunities, but cannot award the graduate credit needed to fulfill some of the continuing teacher education requirements.

One other caveat with regard to teacher education needs to be mentioned. Regardless of the approvals given to teacher education programs at the state level, the [National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education \(NCATE\)](#) is the organization that has the overall responsibility for evaluation and accreditation of programs. A newcomer in this arena is the [Teacher Education Accreditation Council \(TEAC\)](#), which has been gaining influence recently. The September 22, 2006, issue of [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) ran a good story on these two accrediting bodies.

At one time, teacher education in this country was provided by community colleges. Teachers were scattered around the countryside in some very sparsely populated areas. They typically taught students who would alternate going to school with working on the farm, for example. Most people back then didn't get beyond an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education. [Philo Hutcheson](#) has written an excellent article or two on this topic and is a good source for additional information.

**UPDATE:** You have done a good deal of significant research and analysis with regard to the articulation process. I am specifically referring to two articles from 2000, both written with Barbara Townsend. In the Winter 2000 issue of the [Community College Review](#), you wrote “Evaluating State-Level Articulation Agreements According to Good Practice.” Then in November of that year, you and Dr. Townsend presented a paper called “Assumptions about Transfer Behavior in State-Level Articulation Agreements: Realistic or Reactionary?” at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education in Sacramento, CA. In addition, you have had two more recent articles on the same topic in the [Journal of Applied Research in the Community College](#) (Spring 2005). Could you bring us up to date on some of the more critical issues regarding articulation?

**Dr. Ignash:** I recently completed a national study of transfer in occupational and technical areas with the endorsement of the [State Higher Education Executive Officers \(SHEEO\) organization](#). In conducting that research I was surprised to find the number of states that were articulating the Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree and other applied degrees. We found in this 2004 study that of the 40 states responding to the survey, 31 reported using at least one of three pathways to articulate occupational degrees to a baccalaureate. This is a very significant finding. There were also 33 states that required some minimum credit hours in general education courses as part of the occupational program. Most states have always required 15 to 18 hours of unspecified general education courses, but this survey found that 32 out of 33 states had specified a core in certain subject areas. In addition, 20 states had detailed credit hours that were within a limited range of subjects. This study found a trend toward more sophisticated occupational transfer agreements in more and more states.

The occupational curriculum that in the past had been considered terminal is being recognized as a pathway to transfer through a variety of mechanisms. For example, some schools are taking any 2-year degree and capping it with a B.S. in something like Organizational Studies or Business and Labor for example. We also found an ‘upside down degree’ or an inverse degree pattern. Washington State has developed a good illustration of this type of degree. This pattern occurs when the A.A.S. degree in any field is accepted in transfer and applied toward a bachelor’s in ‘general liberal studies,’ ‘general education,’ or some other general designation.

One of the things that impresses me is how many states are paying attention to articulation; I don’t just mean traditional articulation patterns. States are exploring the articulation process through atypical pathways to bachelor’s degrees. Some people will argue whether that is really necessary, but I do feel that it is exciting to see states trying innovative methods of improving access to the baccalaureate.

There is no doubt that accountability in higher education is driving some of this innovation. [K-12 educators have always worked in an environment that demands strong public accountability, and

almost the entire general population attends school and is familiar with them.] But until recently, fewer people have first-hand experience with the “Ivory Tower.” Currently, however, two-thirds of the American population or more are at least ‘tasting’ college. Even if they don’t complete a degree, they become familiar with colleges and universities. They are more likely to be ‘loving critics’ of us—or sometimes not so loving.

One of the things that is important to my research in the future is the implementation of articulation programs in various states. A program that is fabulous on paper but not well implemented leaves a lot to be desired. States have to ask themselves whether measures have been established that will generate good data about how well the articulation agreement is doing several years after implementation. Are students transferring without loss of credit? Is articulation in certain majors working better than in others? Are certain parts of the state having more success with articulation? We have [Cliff Adelman’s](#) wonderful national studies, but within individual states, I don’t think the outcomes of articulation are being studied and documented as well as they could be.

Some states have data education warehouses that track students. The topic is being explored at the national level and was mentioned in the [Spellings Report](#). Some have voiced concerns about privacy issues: FERPA issues. I disagree. The FERPA guidelines stipulate that anyone who has a legitimate educational interest in the data should be able to conduct studies using individual student records. If the data can be reported honestly while not identifying any individual student, researchers and educators in colleges, universities, and state agencies have the right to conduct studies using student unit data. The real issue is being certain that the information is secure and that the systems will ensure suitable privacy. If the data can be maintained in a secure environment, the information generated will be invaluable. What this would allow us to do is to tell students that if their major is engineering or art, for instance, then they shouldn’t even consider hopping around from institution to institution on the path to degree completion. Counselors and advisors at both community colleges and 4-year institutions know that students don’t have the information they need to make intelligent decisions. Students lead rushed lives and many juggle school, job, and kids. They don’t know where to get information or how to get it.

Advisors are overworked and may not have the time to dig deeply enough to figure out what a student doesn’t know. Students sometimes avoid advisors for various reasons. A lot more research regarding transfer is needed that uses the *student* as the unit of analysis. We have a lot to learn concerning the biggest barriers for students as far as transfer is concerned. Both quantitative and qualitative data are needed. High schools, community colleges, and 4-year institutions are all in this together.

The last time I looked, about 27 states had bona fide, state level Pre-K-16 systems in place that attempt to bridge the educational sectors. In Florida, we call it K-20. It is a tough issue and very long term. Consistent leadership at the state-level can

get everyone to pull together. If there is a curriculum change at the high school level, it will take five to eight years before students entering college demonstrate any effect of those new high school policies and programs. In states with governing boards, changes can be made more quickly. In states with coordinating boards decisions are made by consensus and usually take longer.

There are many challenges to the establishment and maintenance of a good articulation policy and process. Take student success for example. What is meant by student success? Is a student a success only if he or she transfers and completes a baccalaureate? What does that mean about those students who stop out to get a better job? Aren't they successes too? States tend to be very careful about how they present information on transfer because the data make it appear that institutions are not performing when they may actually be doing very well.

