



your guide to college transfer

helping you
transfer
in Illinois

brought to you by



Stay on track toward graduation with *iTransfer*.

We help transfer students prepare for successful transitions with comprehensive transfer resources including information about the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI), a statewide transfer agreement that's transferable among more than 100 participating colleges and universities. IAI allows you to complete a package of approved general education courses and get credit for them at any participating institution.

www.iTransfer.org

How do your credits transfer?
Find out with u.select.

VISIT iTransfer.org TO LEARN MORE

u.select (formerly CAS) is a nationwide, web-based transfer information system that provides you with fast, accurate course and transfer information.

With u.select you can:

- Obtain program requirements,
- View Course-by-course equivalencies, and
- Monitor progress toward your degree.



www.iTransfer.org/uselect

welcome!



Dear Students and Families:

With a troubled economy, dwindling college-savings plans and grim post-graduation job prospects, many students and families are looking for the best, most cost-efficient way to earn a degree.

The answer may be to attend a community college then transfer to a four-year school. Attending a community college gives you lower tuition costs and the option to live at home instead of on campus.

If you choose the transfer option, iTransfer, u.select and the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) can help you prepare for a successful transition.

Illinois Articulation Initiative

IAI is a statewide transfer agreement between more than 100 participating colleges and universities. It's perfect for students who know they want to transfer, but are undecided about where to go.

Participating schools accept a package of IAI general education courses in lieu of their own comparable lower-division general education requirements. If you complete the approved package, the courses will be accepted for transfer credit at the participating institution of your choice.

u.select

u.select is an excellent source of information on course transfer among institutions. You can plan for major programs and plans of study from a variety of Illinois higher education institutions, both public and private. Use the site to track your progress toward completion of the Illinois General Education Track (IGET), even if you plan on attending multiple schools.

iTransfer.org

The iTransfer partnership strives to make each student's transition between institutions as smooth as possible. We want to help you achieve your educational goals. If you think your path to a bachelor's degree includes a transfer from one college to another, prepare yourself by reading this guide and checking out iTransfer.org.

Kind regards,

Krista Jackson

Illinois Articulation Initiative and iTransfer Coordinator

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key to college lingo

MAKE SURE YOU'RE SPEAKING THE RIGHT LANGUAGE
WHEN TALKING ABOUT COLLEGE

Knowing the language of college can save you a lot of confusion and misunderstanding when working through the admission and degree completion processes.

ACE: ACE, the "American Council on Education," reviews military training and other forms of experiences to see if they can be equated to college-level credit.

Admissions office: The admissions office is where you send your application, admissions fee and any official transcripts to be evaluated.

Advisor: Talk to an advisor about your degree program, course schedule, transfer credits and professional goals. Your advisor can also help you with any other questions you have regarding your degree.

Audit: Auditing allows you to attend a course to gain information without being expected or required to do the assignments. Audited courses do not earn you a grade and do not count toward your degree requirements, but the course does appear on your transcript.

CLEP: CLEP (College-Level Examination Program) exams are distributed by The College Board and can be used to fulfill requirements of your degree.

Credit by experience: Credit by experience allows students to earn college credit for a skill or knowledge level gained through professional experience, such as a job or training.

Drop: Dropping a course is when you remove yourself from the course roster. Simply not attending a course does not automatically drop you from it.

Matriculated: This is when you have officially applied to a college and been accepted into a program. You must be matriculated to receive financial aid.



Minor: A minor is an extra credential you can receive that usually consists of five to six courses in one area of study.

Non-matriculated: When you attend a college and take courses without being officially enrolled in a degree program. Non-matriculated students cannot receive financial aid.

Official transcript: Transcripts from colleges that are sealed by the admissions office and stamped across the seal are considered official. Ask for one from the registrar.

Part-time status: Generally, part time is when you are enrolled in one to five credit hours of study, usually one to two courses depending on the credit hours assigned to each.

Registrar's office: The registrar's office is where you go to add or drop a class from your schedule, request official transcripts, obtain a student ID, withdraw from the college or take a leave of absence.

Unofficial transcript: A transcript is unofficial if you have opened an official one, or if it's just a list of your courses with the corresponding grades and credit hours that you requested from the college or downloaded off the Web.

Withdraw: When you withdraw from a course, you must either fill out a course withdrawal form or use your school's online withdrawal system.

transferring college credit?

U.SELECT CAN HELP YOU PLAN AHEAD AND
MAKE EDUCATED DECISIONS ABOUT YOUR
NEXT STEPS

By Lisa Marinelli

Planning to transfer college credit? With u.select, you can review degree program requirements, evaluate options, reduce transfer uncertainty and save money—all for free.

What is u.select?

u.select (formerly CAS) is a multi-state, Web-based transfer information system that provides you with fast and accurate course and transfer information.

Students can use u.select to learn about the majors offered by different institutions, graduation requirements for those majors, how courses transfer between participating institutions and how summer courses can satisfy degree requirements.

When should I start using u.select?

Now! Start planning as soon as you think you may want to transfer. At u.select, you can:

- View degree requirements by major at participating colleges and universities.
- Create a personalized degree report to see how your courses transfer and apply to your degree. This function lets you chart your progress toward a baccalaureate even before you're enrolled at the baccalaureate institution.
- Find current information about the transferability of courses. You can see how the courses you have taken or intend to take will transfer.
- Access links to different student services, such as admission, registration, financial aid, transfer and more.

How do I get started?

Sign into u.select (www.itransfer.org/u.select) as a member or guest.

Members are able to create a personalized degree report and have access to all u.select features. A member account allows you to store your course history and see how those courses will transfer and apply toward a degree at a participating institution.

Guests can explore the basic features of u.select, such as programs, course equivalency guides and schools.



Lisa Marinelli is the Project Coordinator of u.select Illinois (formerly CAS).



How to create your free u.select account

- Log on to www.itransfer.org/uselect
- Select the u.select logo
- Select Get Started
- Select Register Now
- Select the state and school you are currently attending
- Click Next
- Fill in the fields with an asterisk (*)

Illinois transfer facts

Are you one of those students who will have attended several institutions by the time you complete your baccalaureate degree? You're not alone! Consider that:

- 60 percent of graduates earn transfer credit.
- More than 40,000 students transfer among Illinois colleges and universities each fall.
- Another 10,000 students transfer to Illinois from other states or countries.

