

State of Illinois

College and Career Interest Task Force Report



Submitted
January 2019

COLLEGE AND CAREER INTEREST TASK FORCE MEMBERS

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The College and Career Interest Task Force

The College and Career Interest Task Force was created to determine the process by which Illinois public high school student college or career interest data may be collected and shared amongst public institutions of higher education. The legislation that established the College and Career Interest Task Force was formally enacted on August 21, 2018.¹ As stated in the law, the College and Career Interest Task Force formally dissolves upon submission of this report to the General Assembly.

After the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) solicited members to represent the various constituency groups outlined in Public Act 100-1007 (110 ILCS 205/9.37) from the other state education agencies and the public universities, Task Force members were formally appointed. The College and Career Interest Task Force met a total five times. The Task Force took no formal action during the first three meetings, as the purpose of those meetings was primarily to provide background information to Task Force members and for discussion purposes. However, several themes emerged from the discussion that took place during those first few meetings. In the fourth meeting, the Task Force members engaged in lengthy discussions and voted on which themes to develop into recommendations; and at the fifth and final meeting, the Task Force members voted on which recommendations were to be included in the final report, in addition to the general nature of each recommendation.

The work of the College and Career Interest Task Force is summarized [on a webpage developed and maintained by IBHE](#).

The College and Career Interest Task Force established the following statement, recommendations, and promising potential initiative:

Strict Adherence to All Pertinent State and Federal Student Privacy and Data Security Laws

The College and Career Interest Task Force states that any sharing of college and career interest information of high school students with public colleges would have to be in full adherence to all pertinent state and federal student privacy protection and data security laws. This holds true whether the college and career interest information being considered for provision to the public colleges involves information that is currently collected, or requires a new collection or survey.

¹ <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/fulltext.asp?DocName=011002050K9.37>

Task Force members specifically discussed and/or referenced the following state and federal student privacy laws in the context of the charge of the Task Force:

- ✓ The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA);
- ✓ The Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) Act;
- ✓ The Illinois Student Online Personal Protection Act (SOPPA);
- ✓ The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA);
- ✓ The Illinois School Student Records Act (ISSRA);
- ✓ Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA); and
- ✓ The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

In addition, representatives from the state education agencies, as well as representatives from the public universities referenced how student privacy and data security were considered throughout their local/internal data governance structures and their respective mechanisms for sharing and reporting student data.

Illinois College Info Portal

The Task Force recommends that, subject to appropriation, pertinent parties in the state of Illinois should work together to develop the Illinois College Info Portal. Responsibility and funding for development, housing, and maintenance of the portal would need to be determined.

The state of Illinois should create a simple, statewide, online student-parent interface (the “Illinois College Info Portal”) that allows registered users to receive information on Illinois community colleges and universities with an emphasis on the most cost efficient means of sharing information. The interface would incorporate a waiver that meets FERPA requirements so that a student’s information can be provided to Illinois institutions primarily for the purposes of recruitment, marketing, and program development. It is envisioned that through these processes, the colleges and universities would provide interested parties information on available programs and financial aid. The system would be automated so that college and career interest information could be sent to a primary data administrator at each college at numerous times throughout the year. The real-time provision of information to the colleges should be explored. In addition, this system would:

- ✓ Enable the student or parent to sign up to receive information for any institution, whole sectors of institutions, or only those offering programs relating to the student’s academic major/career interest area;
- ✓ Allow a menu of choices: the student or parent could select all information from an institution, information only relating to financial aid, or information only relating to certain degree programs;
- ✓ Allow the student or parent to decide how they want to receive the information with an emphasis on the most cost efficient means of sharing information: by email, postal mail when deemed appropriate by the college, text message, any method; and
- ✓ Ensuring streamlined information (unduplicated) from other sources that colleges and universities utilize, so that such efforts are not redundant.

The Illinois College Info Portal should be heavily promoted by all pertinent state agencies including the Secretary of State when possible (see recommendation below). School districts and counselors would be encouraged to integrate the portal into relevant experiences as part of the Illinois Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) framework.²

The Illinois College Info Portal should tie to existing student-facing websites, such as the Illinois Student Assistance Commission's (ISAC) Student Portal, the Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) Student Voices, and the Illinois Department of Employment Security's (IDES) Career Information System.