Another issue is the energy and resources necessary to maintain articulation policies, especially on a statewide level. When I worked at the higher education state agency in Illinois, the panel reviewing the early childhood education curriculum met for two years to work out an articulation agreement that addressed both the general education component as well as four courses in the major. After these agreements are developed, then panel members at both local and state-levels take the responsibility for monitoring them. Over time, faculty and staff come and go; people retire. As membership changes new panel members may have a different understanding of the process. In the meantime, changes in the field trigger curricular changes. On top of all that, the students change. Every few years there needs to be a thorough review of the agreement. I know that Illinois, for example, reviews these agreements every five years. Florida, too, has an articulation coordinating commission that is charged with monitoring the policy. In some states institutions are not really committed to the monitoring process. The institutional representatives change frequently and continuity is lost so the process is constantly starting over. When Barbara Townsend and I wrote about this component for the [Community College Review](#) [Ignash & Townsend, 2000] we evaluated states' different transfer indicators. The book, [Community Colleges: Policy in the Future Context](#) [Townsend & Twombly, Eds., 2002] includes a chapter where Barbara and I rated states' articulation policies. At that time there were very few states with systematic, data driven monitoring to improve the articulation function.

Most institutions and most faculty believe that they do the very best job teaching their students, but they may be cautious about accepting the education students receive at other institutions as equivalent to theirs. Within this context the 4-year 'senior' institutions have been known to pull rank on community colleges, which can derail the articulation process. Strong leadership at the state level can bring all the interests together, legitimately convene meetings, and create fair rules and encourage an open forum. But then they need to get out of the way and let the institutions do their jobs.

**UPDATE:** You are working on a grant through the Lumina Foundation that is looking at articulation in an urban setting. Tell us about that project.

**Dr. Ignash:** We are in the second year of a 4-year grant working with metropolitan areas in Phoenix, AZ; Portland, OR; and Tampa, FL to analyze urban patterns of articulation and transfer. These are all metropolitan areas with 1 million or more people. We are looking at what we can do to remove barriers in articulation and transfer particularly in underrepresented groups. The project is called [UTRN: The Urban Transfer Research Network](#). Our hope is that we can determine how to improve the transfer process for students and to provide recommendations concerning different pathways. This information should help develop better policies and programs in the future. It takes a number of years to develop really good information and valid data. Then more years are needed to see if programs are having any effect. One of the reasons I like being in a faculty position is that it's possible to conduct longitudinal projects like the UTRN project. ❖

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*Dr. Ignash's most recent publications include a Spring 2005 volume of the Journal of Applied Research in the Community College on transfer and articulation and a Spring 2003 volume of New Directions for Community Colleges on the community college role in teacher education. She is currently a co-Principal Investigator on two Lumina Foundation for Education grants concerned with articulation and transfer. Readers wishing more information about Dr. Ignash, her publications, or research may contact her at [ignash@coedu.usf.edu](mailto:ignash@coedu.usf.edu).*

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## Developing the Associate of Arts in Teaching: An Articulation Partnership in Illinois

An Interview with Dr. Charles Evans, Assistant Vice-President for Academic Affairs  
University of Illinois

by Catherine Kirby

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**UPDATE:** You were one of several members of the committee that began the process to establish the Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) in Illinois. Our readers can access the full history of that agreement at <http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/Board/Agendas/2003/December/Item%2013.pdf>. Please summarize your experience, as an administrator and representative from the University of Illinois, in embarking on this important initiative.

**Dr. Evans:** One of the decisions that we made early on—Dave Pierce, Stan Ikenberry, and myself—was that this process would be more ‘top down’ rather than ‘bottom up’; that is, we first got an agreement among IBHE, ICCB, and ISBE that reinforced it was a good idea—something we needed to do. And then we went to the presidents of the community colleges, chief academic officers, and deans of colleges of education. That’s an important issue because it was ...the proverbial double-edged sword. [Starting with a small group of leaders] allowed us to move along quickly at first, but it concerned some people. In higher education people need to have a voice. Our original thought was, ‘Let’s hold off on that and bring everybody to the table later.’ Our concern was that [trying to launch this with all stakeholders involved] we would not be able to move it forward at all. So, we had to go back and listen to people and their concerns, and that was fine. Once we had buy-in at the dean and CAO levels, we involved the faculty, department heads, transfer coordinators, etc. Here was the key: Every time we brought the faculty together, we made true progress.

**UPDATE:** In an article about the establishment of Illinois’ AAT, written by Dr. Ikenberry and Victor Perez for the Fall 2003 issue of *UPDATE* (see [http://occr1.ed.uiuc.edu/Newsletter/2003/fall/fall2003\\_1.asp](http://occr1.ed.uiuc.edu/Newsletter/2003/fall/fall2003_1.asp)), the authors refer to the “necessity and importance of a seamless system that would allow all students to freely navigate the education pipeline and enjoy a smooth transition from one education level to the next.” Within the larger context of the P-16 initiative, the AAT was cited as one creative solution. Please describe the ground-breaking nature of the collaboration that was necessary to accomplish the AAT.

**Dr. Evans:** What we [traditionally] do in education is a lot of parallel play. We have a common goal, but rarely do we touch together the same product, and try and shape it. Everything tends to be rather sequential. So, K-12 does their thing, then there’s a hand-off to the community college; they do their thing,

then there’s another hand-off [to the 4-year institutions]. It’s not a criticism; it’s more a statement about the importance of looking at things from the P-16 perspective, as opposed to the peace-meal, distributed way we do it now. What we were trying to do was to shape that collaboration. So, I do believe *ground-breaking* is an accurate term.

**UPDATE:** The AAT was partially designed to attract a more diverse population of students into teaching: those from urban and rural areas in hopes that they would return to teach in those areas where shortages were, and still are, prevalent. What kinds of recruitment strategies have you employed to attract these students to this [AAT] degree at the community colleges?

**Dr. Evans:** One of the ideas that we had early on was to advertise appropriately so that students were aware of the AAT. The other aspect was in providing solid counseling for students when they approached the community colleges. That [counseling] piece is in place. And it’s really now, in articles like this, and in actually doing advertising—placing ads in newspapers, etc.—that we’re accomplishing that. But we wanted to have a sufficient number of programs at the community colleges and have them articulated with the universities before we did that. So we chose to have the structure in place before we advertised and had people knocking on doors, and no one there to answer!

**UPDATE:** It appears that the AAT process might have been enabled from the state’s adoption of a standards-based teacher licensure through NCATE, (see <http://www.ncate.org/public/aboutNCATE.asp>) about the same time the AAT came into existence in Illinois. Even so, an effort of this magnitude requires institutional changes that are inherent and necessary when stakeholders from different types of higher education institutions collaborate. What were those changes within the context of the 4-year institutions?