How do students transfer?

A traditional (and successful!) transfer pattern is to enroll at a community college, take a full load for two years, then transfer to a baccalaureate degree-granting institution to earn a degree.

But guess what? Many students are not typical. Maybe you started at a four-year school but decided to go to a community college before transferring to a third school. Maybe you are working and taking classes part time.

You are more likely to be successful if you take a balanced set of coursework that fulfills degree requirements, and if you enroll in consecutive terms. But even if you have to take remedial work, you will make progress toward your degree. And that is what counts.

You can take lots of different routes to earn a bachelor's degree. But do take control of the wheel, make a plan, and don't forget to enjoy the trip.

—By **Marilyn M. M. Marshall**, director of University Academic Programs and Services at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



the right questions to ask

EVALUATE POTENTIAL PROGRAMS
BY ASKING ADMISSIONS THESE
QUESTIONS

By Christine Javery

With so many choices for college programs, it can be difficult to find the one that best meets your needs. How do you find the right program?

Start by compiling a list of what you want to get out of your college education. For example, if your primary concerns are length of program and networking options, you will want to find an institution that offers accelerated terms and community and/or career services for students.

Use this list of foundation questions for every institution you contact.

How is the institution accredited?

Check the institution's accreditation. If you attend an institution not regionally accredited by one of the six main regional accrediting agencies, there is very little chance your credits will transfer to other institutions. National accreditation is generally associated with individual programs of study as opposed to the overall institution.

The six regional accrediting agencies are:

1. Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
2. New England Association of Schools and Colleges
3. North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
4. Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
5. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
6. Western Association of Schools and Colleges

If you are thinking about attending a distance learning program, make sure the program has the same regional accreditation as the institution's on-campus programs.

How much will it cost?

Does the institution have any non-tuition related fees, such as application fees, transcript evaluation fees or resident or nonresident student fees?

Also ask the tuition rate per course. Some institutions will give you the rate per credit; calculate the total cost per course with this information.

Many students do not have the financial resources to pay for their education out of pocket, but can generally obtain federal and/or private financial aid. The institution's financial aid office can help.

How long will I be in school?

How many semesters will you need to complete your degree, and how long is each semester?

Some students learn very quickly and can be successful in a program with short, intensive terms. Other students require additional time to fully absorb the information and therefore do better in a program that offers 12- to 16-week terms.

How can I receive credit outside of class?

Many institutions will give college credit for life or work-related experiences. These "life credits" could potentially take the place of several classes required of your degree program. Other forms of alternative credits include CLEP exams, DANTES tests and portfolio assessments. Ask an enrollment counselor about the institution's acceptance of these alternative credits.

Who teaches the classes?

Ask about the program's faculty. Who teaches undergrads? Are they adjuncts (people who typically work in the field during the day and teach part time) or full-time faculty? Both options have pros and cons; make sure you're comfortable with the method the institution offers.

What kind of support is available for students?

Always inquire about the institution's support services for students. Support services range from technical support to tutoring, career counseling to job placement help.

Your choice to continue your education will have a significant impact on your time, money and future. Don't feel pressured to apply anywhere until you are sure it is the right institution for you.



filling out the FAFSA

THIS FREE FEDERAL APPLICATION IS YOUR TICKET TO SCHOLARSHIPS, GRANTS AND LOANS FOR COLLEGE

Looking for scholarships, grants, student loans or on-campus job opportunities? Looks like you'll be filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

The FAFSA is also used by many colleges to determine eligibility for their own institutional financial aid programs. It doesn't take long to complete—about 20 minutes—but it could be your ticket to free money from the government or your college, low-interest student loans or a work-study job.

Fill out a FAFSA for every year you're in college, no matter how much aid you think you will (or won't) receive. The bottom line is, you'll have a hard time getting any tuition help if you don't apply.

Know what you're getting

A grant is free money that doesn't have to be paid back, like a scholarship. Loans must be paid back in full with interest. Your lender will spell out the terms of your loan agreement, including when you will start paying it back, how often you will make payments and how much each payment will be. Student loans are common and effective ways to pay for your college education as long as you're clear about how much and how quickly you'll have to pay them back.

Do it yourself

You can find a FAFSA in college admissions offices or online at fafsa.ed.gov. It may look intimidating at first, but most of the application packet is actually worksheets.

Don't forget to sign it

If you fill out a paper version of the FAFSA, don't forget to sign it before turning it in! The form cannot be processed without your signature. If you fill out the FAFSA online, you'll receive a unique PIN that will allow you to start, save, access and "sign" your application online.

Learn the lingo

EFC, SAR, COA...the road to financial aid can be flooded with alphabet soup. After your FAFSA is processed, you'll receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) to review. The SAR compiles your FAFSA info to determine your estimated

family contribution (EFC). The EFC is based on your family's investments, savings and other assets that could be used to pay for college. Colleges use your EFC to determine your financial need by subtracting it from the school's cost of attendance (COA).

The difference is your financial need, which determines how much loan and grant help you'll need.

Five reasons why filling out the FAFSA is a really good idea:

- 1 Even if you don't think you'll need a loan, it can't hurt to have a backup plan in place.
- 2 Work-study jobs are mostly on campus, and you become qualified to apply based on your FAFSA information.
- 3 It's how the government and colleges decide your financial need.
- 4 It doesn't take long, and you can do it online.
- 5 You might be eligible for federal grants, which you don't have to pay back!



your quick and easy guide to financial aid

HERE'S YOUR GUIDE TO FREE
MONEY FOR COLLEGE (AND MONEY
YOU HAVE TO PAY BACK, TOO)

Don't let the potential cost of college scare you away from applying. There are many ways to help defer the costs. Check out the financial aid opportunities below.

Free money

• Grants

Grants are free money awarded by your college or the government as a result of the information on your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA, fill it out at fafsa.ed.gov), your interests or your merit. Research state-sponsored grant programs through your state's education department Web site.

• Institutional scholarships

When you're searching for colleges to apply to, check out what kind of credentials you'll need to be automatically qualified for merit scholarships. You might find that you qualify for some full rides due to your major, your GPA or other special talents.