Establishing and Formalizing a Relationship with the Illinois Secretary of State

The Task Force recommends that the state education agencies (in coordination with the various constituencies they represent), and those staffing the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) determine the feasibility of building a more formal relationship with the Illinois Secretary of State for two purposes:

- 1) To obtain directory information, including contact information, from the Secretary of State for the purposes of integrating that information within the Illinois Longitudinal Data System, as current law allows. Other states have integrated driver license information into their respective longitudinal data systems – to date the state of Illinois has not. This information could be used to target recruitment and marketing efforts on two key groups of potential college completers:
 - a. Traditionally underserved students that have been accepted to college but have not yet enrolled; and
 - b. Adult learners that have some college experience but no postsecondary degree or credential.

The rationale for this is that current educational attainment goals that have been developed while considering workforce need will not be met if the focus is solely on the current high school student population as they potentially transition to college.

- 2) The Secretary of State could provide general information to its clientele on the various postsecondary opportunities within Illinois. This could include the Secretary of State promoting the Illinois College Info Portal (see previous recommendation). The Task Force felt providing information through the Secretary of State's services could help in establishing additional contexts in which individuals are provided with information on postsecondary opportunities in Illinois. The Task Force recognizes that the potential disruption to the Secretary of State's current business practices would have to be determined.

² <https://www.isac.org/pace/documents/pace-framework.pdf?v3>

Expanding the Use of the Illinois State Scholar Database

The College and Career Interest Task Force recommends that the state education agencies and public colleges, under the coordination of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) pilot a program that would expand the use of the Illinois State Scholar Database maintained by ISAC. Responsibility and funding for development, housing, and maintenance of the portal would need to be determined.

ISAC currently collects information from nearly all Illinois public high schools (in addition to many Illinois private high schools) to determine which students have earned the Illinois State Scholar distinction.

The state scholar designation provides honorary recognition with no monetary award. Approximately the top ten percent of all graduates from approved high schools are recognized as Illinois State Scholars each year.

Key elements that ISAC uses for this process include:

- ✓ ACT/SAT Test Score of a test taken between August 1 and June 30 (by the end of the third semester before high school graduation*);
- ✓ High School Grade Point Average at the end of the third semester before high school graduation* (indicated if weighted or non-weighted); and
- ✓ Class rank at the end of the third semester before high school graduation* (If no class rank is provided by the high school, ISAC develops a rank for State Scholar Program purposes).

**Typically the end of the junior year.*

The expanded use of this data through a pilot program would involve the ‘matching’ of individuals within the Illinois State Scholars database to the public colleges with general admissions criteria (provided by the public colleges) that the given students have met. The students would then be provided with information on all public colleges to which they could potentially gain general admittance as they are notified of their Illinois State Scholar recognition. The pertinent institutions would all also be notified so that more detailed information on the institution, their programs, actual application process, and potential financial aid opportunities could be provided to the students/scholars. Students would still be required to formally apply to any institution.

The Task Force felt that utilizing existing processes and resources could be advantageous and also recognizes that although most high schools only submit information on the top 50% of their respective students for this specific process, the pilot could eventually be expanded to include all high school students and additional sectors (i.e., private colleges in Illinois). Members of the Task Force suggested that there would be a benefit of exposing additional students to more colleges and universities that they potentially do not know much about or have not previously considered. In addition, having the information emanate from a neutral third party (ISAC) to allow students to learn more about where they are admissible would be beneficial. The pilot could also help determine what to do with test optional postsecondary institutions, high schools that no longer rank their graduating class, and universities with a wide variation in their admissions criteria by academic program.

Illinois State Scholar Scholarship for Pell Eligible Students

The College and Career Interest Task Force recommends that pertinent education agencies and the Illinois General Assembly determine the feasibility of establishing a modest scholarship for Illinois State Scholars from low-income families. This would be in addition to the Monetary Award Program (MAP) and subject to appropriation.

