AY26 Recommended Catalog Changes: Dual/Joint Degrees

Motivation

The currently hypercompetitive and fiscally constrained environment that characterizes higher education across the nation and globally, institutional competitive advantages are becoming even more challenging to secure. Further, learners are looking for any advantage possible to achieve their educational goals at reduced cost. As a result, the Illinois Tech Vice President for Enrollment Management and offices handling international academic partnerships are continually asking for dual and/or joint degrees relationships, as well as partnerships that articulate more transfer credits than our catalog permits, particularly in high demand areas such as artificial intelligence and data science. Such relationships are believed to have the potential of increasing our student enrollments.

These offices are doing a good job at targeting such partnerships with high-ranking international universities, thereby protecting Illinois Tech admission standards, historical educational quality of our programs, and student outcomes. As such, we would like to facilitate such relationships with appropriate guardrails.

Issues & Constraints

The graduate catalog only addresses/facilitates *internal* dual degrees[1] and lists paired programs[2]. Relative to co-terminal and/or accelerated masters program, again an *internal* dual degree program, the graduate catalog lists approved paired UG+Master's programs[3]. Students can request new pairings[4].

Our catalog currently doesn't support or enable such *external* dual/joint degree programs, with the exception of a few 3+2 joint degrees at the undergraduate level in engineering with domestic partners[5] (E.g., Benedictine, DePaul, Dominican, Elmhurst, Wheaton, National Louis universities). Such joint degrees at the undergrad level are governed by the following rules[6] in their construction:

- Undergraduate transfer credit limit of 68 credits from two-year institutions
- No transfer credit limit from four-year institutions

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[1] https://catalog.iit.edu/graduate/graduate-education/academic-programs/#Dual%20Graduate%20Degrees

[2] https://www.iit.edu/academics/programs?program_level=6&program_type=216

[3] https://catalog.iit.edu/undergraduate/undergraduate-education/coterminal-degree-programs/

[4] https://iit.secure.force.com/form?formid=217963 (link broken)

[5] https://www.iit.edu/ugaa/joint-programs

[6] https://catalog.iit.edu/undergraduate/undergraduate-admission/

- Last 45 credits must be completed AT Illinois Tech (so called 'academic residence requirement')

Recommended Catalog Changes

Recommended changes to both undergraduate and graduate catalogs:

- **Definitions & Purpose:**
  - **Dual degree** programs with external institutions of higher education: The purpose of a dual degree program is to allow students to undertake complementary programs of graduate study simultaneously through curricular arrangements that allow dual credit (also known as 'double counting') for a specified set of courses. Dual degree programs lead to two separate diplomas, typically with different names or types (i.e. BS Artificial Intelligence and BS Computer Science, or BS Computer Science and BA Computer Science). In most cases, the dual degree program allows students to complete both degrees in a shorter period of time than if they pursued the individual degrees separately. Students are expected to complete the dual degree program within a time frame consistent with institutional, programmatic, and accreditation requirements. Note, the dual degree is synonymous with the double degree term used broadly internationally.
  - **Joint degree** programs with external institutions of higher education: The purpose of joint degree programs is to allow students to exceed standard transfer rules in carefully and limited partnership scenarios and award a single degree that is jointly designed and formally recognized by both institutions, consistent with institutional degree-conferral authority and accreditation requirements. (i.e. both institutions confer a BS Computer Science). Joint degrees are often designed collaboratively between the two institutions, although that is not a requirement.
  - Illinois Tech recognizes only the degree structures and transfer-credit arrangements defined in this catalog.
- **Admission requirements:** Students must apply and be admitted as degree-seeking to each institution's program separately and abide by all program requirements. Admission to these programs requires the submission of two completed application forms, one for each program. Each program's entrance requirements must be met in addition to university-wide requirements. Students must be accepted to both programs, independently.
- **Double-counting credit hours:** Students in dual degree programs with Illinois Tech and an external institution of higher education may double-count a limited number of credit hours toward the requirements of both degrees, and that number may be higher than the standard transfer credit limits applied when credits are transferred from institutions with whom Illinois Tech does not have an approved dual/joint degree program partnership. Students may double-count a limited number of credit hours toward both degrees, as specified in the approved dual or joint degree agreement and subject to institutional, programmatic, and accreditation limits. Double-counted courses must be taken within six years for master's degree, eight years for doctoral degree prior to graduation, or 12 years for undergraduate degrees.

- **Simultaneous degree conferral**: Dual degrees are only conferred simultaneously (or in consecutive terms). Students may not be awarded an individual degree while in a dual degree program. Should a dual degree student choose to withdraw from one of the two degree programs, the student will have the option of completing the other degree following the normal requirements of that individual graduate program.

Recommended changes to the <u>undergraduate catalog:</u>

- **Which credits transfer:** Replace 'final 45 semester hours' with 'at least 45 credits completed as Illinois Tech courses,' with the distribution of those credits governed by approved dual/joint degree agreements and applicable accreditation requirements.
- **Permission & Approval**: Do not require partnerships to be explicitly listed in the catalog (to enable more timely partnership establishment), however, define an approval process that ensures academic standards are maintained by adding the following wording: "Dual/joint degrees must be approved in writing by both the VP Enrollment Management & Student Affairs, the Provost, the respective academic unit chair and Dean. If the degree being conferred by Illinois Tech is not an existing degree in the catalog, it must go through the normal new degree governance process."

Recommended changes to the <u>graduate catalog</u> (add the following text):

- **Permission & Approval**: Illinois Tech permits dual and joint degrees at the graduate level, limited by Higher Learning Commission and other program specific accreditation rules (e.g., ABET) and university governance/approval processes. Dual/joint degrees must be approved in writing by both the VP Enrollment Management & Student Affairs, the Provost, the respective academic unit chair and Dean, and, where required, the appropriate faculty governance bodies. If the degree being conferred by Illinois Tech is not an existing degree in the catalog, it must go through the normal new degree governance process.
- **Grade Requirements**: Existing catalog grade requirements for transfer credit rules hold for dual/joint degrees (E.g., only courses with grades of or equivalent to "A" or "B" (3.0) are accepted).
- **Credit Articulation**: Credits accepted from the partners institution must be articulated in the signed agreement (i.e. approved by both the Vice President of Enrollment Management and the Provost) and must align with the Illinois Tech degree being conferred to ensure graduates from both institutions achieve the same student learning objectives for the Illinois Tech degree being conferred as non-dual/joint degree students.
- **Residency Requirement:** Residency expectations, where applicable, will be defined in the approved dual/joint degree agreement and must comply with institutional and accreditation requirements. Dual/joint degrees may utilize online learning opportunities provided by Illinois tech instructors to meet Illinois Tech instruction requirements.