• Private scholarships

You can spend hours searching for private scholarships online. Use your major, location, hobbies and employer as search criteria to start. Apply for as many private scholarships as you are eligible for, and don't rule out smaller, local awards. National scholarships may offer more money, but you're competing with more people. And when it comes to paying for college, every bit of money will help.

Money to pay back

• Federal loans

Apply for federal money, like the Stafford and Perkins loans, by filling out the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1 of the year you will attend college. Your college will detail any loans you've been awarded in your financial aid letter. Respond to that letter whether or not you want the loans. And if you choose a student loan, don't borrow more

than you absolutely need.

• Private loans

Like federal loans, private loans help you pay for school, and you have to pay them back. Apply for private loans through banks or other loan companies. This money is disbursed by the lender you choose.

Money-saving opportunities

• In-state school

Public colleges and universities often charge in-state residents less for tuition than they charge for nonresidents. That's because the state's taxpayers support the public schools. You might as well benefit.

• Community college

Attend a community college for two years, then transfer to a four-year school for your bachelor's degree. Speak with a transfer advisor before you enroll to ensure that your credits will transfer to the college and program you have in mind.

• Special programs

Ask your college's financial aid office if they offer flexible billing options. Ask the colleges in which you're interested about any special academic programs, such as articulation agreements, accelerated degrees or combination bachelor's-master's degrees, for which you may qualify.

• Tuition discounts

It never hurts to ask the financial aid office if there are any tuition discount programs for which you could be eligible.



your degree **Options**

By Laura Jeanne Hammond

Is going to college even worth it?

You bet it is. Not only will a degree likely boost your lifelong earning potential, it also tells potential employers that you have what it takes to meet a challenge. Considering going back to college? Here are your options.

Associate degree

Average time to complete: Students attending school full time can earn an associate degree in two years or four semesters. Part-time students can take four years or eight semesters.

How to start: Call a community college's office of admissions to set up an appointment.

Options:

- *Year-round school:* Accelerated degrees are a great option if you're willing to attend college full time, attend during the summer and take courses during intersession (winter break). With year-round, full-time schooling, you could earn an associate degree in fewer than two years.

- *Old credits:* Previous college credit can help you fulfill degree requirements quickly. Don't assume any previous college credits are no longer valid. Ask.

- *Flexible schedules:* Through community colleges, you may find online courses, hybrid courses (combination of online and on campus), early-morning courses, weekend courses and classes offered in convenient locations.

Why should you do it? Earn an associate degree to prepare for a career you can enter directly after college. Or, transfer into a bachelor's degree program. Use a community college to receive additional training, fine tune or develop new skills.

Bachelor's degree

Average time to complete: Full-time students with transfer credits typically take two years after transferring from a community college. Part-time students with transfer credits may take four years to complete.

How to start: Call the college in which you're interested to set up an appointment with an advisor. Call any colleges you have previously attended to request your official transcripts. Have the transcripts sent directly to

the college at which you have an appointment, or bring the sealed transcripts to your meeting.

Options: You know the traditional college deal: dorms, classes on campus and activities to keep busy. But consider these unique programs that some colleges also offer.

- *Accelerated degrees:* You can cut the time until graduation by taking CLEP exams, transferring credit from other colleges or getting college credit for on-the-job training or experience. Some colleges offer accelerated bachelor's degrees with intense coursework or year-round classes. Your major might also offer a program through which you can earn a bachelor's and master's degree in five years.

- *Flexible classes:* Online discussions may be one component of your on-campus classes, or you may have a class (or an entire degree) conducted completely online.

- *Independent learning:* In an independent learning model, students meet with an academic advisor to develop and complete coursework. Generally, there are no formal class sessions to attend, which means it's up to you to manage your own course load and deadlines.

- *Cohort learning:* In cohort learning, a small group of students share the same classes and work toward the same degree. Cohort learning gives you a group of similarly minded students to get to know throughout your degree program.

Why should you do it? Bachelor's degrees are today's ticket to management roles or higher-level positions.

Master's degree

Average time to complete: Depends on the program and school. Full-time students average a year to two years after undergrad; part-time students taking one or two classes per quarter could complete a master's in three or more years.

How to start: Contact the graduate studies department of the college in which you're interested.

Options: Some master's degrees are offered completely online. A bachelor's degree is a prerequisite. Part-time master's students are also common.

Why should you do it? Make yourself more marketable in a demanding job market. Develop expertise in your field.




are you an **online learner?**

WHICH PROGRAM FITS YOU BEST:
TRADITIONAL OR ONLINE?

How can you tell if you'd do better with distance/online learning or a face-to-face environment?

Here are some questions to help you decide.

- Do you work well alone?
- Do you need face-to-face contact with your instructor?
- Are you able to meet timelines set by others?
- Do you have 10 to 15 hours a week for school work?
- Do you learn better through reading or lectures?
- Do you have regular access to a computer and Internet?
- Are you comfortable using computers?
- Are you self-disciplined?
- Do you communicate well in writing?
- Do you adapt well to new learning environments?
- Do you tend to procrastinate?
- Do you have extensive work/family commitments?



Choose traditional if you need face-to-face contact with your instructor and peers; you enjoy working as part of a group; you communicate better verbally than in written form; or if you need help with time management. You may do better on campus with a familiar academic structure.

Consider online if your work or personal life prohibits you from attending classes at preset times each week; you work better alone; you're comfortable with technology and can keep yourself to strict deadlines.



Online and Distance Education is just a click away!

The Illinois Virtual Campus is a service for distance education students from Illinois to Indonesia and around the world. Whether you are just starting out or finishing your degree, we have the resources to help you.

Our catalog lists distance education courses and programs from 72 Illinois colleges and universities. The programs include Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees along with professional certificate programs. The courses are available in a wide variety of subject areas including all general education required fields.

Learn more at www.ivc.illinois.edu.

going on a campus tour?



You've collected the beautiful brochures, surfed the snazzy Web site and have memorized the number of the helpful admissions person who answers all your questions.

But the best way to get a feel for a college's campus is to actually go on a campus tour.