**Dr. Evans:** When ISBE moved to a standards-based approach to teacher education it encouraged individual institutions to be creative and innovative, within the standards, in their approaches. One of the prevailing thoughts was that when the shift was made to standards-based [licensure] was that we would end up with ‘cookie-cutter’ programs—they’d all look the same. Well, if that had been the case, our job would have been much easier! What actually happened was that institutions took ISBE at their

word, and so, a program in the teaching of math, or science, or special education at [one university] was often significantly different than a [corresponding] program at another university. Keep in mind, the idea of standards-based licensure is that when the student graduates, certain things will have occurred. What it doesn't address—and here's where innovation and creativity comes in—is the sequence of when and how those things will occur. When a student [graduates] we say they have been exposed to 'A, B, and C' and have done 'X, Y, and Z.' But, the AAT doesn't dictate—and it shouldn't—when and how those experiences occur or when that knowledge is acquired, etc. The [AAT process] forced institutions like UIUC to say, 'Okay, we've got this excellent program crafted in Special Education. It's one of the best in the country. Now, how do we collaborate with not only community colleges, but also other 4-year institutions in the state?' We had to rethink how our excellent programs throughout the state—all somewhat different in very meaningful ways from each other—would be the same [in their end product]. We wanted to come up with a transfer program that would articulate to any of the public, and we hoped many of the private, universities. And, from the timing perspective, how we could allow students from any community college that has special education, and math and science, or early childhood education, to transfer in. That was difficult. That's where we really had to get the faculty together to determine how we could retain quality programs, but at the same time to allow these unique differences. We hadn't thought that way before. That was one institutional change.

Traditionally, [educators and administrators] have developed programs by getting faculty together and saying, 'What is the best way to do [X program]?' Now, we are saying, 'You've already got [X program]. How now, can students coming from elsewhere fit into that program?' That also required a change. And it required changes in the general education [Gen Ed] core curriculum. It is amazing how finely-tuned our programs are. The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) has done a lot of good here. This really pushed the envelope on the IAI because in [community college] teacher ed programs we have courses and curriculum feeding into specific junior/senior teacher ed programs that really affect the Gen Ed core. So, again, it forced us to rethink what was really critical to our programs, often requiring a look at sequencing.

**UPDATE:** I see in your response that one of the innovative things that was also difficult was that you had to think of this new articulation concept as more than a vertical model.

**Dr. Evans:** Correct. That's where those faculty meetings became important. Picture this: you have this room with 40 special ed [professors] in it from the public and some private universities. We also had teacher ed faculty from community colleges, who tend to be generalists as opposed to specialists. So, we had all those people together, and we had to look at it not only horizontally, and vertically, but also diagonally. If we were going to come up with one program that would feed into all the other programs, we really had to rethink, 'Why did we put that in?'

and 'When can we move it around so it works?' One of the terms that we used to solve this confusion was *equitable treatment* of AAT graduates. What we found was that with those very unique programs there is no way that a student graduating from [one particular community college] with an AAT in Special Education, for example, was going to be able to transfer equally, the same, to any of the dozen public university teacher ed programs because of the uniqueness of those programs. So, what we agreed to was equitable treatment. We guarantee to the students who come in that they will be able to graduate in the same amount of time that residential students going through that program at the 4-year institution will graduate in. But they might not take exactly the same program because they might have some things out of sequence.

For example, students transferring to UIUC with an AAT in Math would be on an equitable basis with the residential students, equally prepared. To be a teacher education student in Math at UIUC, one has to be a Math major. Generally speaking, the student who graduates from [a high school], unless he or she has thought it through and has taken a very rigorous Math program at that high school, is going to be behind and will have to take some extra courses. That's equity. What we did [foresee] was that when students transfer in with an AAT degree, they will have had some things that the residential students will not have had; and at the same time they, maybe, will not have some other things. What we called 'the promise of the AAT' means that both kinds of students will be treated equitably. The [transfer students] will be given credit for the things they have taken that perhaps residential students have not, they might have to take some things in their junior year, and accommodations will have to be made accordingly. That's the promise of the AAT: equitable treatment. That allows the universities to retain their innovation and at the same time to protect students coming in.

**UPDATE:** I can see where that could be very complicated, and have to be treated almost on an individual basis.

**Dr. Evans:** In some cases it is. Generally, what happens is that it just works quite well. When the university programs were crafted, the differences weren't significant because we were working from a standard space. But there were differences [in creating the AAT]; we had to address them and that's how we did it while protecting the students.

**UPDATE:** What kinds of ongoing maintenance efforts to this agreement are required among institutions?

**Dr. Evans:** Mainly two: One is that our world in teaching is very dynamic. We continue to make improvements. For every time a program changes at a university level, we need to make sure that everything is still articulated and in place. The second thing we're seeing (which should come as no surprise), is that there are [preferred] pathways being created. While the AAT is set up to allow a student to graduate from any community college with an AAT and then to go to any public or participating private university, there are still [historic] 'pathways.' For

example, folks from western Illinois tend to go to Western Illinois University. While the AAT is set up [for universal transfer] what we're seeing now is a fine tuning among community colleges and what one might call 'primary providers.' That's no surprise, and that's good. But we're always having to monitor it, which is what IBHE is doing now: going back to make sure that the AAT remains inclusive, not allowing changes that would only apply to certain community colleges and a 4-year institution in one pathway while creating a disadvantage to those not in that primary pathway.

**UPDATE:** Has the establishment of this initiative inspired other processes wherein the 2-year and 4-year institutions work together for student, education, and workforce needs, creating what Debra Bragg has called "systemic linkages" and what Barbara Townsend and Jan Ignash have termed "greater systemic efficiency?"

**Dr. Evans:** Yes, we have certainly seen, in my opinion, a greater support of and interest in both the IAI and what you see now coming in the Course Applicability System [CAS]. While those initiatives, particularly the IAI, have been around for a long time, we're noticing much more interest across other disciplines of how we can [think systemically] now the AAT has shown that it is possible within education. So, we're seeing a much more collaborative approach to program development in other areas. I see it in both community colleges and at the university level (see [http://www.vpaa.uillinois.edu/reports\\_re-treats/p16\\_document.asp#toward](http://www.vpaa.uillinois.edu/reports_re-treats/p16_document.asp#toward)). Take, for example, program development from a 4-year perspective: Twenty-five years ago the universities developed the programs and the community colleges had to fit in. Now, it's much more of a partnership approach - more of a collaborative. And we see in the IAI and CAS that people are looking in other disciplines to do it. Part of this is pushed by society also: the expectation that the students will be able to get through [college] in four years. Keep in mind that is not only a parental expectation, it's also public policy. Now people are saying if it's working in education, it can work everywhere.

