Joint Statement from the Illinois Board of Higher Education and Illinois Community College Board: Supporting the PARCC Assessments for Placement

Historically, the level of college and career readiness of first-time freshmen who matriculate directly upon graduation from high school to Illinois two- and four-year colleges and universities does not represent the knowledge and skills expected by colleges and universities for successful first-year students. This lack of alignment between what students are typically expected to know at the end of high school and the content skills necessary for success in entry-level, credit-bearing classes is illustrated by the high remediation rates at Illinois public two- and four-year colleges and universities in Illinois—with the remediation rate at Illinois two-year colleges nearly 50%.1

The Common Core State Standards were developed collaboratively by K-12 and college and university faculty as well as English/literacy and mathematics content experts to address this misalignment between K-12 preparation and expectations of colleges and universities. The Common Core State Standards represent a benchmark of what students should know and be able to do to be successful in entry-level, credit-bearing courses without the need to enroll first in remedial classes.

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) support fully the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in Illinois K-12 public schools as the necessary first step to ensure that all Illinois students receive the academic preparation required to succeed in credit-bearing college and university courses.

The PARCC assessments are aligned with the Common Core State Standards for each grade and are designed to provide students and teachers with accurate and consistent information about whether students are on track to meet these college and career readiness expectations. The PARCC assessments are being developed collaboratively by Illinois higher education and K-12 faculty and content experts to ensure both K-12 and two- and four-year colleges and universities agree that the new assessments accurately measure the knowledge and skills necessary for a student to be ready to and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing courses on Illinois college and university campuses.

IBHE and ICCB agree that it is in the best interest of students for Illinois to strive to establish an alignment between the academic expectations for entry-level, credit-bearing courses at our state institutions of higher education and the academic knowledge and skills our students receive in our K-12 public education system. The administration PARCC assessments in the K-12 public school systems in Illinois in the spring of 2015, assessments that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards, provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to achieve ensure the students entering Illinois colleges and universities directly out of high school will be successful in their college career. Increasing the probability of success in college and university courses will result in the following outcomes important to Illinois colleges and universities:

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1 Complete College America, 2006 state data
- Better information about the preparation of incoming students
- Better use of the 12th grade
- Improved preparation of incoming students
- Increased academic rigor in entry-level, credit-bearing courses
- Reduced remediation rates
- Increased degree attainment rates by shortening the time to degree
- Increased capacity – colleges can admit more students
- Better options for academic interventions to ensure students remain on-track to college readiness

The implementation of the PARCC assessments in the Illinois K-12 public school system will provide the following benefits to students and two- and four-year institutions of higher education:

1) Alignment of college readiness expectation across institutions of higher education in Illinois:
   a. The implementation of the PARCC assessments provides an opportunity for state public postsecondary institutions to align expectations of college readiness across postsecondary institutions in Illinois. PARCC will provide a consistent performance standard for what a student should know and be able to do to be ready for college credit bearing courses across all postsecondary state institutions.
   b. Students will know that they are receiving information about college readiness that has been agreed upon and standardized across the state and can rest assured that if they meet the college readiness benchmark, they will not have to take time consuming and stress inducing placement tests and/or pay for costly remedial courses.

2) Increase college access and K-12 partnerships:
   a. The PARCC assessments will be implemented in grades 3-8 and high school and will provide students, parents and teachers with clear indicators of whether students are on track for college throughout their K-12 academic career.
   b. The PARCC high school assessments will provide a significant opportunity for institutions of higher education in Illinois to provide remedial supports to students while students are still in high school and expand partnerships with K-12 districts to provide these supports.
   c. The PARCC high school assessments will also assist counselors in identifying students who might benefit from dual enrollment and early college programs, increasing enrollment in these programs and increasing early college access.

3) Decreasing remediation:
   a. The PARCC assessments are intended to provide differentiated data that may be used as a more sensitive tool for evaluating college readiness. The assessments are intended to exempt students who achieve a College Readiness Determination in high school from taking placement tests or remedial courses at IHE.
   b. The PARCC assessments will provide students with another mechanism for avoiding placement testing and remediation.