A tour will help you put a face to the name of your admissions rep; scope out parking, classroom locations and other amenities; learn about the services offered; and make you feel more connected to the college.

Here's what to do on a campus tour.

Ask questions

Ask your tour guide questions about the feel of the campus and what kind of issues are important to the student body. Most college tours include a component with a professional admissions rep or college administrator. At those sessions, ask about graduation rates, available support services and required courses for your potential major. You might also want to ask about career services, graduation and hire rates.

Do more than a virtual tour

Many colleges offer virtual tours online. But the best way to learn about a campus remains to see it in person. College is a major time and financial commitment. Treat it like one.

Be courteous of others

Sure, you're busy. But for the sake of other students on the tour—and for your own benefit—don't take phone calls while you're on a campus tour. Also, save your statistical questions for the administrators or admissions reps, not your student guide. And it's rude to ditch the tour without telling the guide you're leaving.

Be positive

Negativity is another tour don't. For example, don't assume a long line at the computer lab alludes to a deeper problem. Instead, ask questions, such as the accessibility of computers and lab hours.

Get the digits

As your tour ends, ask the admissions rep for a business card, or your student guide for his or her e-mail address. That gives you someone to call when you inevitably remember more questions to ask.

—With Emilie Le Beau

what to ask

A campus tour is sort of like a job interview—you're deciding if the institution is up for the job. Here are some questions to ask in a campus info session.

- How many students are there at the college?
- What percent of students graduate in four years?
- What percent of students have jobs in their fields within six months after graduation?
- How much is the total cost to attend?
- What is the average class size?
- What kinds of classes will I be required to take, regardless of my major?
- What should I do if I am undecided?
- What accreditation does the college hold?
- What is the profile of a typical student who is admitted?
- Do you offer classes online as well as on campus?
- How long is each semester or term?

your **5** next steps

By Abby Berner

PUT THIS CHECKLIST ON YOUR FRIDGE TO HELP YOU MOVE SMOOTHLY THROUGH THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS!

1 **Order transcripts.** If you've taken college courses in the past, order two copies of an official transcript from all your past schools and have them sent to your home address. Keep one for your records (you can open this one), and keep the other one sealed for your appointment with the admissions counselor or advisor at your new college. Having an official transcript on hand can save you a lot of time, as many transcripts can take two to four weeks to arrive at their requested location.

To order transcripts, go to the registrar's office on campus (or go online) and fill out a transcript request form. The main item the registrar needs to process your request is your signature. There is usually a fee per transcript requested, typically \$1 to \$5.

Allow about two weeks to receive a request by mail. If you're in a hurry, ask if the transcript can be sent via overnight mail. If that's not possible, you may be able to obtain an unofficial transcript that can be used in an initial appointment.

2 **Make an appointment.** Call the admissions office at the school(s) you are interested in and make an appointment with a transfer counselor. The purpose of this meeting is for you to familiarize yourself with the school's programs and to get an idea of how your previous academic work could transfer into various programs on campus.

After your meeting, you may be directed to meet with a person from a specific program area who can give you more information about your area of interest. See if you can speak to that person that same day.

If going to an on-campus meeting is not an option, or the program you are interested in is only available through online learning, know that phone appointments are very common.

Once you have your transcripts, you can fax or e-mail them to the advisor with whom you will be speaking. Do this ahead of time to make the appointment more productive.

Research your options through the admissions section of the college's Web site, or give the school a call to ask about the advising accommodations they provide for prospective students.

3 **Request an initial transfer evaluation.** An evaluation from either the admissions counselor or an advisor from the specific major you are interested in can give you an idea of how many classes or credits you need to complete to earn a degree (and give you a good idea about the costs involved). If you are in a time crunch to get your degree, evaluations from a variety of schools or majors can help you narrow your options.

4 **Prepare for your meeting.** Use the college's Web site to research programs and classes that interest you. Make a wish list of the classes you want to take, and jot down any questions you have. Doing this legwork—even if you decide not to attend—can make your first appointment more productive, allow you to ask specific questions about your areas of interest and find out if you and the program are a good match.

5 **Print out an application.** If you feel pretty certain about the college but you're not sure what program you want, fill out the application and leave the program choice blank. You can always fill this out during or after the appointment.

review

- **Order official transcripts** and have them ready for your meeting. Not all colleges will be able to do a credit evaluation during the appointment, but it's better to be prepared than to miss out.
- **Schedule an appointment** with an advisor. Call the admissions office and tell them you are a potential transfer student.
- **Research the academic programs beforehand.** The more info you bring to the appointment, the more you will take away from it.

planning your associate degree

KNOW HOW YOUR ASSOCIATE DEGREE WILL FIT INTO A BACHELOR'S DEGREE PLAN TO ENSURE A SMOOTH TRANSFER

As you plan your path to a bachelor's degree, it is critical to select the correct foundational associate degree.

Associate degree options

There are two general types of associate degrees: transfer-oriented and terminal.

Transfer-oriented degrees mirror the first two years of a bachelor's degree. The most common transfer-oriented degrees are the Associate of Arts and the Associate of Sciences.

A few of the other specialized transfer-oriented degrees found in Illinois are the Associate of Arts in Teaching, the Associate of Engineering Sciences, and the Associate of Fine Arts. These degrees contain all or nearly all of the bachelor degree's general education requirements. When a student completes these degrees before transfer, they normally enter the university with junior status and with their general education requirements met. Completion of one of these associate degrees normally doesn't prepare a person for immediate employment.

Terminal degrees are intended to result in immediate employment after completion. They normally contain as little as half of the general education requirements of a bachelor's degree. The most common terminal associate degree is the Associate of Applied Science.

A.A.S. degrees identify a specific area of study, such as an Associate of Applied Science in Therapeutic Massage or an Associate Degree in Nursing.

The Associate of Applied Science was intended to be the end of a person's educational path. But terminal associate degrees are no longer terminal. Instead, they can and must be a ladder to further education.

2+2 programs

Most universities and baccalaureate colleges have developed strategies to help students with terminal degrees continue or re-start their education. The two most common methods are the 2+2 agreement and the baccalaureate degree completion program (upside-down degree).