**UPDATE:** The national literature on forming the AAT indicates that very few 4-year institutions resisted it, and the resistance from 2-year colleges was confined to the area of possible proliferation of associate's degrees. What about the Illinois experience?

**Dr. Evans:** People always agreed on the AAT at a conceptual level, and not just because it was good public policy. I think a majority of the people we encountered and worked with believed in our goals: to produce more teachers and better teachers who were aligned with the needs of the state of Illinois. That meant we had to have better racial alignment and people comfortable in urban settings and people comfortable in rural settings. Everybody agreed to that. The challenge, (I'm not sure I would call it *resistance*) was that with these very individualized programs that people were proud of, how could we make the necessary changes to allow the AAT to work for all students and programs. I think it's sort of like when most people look ahead at a very hard task, the natural leaning is, 'Oh my gosh! Do I have to do that?' So, it wasn't resistance; it was more of the recognition of all the work that would be necessary to accomplish our goal. Yet, when people actually 'got in the pool'—when the faculty got together—I found that most of that reluctance or fear of 'how are we going to do this?' just melted away. We all really wanted this to occur. So, it wasn't resistance or reluctance, but a respect of the challenge we had in front of us. ❖

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# Students' Right to Know: Help Students Take Advantage of Illinois' Strong Articulation Agreements

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by Daniel Cullen

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## Credits from Multiple Institutions

For today's baccalaureate-seeking students, meeting their graduation objectives is more than likely going to entail earning credit at more than one institution. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, nearly 60% of 1999-2000 first-time bachelor's degree recipients completed their degrees with credit from multiple institutions. Although this statistic has been used to back up a wide variety of claims (Education Trust, 2006), one thing is indisputable—the application of credits earned at one school toward a degree at another is widespread. For the students working toward baccalaureate degrees by earning credits at multiple institutions, determining how their accumulated credits will satisfy one ultimate degree objective depends both on the articulation agreements that exist between institutions and on their own course selection decisions. Ideally, those decisions will be based on the agreements. Students need to answer not only, “What credits will transfer?”, a tricky enough question, but further, “What credits will apply toward the degree I ultimately want to earn?”, a much more challenging and important question.

How credits will transfer and apply is a crucial question for the majority of graduating undergraduates, including the student who begins higher education at a baccalaureate-granting institution and then completes a handful of courses elsewhere as well as the transfer student who pursues a full course of study at one institution and then moves on to another. However, the issue is especially important for the latter, the student who begins higher education at a community college with the intention of then moving to a senior institution to complete a baccalaureate degree—these students want to apply some 60 hours of credit from one college (or colleges) toward a degree at a senior institution. If community college credits do not apply—perhaps they do not transfer for credit, or perhaps the student receives credit, but it does not apply toward any degree requirements—students are faced with additional work. This results in increased cost of education, financial and otherwise, and increased time students spend in postsecondary education, and, thus, more opportunity for leaving before completing the degree. The reality today, though, is that students may be enrolled at community colleges earning credits that will not transfer as expected. “No matter which type of student we observe, only about half were able to transfer all of their credits” (Doyle, 2006, p. 58).

## Illinois' Agreements

Students who enroll at Illinois community colleges and who intend to transfer benefit from many inter-institutional agreements including the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI), a statewide course transfer policy, a network of course-to-course articulations between institutions, regional consortia of communication and collaboration such as Transfer Coordinators, a system of Transfer Centers, and program articulation guidelines. These activities and projects promote and strengthen the transfer process, but in order for students to move seamlessly through higher education, they must have information about the agreements. Students need to be able to make course-selection decisions based on an understanding of what articulation agreements institutions have in place. That is to say, they need to be able to learn what courses, based on articulations, will apply to the post-transfer degree; while the agreements and all that faculty, administrators, and policy makers do to create them may remain a mystery to most, the effects of those agreements must be made clear to the students who are affected by them.

## Equity and Equal Access

The [Illinois Course Applicability System \(CAS\) Project](#)<sup>1</sup> is one strategy that makes course transfer information available to students via the Internet. Using a free on-line program, students can create personal accounts through which they can track their progress toward specific degrees at other institutions. This program is intended to put community college students on similar footing with students who start higher education at baccalaureate-granting institutions. The vast majority of “native students” have access to their schools' degree audit systems that provide organized, detailed reviews of degree requirements and an evaluation mechanism to determine students' progress as they complete requirements; only students who are currently enrolled at a particular institution can typically run degree audits for that school's degree programs.

However, if we want to provide equal access to information for all students, if equity across the system is important and we want to treat baccalaureate-seeking students who begin higher education at 2-year institutions the same way we treat those who start at 4-year institutions, community college students also need access to baccalaureate degree audits or an alternative process that

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<sup>1</sup> Find information about the Illinois CAS Project at [www.ibhe.org/CAS](http://www.ibhe.org/CAS). To use CAS, go to [www.transfer.org](http://www.transfer.org).

achieves the same end. Two-year institution students and others can use CAS to examine degree requirements and learn how their completed and anticipated coursework will apply toward the baccalaureate degree at potential 4-year institutions.

The use of technology, such as CAS, has the potential to allow better coordination and communication of transfer articulation data and the ability to target specific populations of students who need the information. Students' difficulty in getting accurate information has been shown to be a major barrier impeding student transfer to 4-year institutions and earning bachelor's degrees (Cunningham, Redmond, & Merisotis, 2003). Students with early access to correct information are more likely to achieve transfer success than students without information (Cabrera & LaNasa, 2001; Perna, 2002). "Despite many years of investment in equalizing post-secondary education opportunity in the United States, gaps in enrollment rates persist between low-income and higher-income students, and between white students and other racial/ethnic groups" (Cunningham, Redmond, & Merisotis, 2003, p. 1). One of the reasons they give for the persistence of this problem is access to information. The research also shows that students who start higher education at a community college attain the baccalaureate degree at rates equivalent to those who start at the 4-year college or university if the community college students know their major and their target institution, and if the sending and receiving institutions have articulation agreements, and if the students have access to this information (Townsend, 1995).

