

**HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION ACT
INNOVATION GRANTS
FISCAL YEAR 2007 PROJECT AMENDMENTS**

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: This item recommends increased grant allocations for two fiscal year 2007 projects funded by the Higher Education Cooperation Act Program (HECA).

The fiscal year 2007 appropriation for the HECA program totals \$4.8 million. During a special Board meeting held September 13, 2006, the Board approved \$2.6 million in HECA grant funds for 15 Renewal and seven Innovation grant projects. On October 10, 2006, the Board approved approximately \$2.0 million in funding to support an additional 15 Innovation grant projects, leaving a balance of \$224,058. The Governor's Office of Management and Budget has requested that the Board hold an amount equal to 2 percent of aggregated grant appropriations in reserve from selected grant programs. The reserve amount for the HECA program will be \$129,746, leaving \$94,312 currently unallocated.

Staff recommends that the remaining funds be used to address additional needs of the Course Applicability System (CAS) and the Shared Enrollment and Graduation Database (SEG). Both projects were approved at the September 13, 2006 Board meeting, and both projects were recommended for permanent funding in the Board's fiscal year 2008 budget recommendations and were included in the Governor's fiscal year 2008 budget.

Staff recommends that the grant made to CAS be increased from \$400,600 to \$430,600. The additional \$30,000 will be used to purchase the CAS license to cover inclusion of the Illinois Articulation Initiative's General Education Core Curriculum. Staff recommends that the grant made to SEG be increased from \$143,126 to \$207,438. The additional \$64,312 will fund several studies needed to pilot the use of new data elements or to assist with the development of additional data elements.

Action Requested: That the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) approve amended grant amounts for the fiscal year 2007 Higher Education Cooperation Act projects titled "Illinois Course Applicability System: Ensuring Academic Success" and "Expansion of Illinois Shared Enrollment and Graduation Database."

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION ACT
INNOVATION GRANTS
FISCAL YEAR 2007 PROJECT AMENDMENTS**

Recommended Innovation Grant Amendments

The Governor and General Assembly appropriated \$4.8 million for the fiscal year 2007 HECA Grant Program. During a special Board meeting held September 13, 2006, the Board approved \$2.6 million in HECA grant funds for 15 Renewal and seven Innovation grant projects. On October 10, 2006, the Board approved approximately \$2.0 million in funding to support an additional 15 Innovation grant projects, leaving a balance of \$224,058. The Governor's Office of Management and Budget has requested that the Board hold an amount equal to 2 percent of aggregated grant appropriations in reserve from selected grant programs. The reserve amount for the HECA program will be \$129,746, leaving \$94,312 currently unallocated.

Staff recommends that the remaining funds be used to address additional needs of the Course Applicability System (CAS) and the Shared Enrollment and Graduation Database (SEG). Both projects were approved at the September 13, 2006 Board meeting, and both projects were recommended for permanent funding in the Board's fiscal year 2008 budget recommendations. Funding for CAS and SEG is included in the Governor's fiscal year 2008 budget.

CAS is a web-based information access tool that communicates up-to-date information about how coursework from one institution will apply toward a degree at another institution. The Board approved \$400,600 for CAS from the fiscal year 2007 HECA appropriation at its September 13, 2006 meeting. Staff recommends that the fiscal year 2007 Innovation Grant made to CAS be increased from \$400,600 to \$430,600. The additional \$30,000 will be used to purchase the CAS license to cover inclusion of the Illinois Articulation Initiative's General Education Core Curriculum (GECC). This license expansion will allow students, advisors, parents, institutional administrators and others to run CAS Planning Guides—unofficial degree audits—that instantly evaluate the courses entered into users' accounts against IAI GECC requirements.

SEG is a student unit record system that collects enrollment, graduation, preparation, and demographic data at the individual student level. Currently, all public universities and community colleges, along with DePaul University and Bradley University, submit information to the SEG database, which is housed at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. As a result of House Resolution 1101 and Senate Resolution 701, both adopted by the Illinois General Assembly in 2006, a committee was formed in May 2006 to direct the addition of new data elements, expand institutional participation, develop research projects, and work toward connecting SEG with other statewide data systems.

The SEG committee organized itself into subcommittees to address broad data and policy categories such as financial aid, student disabilities, and transfer of credit. Several subcommittees reported that additional research was necessary to determine which potential data elements would yield the greatest benefit for the least cost. To gather the additional information, the SEG committee concluded that several research projects should be carried out that address student transfer, student disabilities, and distance education. The IBHE staff recommends that the grant made to SEG be increased from \$143,126 to \$207,438. The additional \$64,312 will fund several studies needed to pilot the use of new data elements, assist with the development of additional data elements, and answer important policy questions.

Table 1 presents a summary of the fiscal year 2007 HECA grant appropriation; allocations approved on September 13, 2006 and October 10, 2006; required grant reserves; and funding increases recommended for CAS and SEG. Appendix A presents a project synopsis for each of the grant projects recommended for funding in this item.

