

Administrative Update to the Co-Terminal Program

The Illinois Tech co-terminal program has been a defining feature of the university's academic portfolio. It provides students with a structured and efficient pathway to complete both a bachelor's and a master's degree on an accelerated timeline. This model has supported student success by enabling early engagement with graduate-level coursework and by creating flexible pathways between undergraduate and graduate study. The ability to complete both degrees in an integrated manner has been recognized by faculty, staff, and students as a key strength of the institution and an important driver of student success.

At the same time, the current administrative structure of the co-terminal program has created challenges in its implementation. These include complexities in program administration, financial aid processing, and alignment with evolving regulatory expectations. To address these issues, Academic Affairs is implementing a revised structure for the co-terminal program that preserves its core academic value while providing a clearer and more sustainable administrative framework. Under this updated structure, the co-terminal program will be implemented as the Plus One Pathway within the university's accelerated master's framework.

What Remains Unchanged

The fundamental academic purpose of the accelerated master's program remains unchanged. Students will continue to have the opportunity to complete both a bachelor's and a master's degree on an accelerated timeline, typically within five years. The program will continue to support flexible pairing of undergraduate and graduate degrees in consultation with academic advisors.

Students will also continue to be permitted to apply a limited number of graduate-level credits toward both their undergraduate and graduate degree requirements. Students completing the accelerated pathway will be held to the same master's degree requirements as students enrolled through standard graduate admission pathways.

Plus One Program Structure

Under the Plus One Pathway, the accelerated master's program will operate as a two-phase model that separates undergraduate and graduate status while preserving the accelerated pathway:

Undergraduate Phase

- Students may apply to the accelerated master's program while they have undergraduate status. To be admitted to the program, students must meet the following eligibility requirements:
 - Must be in good academic standing with the university
 - Must not have applied for conferral (i.e. graduation) at the time of application
 - Must have completed at least 60 credits and have no fewer than 12 undergraduate credits remaining at the start of the program
 - The bachelor's degree/master's degree pairing must be approved prior to starting the course of study
 - Minimum 3.0 GPA required; students with a GPA below the minimum may still be eligible with a letter of recommendation from their undergraduate academic adviser. Individual master's programs may establish higher minimum GPA requirements.
- Students complete all undergraduate degree requirements within the standard timeframe for their undergraduate program (typically four years, or five years for programs with extended curricula).
- During this period, students may enroll in approved coursework applicable to the master's degree requirements.
- Programs may allow up to fifteen approved credit hours applicable to the master's degree requirements to be applied toward both undergraduate and graduate degree requirements, subject to program requirements. At least six of these credits must be at the 500 level or above.
- Graduate-level courses taken during this phase will be assessed at undergraduate tuition rates and subject to undergraduate financial aid structures.

Transition to Graduate Status

- Upon completion of undergraduate degree requirements, students will apply for graduation and have their undergraduate degree awarded.
- At this point, students will transition to graduate student status. Students will be subject to graduate financial aid policies.

- Following transition to graduate student status, additional coursework will apply solely toward the master's degree and will not be eligible for undergraduate credit.

Graduate Phase

- Students complete the remaining requirements for the master's degree as graduate students.

Benefits of the Plus One Pathway

The Plus One Pathway provides a clearer and more consistent progression from undergraduate to graduate study. By aligning student status with degree completion, the program establishes a more transparent academic pathway in which students complete their undergraduate degree within the standard timeframe and then transition fully into graduate study. In many programs, this structure allows students to complete a substantial portion of their master's degree requirements during their undergraduate studies, further supporting an efficient pathway to degree completion.

This structure provides a more straightforward framework for advising, degree planning, and program administration, and reduces ambiguity in how students are classified during their academic progression. It also simplifies the administration of financial aid by aligning aid with a student's academic status, which can reduce delays in the processing and disbursement of aid.

Importantly, the Plus One Pathway preserves the core benefit of the co-terminal program: the ability for students to complete both a bachelor's and a master's degree on an accelerated timeline. Students will continue to engage with graduate coursework during their undergraduate studies and apply those credits toward their graduate degree. In addition, students will complete their undergraduate degree on schedule, allowing them to graduate with their cohort.

Finally, the Plus One Pathway is expected to improve four-year graduation rates by aligning degree completion with the standard undergraduate timeline and removing incentives for students to delay conferral of their bachelor's degree. When benchmarked against peer AITU institutions, Illinois Tech's current four-year graduation rate is notably lower than many of our peers, as reflected in IPEDS data, indicating that our current structure may contribute to delayed undergraduate degree completion.

Institution	Four-year Graduation Rate
Illinois Institute of Technology	34%
Worcester Polytechnic Institute	84%
Carnegie Mellon University	81%
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	72%
Stevens Institute of Technology	71%

Transition for Current Students

To ensure a clear and equitable transition, the following framework will be applied to students currently enrolled in the co-terminal program:

- Students who have completed nine or more approved credit hours applicable to their master's degree requirements as of May 16, 2026 will remain eligible to continue under the existing co-terminal program structure.
- Students who have completed fewer than nine approved credit hours applicable to their master's degree requirements as of May 16, 2026 will transition to the Plus One Pathway.
- All students will transition to graduate student status upon completion of their undergraduate degree requirements and must apply for graduation. Students may not delay completion or conferral of the undergraduate degree, including through modification of course enrollment or academic planning, for the purpose of maintaining undergraduate status within the co-terminal program.
- Students who have begun coursework applicable to the master's degree requirements but have not yet reached the nine-credit threshold may petition Academic Affairs to remain under the existing co-terminal structure. Such petitions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the student's academic progress and program plan.
- In reviewing such petitions, Academic Affairs will give additional consideration to students who are within 12 credit hours of completing their undergraduate degree requirements as of the end of the Spring 2026 semester.
- In exceptional circumstances, such as medical leave, required internships, or other disruptions to academic progress, students may petition Academic Affairs for consideration of alternative arrangements related to program structure. Such requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Financial Aid Considerations

Students enrolled in the co-terminal program as of May 16, 2026 will receive institutional financial support under the Plus One Pathway that is expected to be at least comparable to the level of support provided under the current co-terminal program.

Students enrolled at Illinois Tech as of May 16, 2026 who are not enrolled in the co-terminal program will receive support through institutional financial aid approaches designed to assist students as they transition into and progress through the Plus One Pathway, should they choose to enroll in the accelerated master's program. This pathway also incorporates a substantial built-in financial benefit, as a significant portion of the master's degree requirements may be completed while students are enrolled at undergraduate tuition rates, reducing the overall cost of the graduate degree.