### Illinois' Students by Sector and Race/Ethnicity

The Course Applicability System does not take the place of advising or of academic counselors, but instead provides all users consistent, accurate, and timely information about transfer courses and their specific degree applicability. CAS can aid advising at the high school level and ensure that place-bound or

financially burdened students exploring their options in Illinois higher education see transfer as a realistic choice. The Course Applicability System has the potential to improve the diversity and access rates of the more than 30,000 undergraduate students transferring among Illinois colleges and universities each fall<sup>2</sup>, as well as many of the over 16,000 students transferring into Illinois colleges and universities from outside the Illinois higher education system each fall<sup>3</sup>. How well institutions and the state serve students who are planning to transfer is an important equity issue. Table 1 demonstrates that of students in Illinois public higher education, Black students, Hispanic students, and American Indian/Alaskan Native students are more likely to be enrolled in community colleges than in universities.

One-fifth of the students transferring fall 2004 were underrepresented minorities. That semester, 9,634 Black, Hispanic, and American Indian or Alaskan Native students transferred in Illinois, representing 20.4% of all the students who transferred. Of these students, over one-third (36.3%) transferred to a community college, and under one-third transferred to public universities and not-for-profit institutions (30.1% and 28.9%, respectively).

2 According to the IBHE Data Book, Table V-1, in fall 2004 30,493 students transferred among Illinois institutions, and 16,672 students transferred into Illinois institutions from out-of-state, foreign, and unknown institutions. In addition to these 47,165 students, many others transfer during other terms.

3 Although the Illinois CAS Project works exclusively with CAS Sending and CAS Receiving institutions in Illinois, students attending institutions outside the state can use CAS to plan baccalaureate completion at CAS-implemented institutions in Illinois as long as the Receiving institution has course articulations with that school.

**Table 1 Race or National Origin of Students Enrolled in Illinois Public Colleges and Universities by Type of Institution, Fall 2004**

<u>Race or National Origin</u>	Public Community Colleges				Public Universities	
	Undergraduate		All		Number	Percent
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Black, Non-Hispanic	38,539	16.1%	54,224	14.9%	23,582	11.8%
Am Indian or Alaskan Native	921	0.4%	1,290	0.4%	526	0.3%
White, Non-Hispanic	162,340	67.9%	231,001	63.6%	132,349	66.0%
Asian or Pacific Islander	11,753	4.9%	16,602	4.6%	13,766	6.9%
Hispanic	23,480	9.8%	56,719	15.6%	12,986	6.5%
Non-Resident Alien	855	0.4%	1,593	0.4%	10,872	5.4%
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>237,888</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>361,429</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>194,081</i>	<i>97%</i>
No Indication	1,161	0.5%	1,775	0.5%	6,386	3.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>239,049</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>363,204</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>200,467</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Fall Enrollment Survey, IBHE Data Book. Retrieved 7/15/2006 from <http://www.ibhe.org/Data%20Bank/DataBook/default.asp>

## Outcomes by Credit Acceptance

In a recent article in *Change*, a Vanderbilt University professor of higher education used National Center for Education Statistics data to demonstrate that those students who transfer from a 2-year to a 4-year institution with all credits accepted are far more likely to complete their baccalaureate degrees than are those students for whom only some, or no, credits are accepted (Doyle, 2006). Looking at status after six years, 82% of those who received credit for all their community college work had graduated, but only 42% of those who received credit for some or none of their work had graduated (see Table 2 and Figure 1). Doyle argued that:

It seems that [transfer] students' eventual baccalaureate degree completion may have more to do with issues outside of their control than their own choices....the transfer of course credits is largely an inter- or intra-institutional responsibility. Students bear much of the responsibility for getting to the point of transfer.... But much of what happens after transferring seems to occur as a result of factors beyond their control and is the responsibility of state-level and institutional policymakers. The articulation agreements, common course numbering, and curriculum decisions that the policymakers develop all play a pivotal role in determining how many transfer credits will be accepted and hence the likelihood of students' attaining their educational goals. (p. 58)

These data are striking, but I come to a different conclusion. I do agree that policies are vitally important to the process, and I support Doyle's call for simplifying the articulation process for students, for eliminating barriers, and for standardizing articulations so that clear policies determine transfer outcomes rather than subjective decisions within institutions, decisions that may be arbitrary and highly inconsistent. However, Illinois has a tremendous array of articulation agreements in place. The problem for many students is that they are not aware of the agreements (more precisely, the agreements' implications), not that the agreements are not in place.

## Conclusion

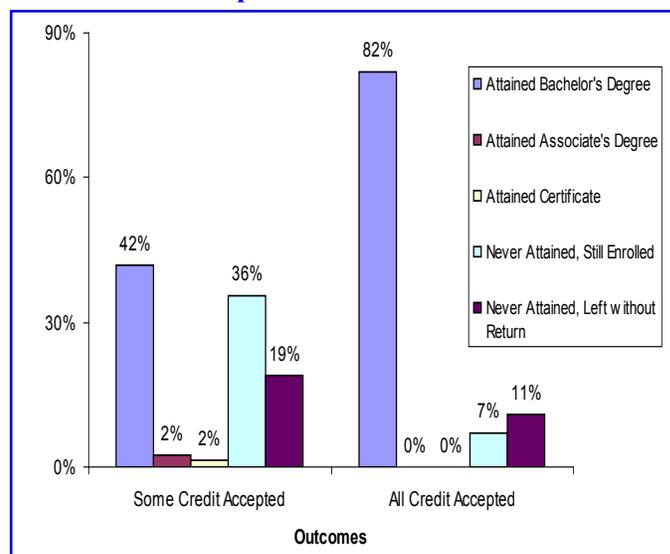
Student course selection, rather than institutional policy, results in much lost credit. In Illinois, with IAI and other strong policies in place to aid course transferability, we need to support students by improving their access to accurate, current, complete, and comprehensible information. The problem for many students is *not* that they are selecting community college courses only to find out later, when their courses are evaluated at the senior institution, that a bureaucrat has decided after the fact and arbitrarily not to grant credit, as Doyle suggests. Rather, the problem is that students are making poor selections because they are not aware of the agreements and their implications. Student

**Table 2 Percentage of Transfer Students Who Completed a Bachelor's Degree in Six Years by Credits Accepted at Four-Year Institutions**