The staff recommends adoption of the following resolution:

The Board of Higher Education hereby approves amended HECA grant awards totaling \$94,312 for the projects “Illinois Course Applicability System: Ensuring Academic Success” and “Expansion of Illinois Shared Enrollment and Graduation Database.” Payment of grants is subject to the receipt of all required documents, and the Board authorizes the Executive Director to withhold payment or adjust a grant allocation, if necessary, to conform with existing statute, rules, or budgetary reserves.

TABLE 1
HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION ACT (HECA)
FISCAL YEAR 2007
RECOMMENDED GRANT AMENDMENTS

| | |
|--|----------------------------|
| Fiscal Year 2007 HECA Appropriation | \$ 4,787,300 |
| Approved HECA/Innovation Grants | |
| Innovation Grants Approved September 13, 2006 | 1,601,676 |
| HECA Renewal Grants Approved September 13, 2006 | 973,966 |
| Innovation Grants Approved October 10, 2006 | 1,987,600 |
| Reserve Amount | <u>129,746</u> |
| Subtotal Grant Awards and Reserves | \$ 4,692,988 |
| Recommended Grant Amendments | |
| U of I - University Administration: Illinois Course Applicability System: Ensuring the Academic Success License Expansion for General Education Core Curriculum | 30,000 |
| SIU - Carbondale: Expansion of Illinois Shared Enrollment and Graduation Database Research Studies | 64,312 |
| Student Transfer: Transcript Study | |
| Student Transfer: Transfer Student Focus Groups | |
| Disability Study | |
| Distance Learning Study | <u> </u> |
| Subtotal Recommended Amendments | \$ 94,312 |
| Total Recommended Fiscal Year 2007 Grants and Reserves | <u><u>\$ 4,787,300</u></u> |

APPENDIX A

ILLINOIS BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION ACT
FISCAL YEAR 2007
SYNOPSIS OF RECOMMENDED PROJECT
AMENDMENTS**

June 5, 2007

Institution: Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Project Title: Expansion of the Illinois Shared Enrollment and Graduation Database

Project Director: Mr. Larry Schilling
Director of Institutional Research and Studies
(618) 536-2384; lschillin@siu.edu

Recommended Amendment: \$64,312

Project Total: \$207,438

Cooperating Institution(s): Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign, Illinois State University, and the Illinois Community College Board

Project Synopsis: The Shared Enrollment and Graduation Database (SEG) was initially developed in 1991 to provide a data source for monitoring student progress, retention, transfer, and degree completion of Illinois postsecondary education students. Currently all public universities, all community colleges, and two private institutions participate in the project. The SEG project received HECA funding in fiscal year 2007 to pursue the following objectives:

- Expand participation among all degree granting post-secondary institutions in Illinois.
- Expand the data element collection to include the additional variables as defined by the Shared Enrollment and Graduation Consortium.
- Collect, maintain and secure the shared enrollment and graduation data submitted from the participating institutions.
- Develop reports and analyses of the collected data in a “user friendly,” yet secure, environment to provide a value-added product for distribution to the participating institutions.
- Support and encourage research projects that will add to the body of knowledge concerning the students who enroll in Illinois higher education institutions.

The recommended amendment to the fiscal year 2007 grant award addresses several of the grant objectives, particularly the last. SIU Carbondale, the fiscal agent for the SEG HECA grant, will contract with consultants and campus-based researchers to carry out the following four projects under the direction of SEG leadership and the various SEG subcommittees.

1. Transcript Study. Analysis at the transcript level is necessary in investigating many areas of student transfer. For example, for a particular student, how much transfer credit is counted in the major, how much transfer credit is counted as an elective, how much credit did not transfer, and, in the latter case, what are the reasons for non-transferability – e.g., how often are courses not accepted because of low grades or the accreditation of the sending institution? A similar question, in comparison to the number of hours required in a major, is how many and what type – major, general education, electives – of hours do native students usually accumulate? How many and what type of hours do transfer students earn? Additional important questions include the role of dual credit -- usually earned at a community college – and AP credit in transfer. Analysis of student transcripts is the most advantageous method of addressing these areas. Through SEG leadership and the SEG transfer subcommittee, the research question(s) will be reviewed and refined; the sending and receiving institutions approved; and the study design finalized. The

design assumes cooperation of four universities and one community college. No human subject review approval is necessary, as student identifiers can be removed from the transcripts.

2. Transfer Student Focus Groups. A review of transcripts will yield significant information on course-taking patterns and student academic success; however, students' stories reveal the essential aspects of college and university services and student choice that influence success. Researchers will conduct five focus groups around the state to gather information on student evaluations of the transfer process, the transfer experience, and the information needed to transfer. A researcher will coordinate this project and work with the SEG subcommittee on transfer, composed of seven members of higher education institutional research staff. As necessary, the researcher will involve other transfer specialists in the deliberations. The researcher will also meet with SEG leadership to triangulate the focus group questions and to discuss the purpose behind the research desired by academic leadership for this project. Significant effort will be required to secure human subject review approval at each institution and to work with the institutional research staff at the institutions to identify and contact students, as well as to conduct the focus groups. Two members of the SEG committee will assist the research at each of the focus group meetings to help organize, take notes, and direct the conversations.