The intent behind this proposed scholarship is to provide additional financial support to high achieving students who emanate from the lowest family income quintiles. As shown in *Table 1*, over the past two years, slightly less than one out of every ten of the Illinois State Scholars who filed a FAFSA and attended an Illinois school are Pell eligible. More importantly, we can see that for the high school graduating class of 2017, only 1,677 students attended an Illinois MAP-approved school and received a MAP Grant out of the 2,844 State Scholars who were Pell eligible. This indicates that almost 1,200 of Illinois' highest academically achieving students from low-income families either did not attend college in the state of Illinois or may not have even enrolled in postsecondary education at all.

Table 1

High School Graduation Year	FAFSA Year	Scholar Count	Pell Eligible	MAP Recipient & Pell Eligible	% of all Scholars that are both a MAP Recipient & Pell Eligible
2017	2018	19,351	2,844	1,677	9%
2016	2017	18,953	2,717	1,716	9%

This new scholarship would provide financial assistance to any student who earns the designation of Illinois State Scholar (roughly the top 10% of the Illinois high school graduating class), is determined eligible for the Pell Grant, and enrolls in an Illinois MAP approved school (inclusive of both public and private colleges and universities).

In order to be eligible the student must:

- ✓ Meet all requirements and be designated as Illinois State Scholar by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission³;
- ✓ File a FAFSA and be determined eligible for Pell; and
- ✓ Enroll in a MAP-approved postsecondary institution within the following academic year after high school graduation.

Additional parameters for the scholarship include:

- ✓ The scholarship would be limited to one year at first and the possibility of extending it additional years (e.g., sophomore, junior, senior) would be studied;
- ✓ The scholarship can be used for anything listed in the school's cost of attendance;

³ The criteria could be found at <https://www.isac.org/isac-gift-assistance-programs/state-scholar-program/selection-process.html>.

- ✓ Regarding administration of the scholarship at institutions, the scholarship can only be used to offset student loans and work study, and a college cannot reduce any other scholarships because of this award; and
- ✓ The scholarship amount shall not exceed \$2,500 a year per student.

The list of state scholars could also be shared with colleges and universities in the state, which would enable the schools to reach out to these students and help the students navigate the process of successfully transitioning from high school to college. This is how this particular recommendation is within the scope of the Task Force.

Coordination and Curation of Existing College and Career Interest Information

The Task Force recommends that existing platforms and systems that collect and/or provide college and career interest information should be used when possible. In other words, when possible the state education agencies should use existing structures, both technical and governance, to accomplish the recommendations.

Further, when agencies are entering into new arrangements with vendors that provide information on colleges or collect information on college and/or career interests, the state should establish a system to determine if something similar is already being used in the state. The Task Force recommends that any agency involved in the provision, or the collection of college and career interest information work in concert to ensure these efforts are non-duplicative and/or economies of scale or efficiencies can be established.

Labor Market and Demand Information

The College and Career Interest Task Force recommends that the state's education and workforce agencies should collaborate to align and curate available information on labor markets at the state and sub-state levels. This should be done in an effort to provide more and better labor market information to the state, all postsecondary institutions, as well as prospective students and their families. The information should be inclusive of moderate- to long-term labor market projections (such as what is produced by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Illinois Department of Employment Security), and real-time labor market information (as produced by private firms such as Emsi and Burning Glass). There is a need to establish a consistent approach in developing supply and demand reports, which could allow for more proactive and systemic responses to the needs of the local, regional, and state workforce. The information should also be adaptable so that public universities with a more prominent statewide mission could be provided with state-level information, without having to aggregate the regional information to the state-level.

The importance of this to the colleges would be to allow the postsecondary institutions to better tailor their array of academic and workforce program offerings with state and regional workforce demand.

Data Sharing Arrangements

The charge of the Task Force was specific to determining the feasibility of sharing the college and career interest information of high schools students with the public colleges. The potential data sharing arrangements as defined in the scope of the Task Force could easily be described as one-way, with the information on high school students flowing to the public colleges. The Task Force members recognized the importance of that charge but collectively felt that they should also recommend a two-way flow, or mutually beneficial exchange, of information. In other words, as high schools, or ISBE, are being asked to share data or have the information for students under their purview shared, it would only make sense for the college and universities to be agreeable to sharing information that they collect (or is collected on their behalf by IBHE and the Illinois Community College Board) with the high schools.