Under a 2+2 agreement, the associate-degree school



By Dr. Rick Pearce

and the bachelor's-degree school agree to a plan of study that specifically aligns the courses taken in the A.A.S. with requirements in the bachelor's degree and then sets out the remaining requirements. This is designed specifically for transfer from one particular school to another.

Upside-down degrees

The upside-down degree does not identify a specific associate degree school, instead assuming some general idea of what an A.A.S. degree in a specific field would include.

Most often, the upside-down degree assumes the major courses are completed at the associate level and reserves the general education requirements for completion at the university (hence the "upside-down"). A good example of this type of program is a Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Nursing Sciences (RN-BSN) program.

Which associate degree is for you?

Are you planning to enter a field where employment requires at least a bachelor's degree? Then seriously consider a transfer-oriented associate degree program.

Are you interested in a career field that requires only an associate degree? Then perhaps an A.A.S. is the right call.

Either way, speak with your advisor about just what the options are when you earn the degree. Be clear about what the next steps are and what options are available.

And remember, no degree is "terminal" these days. If you want to continue your education, there are opportunities out there if you know where to look.



Dr. Rick Pearce is Vice President for Learning and Student Development at Illinois Valley Community College (ivcc.edu) and a proud graduate of IVCC's Associate of Arts program.

find your passion

IT'S IMPORTANT TO BECOME INVOLVED AT YOUR COMMUNITY COLLEGE—AND TAKE THAT INVOLVEMENT WITH YOU AS YOU TRANSFER, TOO

By Cassie Fuller

In high school, I was very involved in several athletics, clubs and honors organizations. I thought my extracurricular social life would end when I graduated and went to a community college.

I was very wrong.

My first day attending community college, I began writing for the student-led newspaper, the IV Leader. I wrote and edited most of the sports articles and organized the section's layout. This opportunity brought me a job offer to work as a sports reporter at one of the local newspapers, which sent me around the state following high school athletes.

I also wrote many articles on campus news for the IV Leader, which sparked my interest in the Student Government Association. Freshman year, I was elected to the Student Government Association Programming Board. Through the board, I was able to take part in many community-based projects, organize campus activities and offer input on campus legislation.

The next year, I decided to run for student trustee, the liaison between the students and the college's board of trustees. Although this extracurricular required a lot of time and devotion, it was the best learning experience I have ever had. I was able to join state and nationwide organizations, travel to New York City for a conference, lobby in Washington, D.C., and travel across the state to discuss community college matters with multiple student advisory committees.

I also joined Phi Theta Kappa, the international honors society of community colleges. Phi Theta Kappa is one of the most active groups on campus. We take on numerous service activities, ranging from campus cleanup days and tree plantings to volunteering in the community and raising money for children in Africa. As a group, we have not only made an impact on campus and locally, but globally as well.

I came to a community college because I was not sure what career field I wanted to go into. The educational freedom that the community college system allows has let me try several different careers.

I joined the Honors Program at my community college to broaden my mind about different career paths and help me pinpoint my educational and career goals.

In my situation, I was already heavily involved on campus and in the community, but I really had no experiential learning experiences. The Honors Program supported me as I accepted an observation opportunity in an elementary school,

which has also guided me into picking a field of study and setting goals for my future.

Community college has a lot to offer when it comes to extracurricular activities. The possibilities truly are endless, as many of the clubs and organizations on campus are initiated by student interests. As I transfer to a four-year university, I take with me an abundance of experience and knowledge just from getting involved. The opportunities at community college helped me develop the ambition I need for a successful future.



Cassie Fuller is a 2009 graduate of Illinois Valley Community College, where she served as a student trustee, student government officer and student ambassador. Cassie has also been recognized by the Coca-Cola Company as one of the top 50 community college students in the nation.



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why you should get involved

GETTING INVOLVED ON CAMPUS
IS ONE WAY YOU CAN ENJOY
YOUR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

Ask someone about their college experience, and chances are, they'll call to mind events that occur outside of the classroom. Sporting events, honor societies, student clubs and performance groups give a campus its character.

There are strong advantages to getting involved at your college, whether you attend a community college or four-year school, are a traditionally aged learner or older adult.

And getting involved may be easier than you think!

Why get involved?

• *It's fun*

The obvious reason to get involved in student life is for the sheer enjoyment of participating. Extracurricular activities are supposed to be fun, interesting and engaging. If you get involved with one that isn't those things, find another one.

You will find that you can make valuable social and professional connections with your classmates. You can explore your interests with people who share them, and you may find more enjoyment in your time on campus.

• *You're paying for it*

If you want a more cynical reason to participate, how about this: You may be paying for those organizations anyway. One common student fee is an activities fee that funds extracurricular organizations. You are already paying for the opportunity to partake in campus life.

• *You can prove your leadership skills*

Your employer and future employers may have an interest in your participation as well. College is a time to prove yourself and gain experiences. Perhaps you want a professional position of increased responsibility, but you do not have many leadership opportunities at work. A role in student government may give you the experience you need to demonstrate your abilities. Participation in honor groups, such as Phi Theta Kappa or Phi Sigma Pi, may speak volumes to future employers about your potential.

• *It's part of college*

Perhaps the most important reason to get involved is because it is part of the college experience. Going to college is more than earning a degree. It involves many subtle lessons that create a broad set of skills. A person who graduates college should be able to interact among diverse peers in challenging circumstances. Only a small part of this comes through formal coursework. By skipping the opportunities of campus life, you are shortchanging your education.



How to get involved

To get involved in student life, choose a club with a topic that interests you—from photography to women's issues, from soccer to science, from politics to juggling—and attend a meeting or informational session. Information about student activities can be found on school bulletin boards (online and on campus) or the school's office of student life. You may want to contact club officers to get more information via e-mail or over coffee on campus.

You will quickly find that organizations want to attract you as a member. Why? Many student groups receive funding from student activities fees, and often the amount that a group receives depends on the number of its members. The more members it can attract, the more money it can receive.

Most extracurricular activities can be scheduled around your busy life. Many activities do not require strict attendance—you can work your commitment to the organization around your other commitments. If you are a member, you may have a voice in when and where the group meets, so you can try to find a time that works for you.

Once you are involved, it is a matter of choice as to how involved to get. You may find that attending an occasional event is enough for you, or you may want to assume a leadership position in the organization.