Outcome	Some Credit Accepted	All Credit Accepted
Attained Bachelor's Degree	41.7%	81.9%
Attained Associate's Degree	2.4%	0.0%
Attained Certificate	1.5%	0.0%
Never Attained, Still Enrolled	35.5%	7.2%
Never Attained, Left without Return	18.9%	10.9%
	100%	100%

Source: United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2006), Data Analysis System for Beginning Postsecondary Students. Retrieved 9/25/2006 from <http://nces.ed.gov/das/>

**Figure 1 Percentage of Transfer Students Who Completed a Bachelor's Degree in Six Years by Credits Accepted at Four-Year Institutions**



Source: United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2006), Data Analysis System for Beginning Postsecondary Students. Retrieved 9/25/2006 from <http://nces.ed.gov/das/>

course selection, rather than institutional policy, is resulting in much of the lost credit<sup>4</sup>. It is important to emphasize that students are not necessarily to blame for their choices; rather, it is an acknowledgement that institutions need to guide students more effectively so that they are armed with adequate and accurate information to make the best choices possible. We, the higher education community of scholars and practitioners, must support students so that they can make well-informed choices.

With appropriate help from the sending institutions, the receiving institutions, and the state, students can make better choices, choices that will result in greater proportions of courses transferring and applying toward their degree of choice. Using CAS, community college students in Illinois will be better able to fall into the “all credits accepted” category. Illinois’ students already have a wide range of statewide and institution-to-institution articulation and transfer policies to support their progress. What they need is the knowledge about precisely how those articulations affect them as they plan their pathways through higher education, pathways that are increasingly likely to include credit at more than one institution. ❖

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<sup>4</sup> In this article I argue that community college students need to be armed with better information so that they can carefully choose courses that will transfer and apply toward their intended baccalaureate. This is not to assume that we will ever be able to provide *all* students the opportunity to choose *only* courses that will apply to the senior degree. This will never be possible for a number of students. Many students enter community colleges wanting to transfer, but undecided on their major and need to explore options; many will take courses in one pathway (e.g., an applied associate’s degree) and then change their goals to a transfer orientation; and many will need to take pre-college courses, to provide a few examples.

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# IS IAI IMPROVING TRANSFER?

by Jane Sack, Ed.D.

*This article summarizes a qualitative study conducted as one phase of a dissertation titled "An Historical Case Study on the Illinois Articulation Initiative." As part of her doctoral thesis, Sack studied the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) and its relationship to student success, especially as it relates to transfer and the rate of baccalaureate degree attainment. Her research findings were based on 13 interviews of higher education professionals who worked extensively on the development of the IAI agreement, as well as other primary and secondary resources. Sack recently completed her Ed.D. in the Community College Executive Leadership specialization at the University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign. Dr. Steven Aragon, Associate Professor of Human Resource Education, directed her dissertation research.*

## Introduction

In 1992 the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) introduced an option for transferring courses from one institution to another within the state called the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI). Technically, IAI is an outgrowth of the IBHE's original 1970 era policy on Transfer and Articulation known as the General Education Compact Agreement. Under the Compact Agreement, students transferring to a 4-year institution in Illinois with an associate degree from an in-state junior or community college were to be considered juniors in good standing having completed their general education requirements. Essentially, the purpose of the IAI was to enhance the earlier Compact Agreement by smoothing the transfer of courses so that the time-to-degree would be shortened and students would have better opportunities of attaining a baccalaureate degree (IBHE, 1998). By 1997, IBHE had approved the third and final amendment to the original Compact Agreement and implemented new IAI practices in transfer and articulation across Illinois.

## IAI Development and the Community College Perspective

Throughout the history of junior and community colleges, a number of complicated issues have been associated with transfer and articulation policies and procedures. In reviewing the literature, I observed the reoccurring question related to how courses from 2-year institutions are accepted at senior colleges and universities. As is customary of higher education policy, the 1997 IAI had taken years to develop, going through multiple phases. The aim of IAI as it emerged seemed to be directed to achieving a comprehensive and consistent framework for articulation and transfer that would address barriers to student degree completion within the state.

The first phase of IAI development involved determining a statewide general education core curriculum that would be acceptable at transfer institutions to satisfy general education requirements. The second phase of IAI dealt with comparability among major disciplinary programs and courses. Although some courses and programs received approval for transfer, I found much of this part of the policy development process was hampered by struggles to find common ground among a diverse array of institutions and programs. The third phase of IAI policy development incorporated a five-year curriculum review, and the fourth phase involved an evaluation of policy and process.

Recently, Kelly and Lach (2006) released their evaluation of the fourth developmental phase of the IAI plan. Although their evaluation included a comprehensive list of recommendations for potential improvements to enhance institutional effectiveness of IAI, the evaluation fell short of collecting longitudinal data on the rate of baccalaureate degree attainment during the 8-year time span since IAI implementation.

## Historical Antecedents to IAI

Throughout the 1980s, Illinois community colleges enrolled a preponderance of the state's minority students in higher education (IBHE, 1992a). Also during that time budgetary constraints prompted the IBHE to address issues of access, education quality, faculty recruitment, and learning environments, while exploring ways to maintain or improve programs without additional state resources or increased tuition (IBHE, 1990b). Early in the 1990s, the IBHE conducted an evaluation study on transfer and articulation that indicated a disproportionately low percentage of minority students were attaining baccalaureate degrees (IBHE, 1990a, 1992a). These studies also indicated that students transferring to 4-year institutions were taking more time-to-degree than the students who started college at 4-year institutions (IBHE, 1990a, 1992b). Many of these same students were categorized as under-prepared and/or from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The report's findings substantiated anecdotal evidence that under the original Compact Agreement many transfer students found it necessary to repeat requirements or take additional general education courses at 4-year institutions in spite of previously completing associate degrees. The evidence indicated to me that the original articulation agreements were not functioning consistently, which prompted IBHE to review the Compact Agreement and the entire articulation process. About this same time period, the focus of IBHE turned toward accountability to the taxpayers, prompting the IBHE's demand for transfer problems to be addressed.

Accordingly, IBHE and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) sought a collaborative approach to attend to the issue of improving the Compact Agreement, resulting in the IAI.

