Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) Transfer Policy
Recommendations from Articulation Work Group

Preamble

- The Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network Articulation Work Group recognizes the importance of creating a process for ensuring that general education coursework taken at Illinois community colleges transfers as seamlessly as possible to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions.

- The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) has overseen this process since 1998. Generally, the Illinois system has worked quite well with its model of bringing representatives of both community colleges and universities to the table using articulation panels. Given the changing landscape in higher education, the different approaches toward articulation criteria among General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) panels, and some inconsistencies in transferability of courses, now appears to be an opportune moment to review the current process.

- To date, the primary focus for the articulation of courses is predicated upon course content rather than the acquisition of competencies or student learning outcomes within broad academic areas. For a definition of competency based learning, see The Glossary of Education Reform at http://edglossary.org/competency-based-learning/.

- With the ongoing implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards in K-12, alignment with these standards within the GECC is needed.

- With an eye to working collaboratively with the IBHE and the IAI, this paper makes a series of recommendations.

Background

A national conversation is going on about what the university should look like in the 21st century. One element of the conversation focuses on the need to ensure that student learning has taken place. For one perspective, see Carol Geary Schneider, “Making the LEAP: Connecting Liberal Education with 21st Century Challenges.” Plenary Address at the Institute of Integrative Learning and the Departments, AAC&U, July 2013. The potential changes to higher education are driven by multiple forces:

- Assessment tools – Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP), etc.
- Organizations – National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessments (NILOA)
- Initiatives – Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP)
- New Pressures – Academically Adrift; Aspiring Adults Adrift; AAC&U Employer Survey
- New Philosophy – Demonstrating Learning vs. Delivering Content
While many states have statewide articulation agreements between baccalaureate degree-granting institutions and community colleges (e.g., North Carolina, Colorado, Virginia, Mississippi, Iowa, etc.), many states are moving to review these agreements in the face of the changing higher education landscape. For example, Kentucky revised its General Education Transfer Policy in 2012 towards competency-based learning criteria within the context of the AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes.

**IAI Practices and GECC Panels**

Review of the different GECC panels reveals variations among the panels in terms of criteria set for transfer of courses. A standardized panel approach is missing (i.e. content, breadth, student learning outcomes, competencies – each panel emphasizes different aspects).

- **Humanities and Fine Arts** – Focus is on meeting distribution requirements in content areas or disciplines. Broad approach to general topics. There is a writing requirement.
- **Mathematics** – Course content and SLOs need to match but are not specifically articulated in the panel documents. Note that the panel uses the guidelines of the Illinois Section of Mathematical Associate of America (ISMAA)/Illinois Mathematics Association of Community Colleges (IMACC) and urges that these guidelines be consulted when submitting courses.
- **Physical Sciences** – Course description and objectives should align. Student learning objectives are left up to the submitting institution. Lab courses and interdisciplinary courses have specific requirements.
- **Communication** – Delivery mode, assignments (writing and speech), and evaluation are specified in overall document while specific student learning outcomes or performance criteria are set forth in the course description section.
- **Social and Behavioral Sciences** – Some outcomes are offered for the interdisciplinary courses in this area (e.g., “students will derive a balance of the 1) concepts, 2) theories, 3) methods, and 4) conclusions of each discipline”). However, there is vagueness on what a student must demonstrate.
- **History** – Assessment criteria for the panel is well developed with students being able to demonstrate specific learning outcomes.
- **Life Sciences** – In addition to specific requirements such as a societal component for courses with that IAI code and combinations of content breadth, the panel offers specific goals for students. Demonstrated skills related to the laboratory experience are also included.

**Recommendations**

- Create a common template to be used by all GECC panels.
- Organize information so it is easily accessed in one location.
- Invite the Humanities/Fine Arts Panel to review their current descriptors (outdated, strong emphasis on content) as well as consider incorporating student learning outcomes.
- Provide evidence that the IAI panels are focusing on Illinois State Learning Standards when applicable.
- Invite panels to incorporate student learning or competency-based outcomes in their criteria.
Next Steps
1. Ask articulation work group to review and provide feedback.
2. Share draft with appropriate individuals at IBHE and ICCB.
3. Make revisions based upon feedback from different groups.
4. Present draft document to Regional P-20 Network meeting.

Appendix
Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) – The Collegiate Learning Assessment was first launched in 2000 by the Council for Aid to Education, a national nonprofit organization based in New York City. The CLA is a standardized testing initiative in U.S. higher educational evaluation and assessment. Its measures are designed to test for critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem solving, and written communication skills. www.cae.org

Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) – “The CAAP is the standardize, nationally normed assessment program from ACT that enables post-secondary institutions to assess, evaluate, and enhance student learning outcomes and general education outcomes.” https://www.act.org/caap

The Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) – “The Degree Qualifications Profile outlines a set of reference points for what students should know and be able to do upon completion of associate, bachelor’s and master’s degrees—in any field of study. There are five broad categories of proficiencies which provide a profile of what degrees mean in terms of specific learning outcomes.” www.degreeprofile.org

National Institute for Learning Assessments (NILOA) – “Established in 2008, NILOA assists institutions and others in discovering and adopting promising practices in the assessment of college student learning outcomes. NILOA’s primary objective is to discover and disseminate ways that academic programs and institutions can productively use assessment data internally to inform and strengthen undergraduate education and to communicate with policy makers, families and other stakeholders.” www.learningoutcomeassessment.org

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