Attending college is more than a chore designed to produce a degree. It is a place and a time to explore your interests.



create your own organization

Can't find an organization that fits your interests? Start your own group on campus! Different colleges have different systems for starting student organizations, but almost every school has a system that shares these steps.

1. Find some founding members

One student does not a group make. Talk with peers in your classes about your idea. Post some information and hold an informational session to share your idea for a new group. Collect attendance sheets or petition signatures to demonstrate the appeal of the new organization.

2. Decide what your group will do

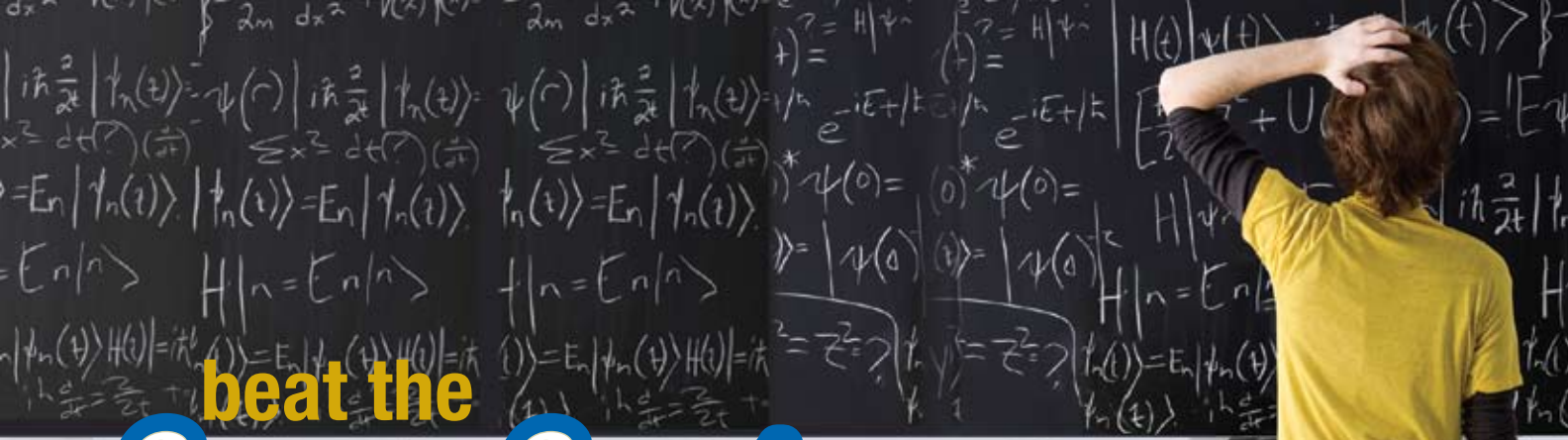
How often will your club meet? What will be the purpose of the group? How much money will it need to fund what activities?

3. Find a faculty supporter

If you know of a professor who shares your interest, ask that professor to serve as a faculty sponsor. The professor may have questions about how much of a commitment will be required—like you, faculty members have busy lives. You will find, however, that many professors are willing to sponsor well-considered groups.

4. Present your organization for funding

Present your organization to the decision makers at your school to create a formal group eligible for funding. You may need to present to the student government, the dean of students or another committee set up to create new groups. Once your group is recognized, all that is left is to conduct the business of the new organization.



beat the fear factor

HOW TO CONQUER ENGLISH
AND MATH IN COLLEGE

By Jason Karpf

When you turn to face the actual coursework of college, two monsters stare back: English and math. They stand ready to drag unwary victims into a maze of auxiliary verbs and quadratic equations.

But with these tips, you *can* conquer English and math.

English

More than merely an academic subject or a major, English is a tool that we employ in every classroom and workplace.

Gary Morgan, professor emeritus of journalism and English, offers a practical perspective derived from more than 30 years as an instructor: “Employers are looking for people who can write clearly and effectively and can convey ideas directly.”

Morgan summarizes “English success” as the ability to:

- Write simple, direct sentences that convey the thought or idea that is intended.
- Organize thoughts on paper into a meaningful and coherent collection of ideas.
- Use appropriate grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Colleges typically administer tests to determine prospective students’ proficiency in sentence structure, fundamental organization and mechanics. Based on test results, new students are placed in English classes that correspond to their skill levels.

Placement in a remedial, developmental or pre-college level course is not punishment. It’s your chance to catch up on concepts you may have missed or on which you need a refresher. A solid performance in a remedial class will create academic momentum that can carry you to graduation.

In an early English class, you should be assigned a handbook such as *The Little, Brown Handbook* or *The Allyn &*

Bacon Handbook. These comprehensive guides cover grammar, punctuation, composition and academic/research writing styles such as MLA, APA, CBE and Chicago style.

Math

Mathematics is a sequential discipline, taught in order of difficulty and process, leading students from one level to the next. Where you begin the sequence is the key.

“I think the best thing that ... students can do in preparation for taking a math class is to get good advice about what course level they should be placed at,” says David Weinstein, a college and university professor with nearly 30 years of classroom experience.

As is the case with English studies, do not be disheartened with low proficiency test scores or placement in a remedial course.

“It is better to underestimate one’s own abilities and take a course that is partially review in nature rather than overestimating one’s own abilities and getting blown away by the material,” Weinstein advises.

Colleges frequently provide free math tutoring through learning resource centers. The centers usually have a collection of instructional media and offer guidance in their usage. Some centers hold seminars on topics such as math anxiety and test-taking strategies.

stay on track to transfer!

YOUR ILLINOIS TRANSFER TIMELINE

Developed by Rita Pearson, Transfer Coordinator, Eastern Illinois University, with the Transfer Coordinators of Illinois Colleges and Universities



Whether you're certain **community college** is right for you or you're still considering it among other options, a successful transfer depends on solid planning. To help you stay on track, iTransfer developed this transfer timeline.

Junior year of high school

Choose the right first college for you

Attending a community college close to home allows your existing support system to help you with the transition to college and gives you the option to live at home. Many students from your high school will likely also go to the local community college, so you'll already know people there.