### Key Concepts of the IAI

The 1997 IAI agreement reflected three major additions to the original Compact Agreement: 1) “associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions are equal partners in providing the first two years of baccalaureate degree programs in Illinois”; 2) “associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions should work together to expand opportunities for students to complete baccalaureate degrees,” which involves faculty taking primary responsibility for articulation; and 3) “institutions are expected to work together to assure that lower-division baccalaureate programs are comparable in scope, quality, and intellectual rigor” (IBHE, 2003, p. 5). According to an ICCB official that I interviewed, these three provisions were key to guiding continued development of the new IAI. An IBHE official agreed, indicating the goal of the IBHE and ICCB was to produce a plan that would be agreeable among the state’s higher education administrators, faculty, and students, as well as 4-year public and private institutions.

The purpose of my dissertation study was to examine these three key concepts and determine how the IAI policy impacted student degree completion, using personal interviews, extant records and reports, and archival data. A brief summary of the three concepts of equal partnership, faculty responsibility, and comparable courses follows.

*Equal Partnership:* In one form or another the terms *commitment*, *collaboration*, *communication*, and *cooperation* can readily be found in articulation literature as imperatives for higher education policy (Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999; Kintzer, 1996; Knoell, 1990; Palmer, 1996). Data in Illinois have tended to show that students who transferred from community colleges with an associate degree performed as well academically and in persistence-to-degree as native baccalaureate students (IBHE, 1992). On the surface, collaboration among colleges and universities appears to be mutually beneficial to all institutions as well as to students. But, according to Ignash (1992), even though community colleges excel in the area of transfer, no topic exemplifies the imbalance between 2-year and 4-year institutions more than articulation policy. Ignash argued that 4-year institutions typically dominate decisions regarding transfer policy and are therefore unlikely to voluntarily relinquish control. I observed this dynamic in the development of IAI. Faculty representing the various higher education institutions in the state participated in the development of IAI policy by determining guidelines for articulation of general education requirements and course content. Even after such input, the language in the 1997 IAI agreement turned out to be as open to subjective interpretation as the earlier Compact Agreement.

My research suggests community college representatives felt their course content was being dictated by 4-year institutions. To some, the transferability of courses was held hostage at community colleges that failed to adjust their curriculum according to the standards of the 4-year institutions. The 4-year colleges and universities, on the other hand, were requested to voluntarily comply with the agreement (IBHE, 1994), demonstrating the imbalance in accountability between the two different parts of the system. Kelly and Lach (2006) noted that continued cooperation on the part of community colleges was most likely due to a belief that the 1997 IAI agreement was the best available solution to transfer problems. In effect, the dynamics of the policy negotiation process led to an IAI agreement that did not represent an equal partnership but incongruent representation of interests between 2-year and 4-year institutions, creating an unstable foundation for IAI from the start.

*Faculty Responsibility:* According to a former executive director of IBHE, prior to the development of the 1997 IAI agreement, transfer and articulation activities had not been clearly focused on curriculum because of minimal faculty involvement. One official and others that I interviewed believed that, in order to have successful agreements, all sectors of all institutions needed good faculty representation and strong leadership involved in articulation effects. Affirming the value of faculty participation, Palmer (1996) claimed that moving students among the colleges in the state required collaboration between the 2-year and 4-year college faculty. Such participation would allow for clarification in performance expectations by both types of institutions and ensure that students were not faced with unintended barriers to the transfer experience.

As a statewide agreement, IAI allows for discussions on curriculum among faculty members from public and private 2-year and 4-year institutions. Unfortunately, these discussions have been hampered by constant changes in faculty membership, relative infrequency of meetings, and uncertainty of purpose. An alternative process that might have proven to be more effective would be to allow continuing members who were aware of the fundamental purpose and process of the IAI agreement to initiate new members. For example, at one state-wide meeting, new panel members were instructed that the intent of IAI was not to negatively judge course syllabi, but to raise the standards of curriculum in the state. This example is indicative of how the original IAI goals of improving baccalaureate rates became blurred and distorted over the course of policy development.

The IBHE was committed to addressing the minority student transfer and graduation rate. Because baccalaureate degree attainment was higher for transfer students who had earned an associate degree, effective articulation of general education courses would potentially support the transfer process for minority students from community colleges while also facilitating their engagement and success at 4-year transfer institutions. An

effective IAI policy should increase minority students' chances of persisting to graduation, but I believe this goal became subverted as the discussions shifted to curriculum standards. In order to achieve buy-in from the 4-year institutions, curriculum standards were allowed a central place in discussions. In an attempt to mollify all institutions, the IBHE merged the initial goals of improving minority success with 4-year institution interest in providing program quality.

*Comparable in Scope, Quality, and Intellectual Rigor:* As IBHE was resurrecting former discussions on the state's transfer and articulation problems, the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) Board of Directors declared 1990 as the "Year of the Transfer." Almost 25 years later, Holaday and McCauley's 2004 study found the overall articulation process was still characterized by a high degree of subjectivity and inconsistency in application among institutions. Sullivan (2005) identified this problem as stemming from time consuming maintenance issues that drain the resources of both 4-year and 2-year institutions. In addition, he claimed poorly executed articulation procedures are costly to students. The aforementioned researchers recommended improved communication as one way to address such problems.

Communication was a top priority for IAI during policy negotiation and early execution. Those involved in planning saw great value in bringing 4-year and 2-year institutions to the table to discuss curriculum comparability and acceptability. The intended impact was to eliminate poor practices in a number of institutions, according to an IBHE official who I interviewed. In addition, a problem emerged involving inconsistent policy application and execution among some universities with regard to general education programs. In some cases, institutional philosophies hindered practical application of the articulation agreement. The aim of IAI was to promote a grouping of general education courses that would be acceptable to every participating institution. Once again this same IBHE official noted that, given the magnitude of curricular diversity statewide, compromise might result in the articulation of courses that would not necessarily replicate the curriculum in place at specific institutions.

### **Hurdles**

In my experience as a community college practitioner, course comparability has always been an issue for community college administrators, faculty, and students. In spite of data showing high rates of success for community college transfer students (Glass & Harrington, 2002), my study revealed that transfer students from 4-year institutions were viewed more positively at receiving 4-year institutions than were community college students. As noted by Grossbach (1991), university faculty members at specific institutions have been known to impose transfer agendas over and above official articulation agreements because the faculty do not trust the quality of courses from the community college. This happens most frequently for general education programs. On the other hand faculty members at 4-year institutions have a vested interest in the content

of community college courses. Transfer courses at community colleges provide incoming students with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed at 4-year institutions. Within disciplines transfer courses introduce students to a particular field. Success or failure in introductory courses in the major may determine whether a student will persist to complete a degree in that discipline. Transfer of credit becomes more complex when levels of rigor in course content differ and are aggregated into academic credentials prior to being received by the institution from which the student plans to graduate (Sullivan, 2005).