3. Disabilities. Anticipating that the SEG system will soon include unit record data carrying a student's disability, statewide research on student success may soon be able to address a significant group of underrepresented students -- students with disabilities. However, these data are necessarily very sensitive and cannot be disseminated or made identifiable. With general data on students with disabilities tied to academic performance, it is possible now not only to count the students with disabilities who are enrolled and graduated in Illinois, but also to investigate policies and decisions that best help disabled students succeed. Using a blind database that contains performance and disability data but no student identifiers, researchers will be able to address important questions on students with disabilities. The initial study will analyze baccalaureate graduation and time-to-degree rates of students with disability/no disability, disability type, and academic credentials. The study will include transfer as one of the routes to the baccalaureate degree. Researchers will work with the SEG subcommittee on disability (institutional researchers), the IBHE Disability Advisory Committee (disability services staff), and SEG leadership (academic leadership) to articulate the specific research questions.

4. Distance Learning. Given the rapid changes taking place in distance teaching/learning, research that complements and expands data that are currently collected is needed. Institutional data regarding the scope of how students are using distance learning in Illinois as part of their degree program, whether they are enrolled in completely online programs, or supplementing their face-to-face instruction, would be useful at a statewide level when planning for facility needs, assessing student progress, and determining success of students studying predominantly at a distance. In order to evaluate the course-taking patterns of students, researchers will interview students individually, and those interviews will be matched with the respective students' transcript(s). Typically, a transcript will not indicate that a course was taken through distance education, but a student's memory will be validated as best possible. Another benefit of an interview is that by talking with the students the researcher can gather valuable information regarding the experiences of taking courses in online, blended, and face-to-face formats. Human subject review approval will be needed at each institution covered in the project.

Institution: University of Illinois

Project Title: Course Applicability System

Project Director: Dr. Marilyn Marshall, Director
University Academic Programs and Services
(217) 333-3079 mmmurphy@uiuc.edu

Recommended Amendment: \$30,000

Project Total: \$430,600

Cooperating Institution(s): Northern Illinois University and Parkland College

Project Synopsis: The Illinois Course Applicability System Project team seeks funds to purchase the CAS license to cover the Illinois Articulation Initiative's (IAI) General Education Core Curriculum (GECC). With this license expansion, students, advisors, parents, institutional administrators, and others will be able to run CAS Planning Guides—unofficial degree audits—that will instantly evaluate the courses entered into users' accounts against IAI GECC requirements. The total amount requested is \$30,000, for a revised total grant amount of \$430,600 for fiscal year 2007.

The IAI and CAS have a history of working toward similar state goals from different perspectives. The IAI has been instrumental in the development of the GECC package by bringing together faculty from across sectors to develop course transferability agreements considered a national model. CAS has worked to make information about agreements—those that are part of IAI as well as other institution-to-institution agreements—and their implications clear to students, thus allowing the best college planning possible to take place. The two programs have increasingly worked together to maximize the realization of shared goals and make the best use of the state funding that supports both projects.

CAS is currently available for use at 17 Illinois institutions, with seven completely implemented at this time. Because IAI is a more mature program and is widely accepted, this CAS-IAI collaboration will likely be a factor in improved rates of CAS adoption. Consistent feedback received by CAS indicates that community college and senior institution advisors and administrators see the potential in CAS, but that some are reluctant to fully embrace the system until more institutions implement major CAS functions. CAS will not reach its full potential until institutional staff, particularly community college advisors, can turn to it for information about a wide range of programs. If advisors were able to turn to CAS for evaluations of students' progress toward the GECC, this would add to the "critical mass" that CAS is working to build to inspire broader use and, thus, more implementation and adoption momentum.

Last May, the IBHE and ICCB asked their staffs to cooperate to implement several revisions to the Illinois Articulation Initiative. Among the suggested revisions was a new policy requiring that senior institutions participating in IAI allow a student with a transfer-oriented, non-compact Associate's degree (AAT, AFA, AES) or a student with 30 hours of transfer credit accepted by the senior institution the option of either completing the IAI GECC post-transfer or of completing the senior institution's native general education package. The rationale was that students who had demonstrated a considerable commitment to preparing for transfer should not be penalized for being a few courses short of a complete GECC and be forced to start from scratch on the Gen Ed requirements.

Although institutional representatives indicated virtually universal agreement that this policy would benefit students, they expressed considerable concern that it would overburden the resources of the receiving institution, since it would need to do an audit of the transcripts to see what was missing from the GECC as well as the native General Education package.

A degree audit specialist at a leading CAS-implemented institution suggested the use of CAS as a solution. Illinois will purchase a CAS license for the IAI GECC institution much the way the state has purchased CAS licenses for institutions in the past. After this is in place with Miami University's Degree Audit Reporting System (the authors of CAS), the CAS Planning Guide can be used as a convenient and widely available tool for institutions to do quick, informal evaluations of student progress toward the IAI GECC, thereby taking that burden off of the resources of the institution. Additionally, students will be able to use the CAS GECC Planning Guide to plan their completion of the IAI.