Senior year of high school

Apply nine months to a year before enrollment

Application deadlines and requirements vary from school to school, so when you know which first college you want to attend, learn about the application process.

Senior year of high school

Freshman year of college

Choose your transfer college

Make this decision early so you can plan for that school's specific transfer requirements. If you've already determined your major, look for schools with strong programs. Ask other transfer students what their transfer experience was like.

Freshman year of college

Sophomore year of college

Develop a transfer curriculum with your community college advisor

Your advisor knows how courses from your college will transfer to other institutions, a process called "articulation." Your advisor is likely quite familiar with iTransfer and the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI).

IAI is a statewide transfer credit agreement between more than 100 participating schools. IAI enables students to take an approved set of classes at community college instead of comparable lower-division general education requirements at their transfer institution.

To learn more about IAI, visit iTransfer.org.

Discuss your transfer plan with a transfer admissions counselor

Transfer counselors can tell you anything from if your

grades are good enough to get into a particular major to whether you'll have to live on campus.

Sophomore year of college

Apply to your transfer institution(s)

If you aren't sure whether or not you'll be accepted to your first-choice school, apply to more than one.

Send your college transcripts to your transfer college

You'll likely need to send your transcript when you apply and after every completed semester thereafter.

Determine where you will live when you transfer

If you're leaving home once you transfer, decide whether to live on campus or off, and start looking for a place.

Junior year of college

Get started on your new campus

If you're moving into a new place, move in at least a week before classes start. Find out if there are any transfer student orientation programs you should attend. Buy your textbooks as soon as possible. Don't let the social side of your new college experience interfere with attending classes!

Apply for graduation

Get a complete degree audit early in your junior year to make sure you are on track to graduate on time.

If you follow these steps, you'll be well on your way to earning a bachelor's degree in four years.

Learn more about the transfer process at iTransfer.org.

ongoing to-dos

Here are some activities to do throughout college.

- **Each fall/winter:** Learn about scholarship opportunities and apply for them. Most scholarship applications are due by December 1 for the following academic year. Check deadlines.

- **Each winter/spring:** Apply for financial aid before March 1 for the next academic year. Work with your parents to submit your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

- **Each semester:** Meet with your advisor to choose and register for classes. Your advisor will help you make sure you take the classes you need to transfer successfully.

from **community college** to **graduate school**

JUSTIN WIEGAND'S INDEPENDENT SPIRIT HELPED HIM SUCCEED AS A TRANSFER STUDENT

Justin Wiegand's big dreams didn't start at community college, but that's where they really started to take shape.

“I want to go to Sierra Leone to do children's services work, maybe start an orphanage. First, grad school, though. I'm going to the University of Illinois to study international labor policy and industrial relations,” Wiegand says.

After high school, Wiegand attended Heartland Community College in Normal and eventually transferred to Illinois State University. Now with a bachelor's degree in human resources, Wiegand says he is satisfied with the choices he has made.

He says community college was an important step for him, especially after injuries he sustained in an accident forced him to delay the start of his college career by a semester. He was able to catch up before he transferred to a four-year institution. The ability to complete lots of classes quickly was a main advantage of community college for Wiegand.

For Wiegand, the easier academic transition and proximity to his family in Gridley, Ill., made it possible for him to get his own place right away.

“Community college suited my lifestyle better,” he says. “I

didn't want to live in a dorm; I wanted to be in an apartment on my own.”

Wiegand got involved in Illinois State's campus community and found his niche. His activity in a campus church youth group helped him meet other students quickly. After his first year at Illinois State, he joined other student organizations and became a student ambassador in the Office of Admissions.

In addition to getting involved on campus, Wiegand recommends that students who want to transfer start the planning process with their community college advisor as soon as possible.

“Check with your counselor early and often to find out what you need to take and how your courses will transfer,” he says.

Once Wiegand graduated from Heartland, he found that he lacked a course needed to get into his major at Illinois State. He was able to take a summer class and proceed as planned—but it's a reminder to double check that your credits transfer.

Wiegand's independent nature and unusual circumstances at the time he started college made community college the right choice for him. He is well-prepared as he embarks on his new adventures in graduate school and beyond.



Illinois State student Justin Wiegand got his start at a community college



Paying for college isn't easy. That's why the **Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC)** helps Illinois students by awarding an estimated \$400 million in scholarships and grants to nearly 185,000 qualified students each year, and also provides an additional \$740 million through student loan programs.

Check out **collegezone.com** to find out if ISAC programs can help you. While you're there, browse online college admission applications, view campus tours, or create a personalized portfolio.

Learn more about ISAC at **collegezone.com** or by calling 1-800-899-ISAC.

MAKING COLLEGE ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE FOR ALL ILLINOIS STUDENTS

HAVE MILITARY EXPERIENCE?
YOU'RE WELL PREPARED FOR THE
CHALLENGE OF COLLEGE



from military to college

By Sean-Michael Green



When you enlisted in the U.S. Armed Forces, you probably had the goal of a college degree in the back of your mind. And if you're reading this, it's time to get started on that goal!

Choosing a college

Before you commit to the expense and time of college, ask yourself what you want to do with your degree.

If your answer is, "I want to get a better job," you might investigate where graduates of your college find work. If your answer is, "I want to go to Hollywood and make it as an actor," ask how many alumni are in and around Los Angeles.

The best way to investigate a college or university is to explore their Web site and materials, visit the campus, and most importantly, ask questions.

Of course, you have some experience with being recruited. Think ahead and do your research.

Sending transcripts

Most college applications require some of the same pieces: transcripts from high school and any previous colleges, letters of recommendation, standardized test scores, and an essay or personal statement.

In addition to your academic records from any previous college and your high school, you have a third type of transcript that might be valuable. Your transcript—called SMART, AARTS or CCAF depending on the branch in which you served—contains academic evaluations of your military training. Your college may or may not award you college credit based on these records, but you should include them in your application and discuss them with a transfer counselor.

Standardized tests

Not all schools require standardized tests—and some schools have specific exceptions for service members and veterans. The Defense Activity for Nontraditional Education Support (DANTES) offers the two major tests, the SAT and the ACT, to military personnel on military posts for free.

Writing the essay

You'll need to create a statement that showcases your writing and tells admissions why you want to attend. Be positive, authentic, and avoid acronyms and military speak.