As previously stated in the report, data should only be collected and shared in ways that protect students' personally identifiable information and adheres to all pertinent state and federal laws. Data sharing should maintain its current governance and technical structures.

Objectives of data sharing:

- ✓ Providing actionable information on:
 - ✓ Remedial course participation and subsequent performance in related gateway courses (i.e., tracking remedial math and then performance in college algebra); and
 - ✓ Time to completion of degree;
- ✓ Understand the alignment of high school career interests and course participation patterns to postsecondary course participation, major and degree completion, as well as success in workforce readiness programs.
- ✓ Conduct follow-up research and develop alumni connections to career mentoring, as well as academic support services.
- ✓ Build stronger two way partnerships between K-12 and higher education that results in more students seeking higher education in Illinois.

This too would be subject to continued appropriation for the Illinois Longitudinal Data System and other available related resources.

Any new information shared should be aligned with existing tools and systems, such as the Common Demographic Dataset Administrator, the Illinois Report Card, ISBE's Ed360, IBHE's Higher Education Information System (IHEIS), and the upcoming Illinois Postsecondary Profiles site. The Task Force recommends utilizing existing systems when possible and/or alignment with such systems and structures to ensure the information is exchanged and presented in the most efficient and safest possible ways.

Funding for Education

The Task Force recommends stable and predictable funding for education, including increased support for counseling services in an effort to bring the state's counselor-to-student ratio to a more acceptable level.

As the Task Force discussed enrollment trends of Illinois residents at in-state and out-of-state colleges and universities, members returned to the topic of funding for education multiple times. On the higher education level, the lack of predictable funding for higher education has created issues for the public colleges. Past budgets continually reduced the state support for Illinois colleges and universities, creating an environment in which institutions of higher education have had to raise tuition to cover the declining state funding support.⁴ The budget crisis had a negative impact on state universities and the impact lingers. Members of the Task Force also discussed the historic issues the state of Illinois has had with the net-migration of Illinois residents to out-of-state institutions⁵ and the often perceived and sometimes real differences in financial aid packages that out-of-state institutions offer to Illinois residents.⁶

Funding in the K-12 sector was also a concern, particularly as it relates to adequate access to schools counselors. The American School Counselor Association recommends a ratio of school counselors to students at 1:250, and the Evidence-Based Model for funding Illinois elementary and secondary schools supports this research-based ratio for high schools. Illinois currently has a ratio of 1:678. The Task Force recognizes that counseling services are a critical link to student career development.

Pathways Ambassadors as a Promising Potential Initiative

The College and Career Interest Task Force recognized that its charge was fairly specific and technical in nature, but as a whole, the members felt they should consider discussing some promising initiatives that were more program specific, as opposed to only having recommendations specific to the provision of data. Specifically, the group discussed regional approaches to build and strengthen college and career partnerships. Although, the Task Force did not formally recommend that the state encourage all Illinois community college and public universities to designate “Pathways Ambassadors”, it recognized this idea as a promising potential initiative. The idea would be to encourage the Illinois community colleges and public universities to designate “Pathways Ambassadors” to provide information on relevant college programs and offerings and serve as a conduit to support partnership development and regional college and career pathway systems. As was the case with the Task Force recommendations, cost, particularly to the public colleges, would have to be considered.

The focus of this work would be for the Pathways Ambassadors to serve as the conduit for information about specific pathways to groups such as school counselors and counseling support staff. It should be noted that the aim of this initiative would not be to supplant school counselors.

⁴ https://www.ibhe.org/assets/files/DataPoint_ShifttoTuitionandFeesfromStateAppropriations.pdf

⁵ <https://www.ibhe.org/assets/files/Outmigration2018Residence.pdf>

⁶ https://www.ibhe.org/DataPoints/WhatDoIllinoisResidentsPay_Update.htm