The level of academic rigor in course content at community colleges has been an issue for receiving institutions like the University of Illinois. The University viewed IAI guidelines as posing a potential risk for "lowering the bar" on their quality of education. One U of I official reported to me that the University initially believed goals for the new IAI policy included raising state curriculum standards, assuming the university could be assured that community college course content was equivalent in nature, content, and level to a University course. IAI guidelines, as set by the Illinois Community College Admission and Records Officers Organization (ICCAROO), did not consider this a requisite characteristic for articulation. My research suggests that, to date, the university continues to utilize an internal articulation guideline instead of accepting transfer courses in accordance with the statewide IAI agreement.

### **Conclusions of the Study**

Once the concept of IAI was endorsed by 4-year institutions, those institutions were given broad representation on IAI faculty panels determining course comparability. This granted 4-year institutions powerful influence in determining course comparability with regard to academic scope, quality, and intellectual rigor.

Community colleges also had broad representation on faculty panels and their role necessitated remaining responsive to the dictates of 4-year institutions with regard to achieving course comparability through modification of scope, quality, and academic rigor of transferable courses. The IAI is an ongoing transfer policy and the relationship between the two types of institutions continues to reflect this issue. As the community colleges adjust, improve, restructure, amend, and incorporate new standards of curriculum according to the IAI guidelines, 4-year institutions adhere to internal institutional policy for course content. This study noted that even after community colleges comply with course content requirements established by 4-year institutions, the "senior" institutions have not been required to accept the resulting articulation as an equivalent for transfer.

This study illuminates problems dealing with the development and early implementation of IAI as a statewide policy. The initial impetus to create an effective statewide transfer and articulation policy was due to a general belief that sound transfer policies could improve baccalaureate degree attainment for students who start at a community college and transfer to a 4-year institution. Because community colleges provide the first two

years of college for most minorities who seek higher education, improvements in the Compact Agreement were expected to increase enrollments of underrepresented groups at 4-year institutions. During the policy development phase of IAI, interest in upgrading state curricular standards became a focus. IAI has been perceived as the vehicle that moved better prepared community college students to the 4-year institutions but the question of impact on the ability of students to transfer remains unanswered.

### Is IAI Working?

In this article, I have identified a problem that developed during IAI policy formulation. The original goals for improving the effectiveness of articulation and eliminating barriers to transfer to reduce time-to-degree and offer students better opportunities for attaining a baccalaureate were allowed to waver. Achieving equal partnerships, faculty responsibility, and comparable courses, although valuable in guiding the initiative forward, proved to be difficult to sustain. The absence of quantitative data related to graduation rates post-IAI is perplexing. Fifteen years were dedicated to developing the IAI; it is time to measure the effects it has on student transfer processes and completion rates.

Why is an evaluation so important? On a larger scale, the Commission on the Future of Higher Education has held a series of meetings in the interest of developing a national strategy for higher education that will have an impact on the next 20 years (Cohen, 2006). So far, they have looked at cost, quality, and accountability, but their top priority is increasing college access and success for low-income minority students. The history of IAI reveals that IBHE was years ahead in addressing these issues. If, however, IBHE is still interested in improving baccalaureate degree attainment rates, then an evaluation of IAI benefits, strengths, and weaknesses should be the next step. Such information is imperative for bringing the initiative back to its intended purpose. ❖

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# The Office of Community College Research and Leadership Announces. . .

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## A recent publication

The Fall 2006 volume of *New Directions for Community Colleges* examines local programs and state and federal policies designed to enhance opportunities for underserved students to enter and succeed in college, paying particular attention to community colleges. The volume focuses on *academic pathways*—boundary-spanning curricula, instructional strategies, and organizational structures that link high schools with two- and four-year colleges. Debra Bragg, Director of OCCRL and Professor of Higher Education and Elisabeth Barnett, senior research associate at Columbia University, serve as editors of this edition.

## A new monograph from the [National Council on Student Development](#) (NCSO)

This publication, *Toward the Future Vitality of Student Development: The Vision of the National Council on Student Development*, summarizes insights gathered at a 2004 NCSO colloquium on the future of community college student development. The full report and summary presentations of scholars and leaders in the field are available to NCSO members. Non-members should contact the NCSO National Office at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 51 Gerty Drive, Room 129, Champaign, IL 61820, ph: 217-244-9390.

## Briefs coming soon

*Technology Implementation in Community College Student Services* — a brief exploring the uses of technology at community college student services.

*A Broad Mission, Public Image, and Private Funding: Can Community Colleges Have it All?* — a brief that discusses the relationship of the community college mission to fundraising and development.

## A new book in print

### [Awards and Recognition for Exceptional Teachers](#) by Hans Andrews

Hans Andrews' book, [Awards and Recognition for Exceptional Teachers](#) presents a case for K-12 schools and community colleges to develop strong teacher recognition programs. Improved student learning is a foundation goal of No Child Left Behind legislation. This book argues that outstanding teachers make significant contributions to learning improvements and should be recognized.

“*Awards and Recognition for Exceptional Teachers* is well worth reading and I urge that it be placed at the top of educators’ must read lists...” notes Dr. David Pierce, former President and CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Andrews has more than 30 years of experience in developing recognition programs while providing for teacher evaluation accountability. A nationally recognized speaker, he has written six books including, *Accountable Teacher Evaluation*, *Teachers Can Be Fired*, and *The Dual-Credit Phenomenon* and 85 articles. His high school and community college background makes this book a practical and useful guide for anyone interested in improving the learning climate in schools.

*Awards and Recognition for Exceptional Teachers*, ISBN 0-9787158-02 (ISBN 978-0-9787158-0-9 in 2007) is available through Matilda Press, 1019 Lakewood Drive, Ottawa, IL 61350, [andrewsha@sbcglobal.net](mailto:andrewsha@sbcglobal.net), Amazon.com for \$24.95, and can be ordered through numerous bookstores.

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The Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) was established in 1989 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. *Our primary mission is to provide research, leadership, and service to community college leaders and assist in improving the quality of education in the Illinois community college system.* Projects of this office are supported by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), and are closely coordinated with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), along with other state, federal, and private and not-for-profit organizations. The contents of the UPDATE newsletter do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of OCCRL, the ICCB, or the ISBE.

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