Paying for college

If you have been on active duty for more than 90 days since Sept. 11, 2001, you may qualify for the Post 9/11 GI Bill. The benefit is paid out based on the amount of time served since 9/11.

Under the new Post 9/11 GI Bill, your tuition is paid directly to your college instead of to you. If you attend an on-campus program, you could qualify for a living stipend worth up to \$2,700 a month. And students can also receive up to \$1,000 a year to cover books and fees. New GI Bill benefits will be available to veterans for up to 15 years after leaving the military.

Veterans also have a few other benefits. In some states, veterans automatically qualify for grants for college. Similarly, there are some scholarships that are either open only to veterans or that favor veterans.

Succeeding in college

Of course, college requires plenty of work. You will need to identify opportunities and seize them. You will need to face difficult circumstances.

And that is where you may find the biggest advantage: You are accustomed to difficult circumstances. For many freshmen, college is the challenge of a lifetime. For veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces, it is simply another challenge.



veterans

what to do after you've been admitted

HERE'S WHAT VETERANS CAN DO
TO ENSURE A SMOOTH TRANSFER

By Judy Curtis, with Brian Jackson

The transition to a college or university after military service can be tough. Use this checklist to help you find the resources for a successful academic career.

Contact the Office of Admissions

Confirm the office has received all the documents necessary to complete your application, such as test scores, transcripts, etc. Send these materials as soon as possible so you can register at your earliest opportunity. Your college or university's Office of Admissions can guide you to other campus resources to help you plan your academic future.

Ask about academic advising and required courses for your major, housing and meal plan options, opportunities for campus involvement and any special services for veterans.

Contact your academic advisor as soon as possible

They can discuss the Illinois Articulation Initiative and program requirements with you and help you plan your course schedule and registration.

Contact your institution's Office of Veterans Services

The office helps veterans, National Guard members, reservists and eligible dependents on all matters relating to federal and state educational benefits and payments and other veteran-related concerns.

If your institution does not have an Office of Veterans Services, ask your advisor or admissions counselor which office or personnel on campus are familiar with the services the school offers veterans.

As a transfer student, you've most likely received Montgomery GI Bill benefits at your previous institution. If not, you must apply for the GI Bill. Find an application and general information regarding benefits on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Web site (gibill.va.gov).

As an Illinois veteran, you may also be eligible for the Illinois Veterans Grant or Illinois National Guard Grant administered by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC). These programs pay tuition and certain fees. If you have received the grant at your previous institution, provide proof of eligibility to the Financial Aid Office as soon as possible. If you have not received the grant, you must apply. Applications are available at collegezone.com.

Become involved with other veterans on campus

Many institutions and communities across the state offer opportunities for veterans to gather and serve their campuses and communities. Ask your advisor or admissions counselor about these service organizations on your campus.

Be mindful of your own goals and personal limitations

Talk with your advisor or admissions counselor about your reasons for returning to college. Pay careful attention to any personal reasons for choosing military service, such as not enjoying your educational experiences or seeking other alternatives to education. If you feel concerned about your academic skills as you enter your college career, ask about tutoring and academic assistance opportunities at your institution. Don't be afraid to seek out a professor's help if you need assistance in a particular course. Ask for help before any difficulty in coursework progresses to an unhealthy point.

Enjoy your college or university experiences!

It is important to enjoy the opportunities that your educational experience affords you. Get involved in the campus community. Keep in mind that balancing your time to get the most out of your education can be tough after an extended break. Ask your advisor or admissions counselor about services on campus that can help you manage your time and get the most out of both studying and socializing.

Judy Curtis is Coordinator of Veterans Services for Illinois State University. **Brian Jackson** is an Academic Advisor at Illinois State University.



Look for this logo, displayed on all community college Web sites throughout Illinois, to be linked directly to college contacts, specific services and community resources for veterans!

wanted: more time

COLLEGE STUDENTS CAN
VOUCH FOR THE IMPORTANCE
OF MANAGING TIME

2. Start your work early

Review the syllabus for each class as soon as possible. Create a schedule each week that includes what reading and homework you must complete.

Create your school schedule one to two months in advance. Having a schedule created this far in advance allows you to schedule family, fun and personal activities around your school schedule, and it helps you block off enough time for all school-related tasks.

3. Start small


Break down big projects into smaller tasks. Many times, just the thought of having to compose a 30-page paper or create a business plan for a class seems overwhelming.

This feeling can lead to undue stress and anxiety. If the project is broken down into smaller segments, and you schedule time throughout the term for each smaller piece, the project will not seem so overwhelming.

4. Give yourself enough time

Allow extra time for each assignment. If it generally takes one hour to write a two-page paper, allow an hour and a half. This will help eliminate the feeling of pressure you often experience when working on deadline.

Strive to minimize your stress and anxiety. It is very easy to start to feel overwhelmed, so practice good time management to help you stay focused and on track.



For many students, one of the most difficult skills to learn is how to manage time effectively.

Try these tips to minimize the stress of going back to school.

1. Make a space just for you

Create a workspace that is both quiet and private. This is by far one of the most important aspects of personal time management.

It is extremely difficult to create and maintain an effective schedule if you do not have a place of your own to read and do schoolwork. Also make sure that your roommate, family or friends know that when you are doing schoolwork, you are not to be disturbed. Having a private place to work will not be effective if you encounter frequent interruptions. Each two-minute interruption can add 10 to 20 minutes onto the amount of time you've slotted for an assignment.

Take your next step with confidence.

You want to make the smoothest transition possible to a university or college. iTransfer can help you find your path to a successful transfer in Illinois. We'll help you make sure you're headed in the right direction.



iTransfer coordinates the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI), a statewide transfer agreement that is transferable among more than 100 participating colleges or universities in Illinois. IAI is ideal for students who know they will transfer, but aren't sure which college or university they will choose.

Visit www.iTransfer.org to learn more.



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Whether you want to learn a new trade or earn an associate's or bachelor's degree or beyond, check out Illinois schools first.

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www.ibhe.state.il.us.

You'll see a wide range of educational opportunities right here in your own backyard.



Explore your in-state transfer options at iTransfer.org.



 College or University