

REVIEW OF THE B.S. IN HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) Code: 51.0706
Health Information/Medical Records Administration/Administrator

OVERVIEW

The B.S. in Health Information Management program at Illinois State University is housed in the Department of Health Sciences within the College of Applied Science and Technology. The department also offers three minors (environmental health, public health, and safety), a B.S. in Environmental Health, a B.S., B.S.Ed. in Health Promotion and Education, a B.S. in Medical Laboratory Science, and a B.S. in Safety. The Department of Health Sciences does not currently offer programs at the graduate level. The B.S. in Health Information Management and the B.S. in Environmental Health have been reviewed in the current program review cycle, whereas the other three baccalaureate programs of the department are scheduled for review in 2018-2019.

The B.S. in Health Information Management program prepares students to manage the collection, maintenance, and analysis of medical data that healthcare professionals need to deliver, manage, and finance quality patient care. Graduates of the program are eligible to take the national examination for certification as a Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA). Although most program graduates work for healthcare entities, some are employed by healthcare or data vendors or by insurance companies.

Prospective students seeking employment in the field but not yet possessing any health information management credential enroll in the four-year on-campus plan of study. Students possessing an associate's degree and certification as a Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) enroll in an 18-month online plan of study. The online sequence was approved by the Higher Learning Commission (the entity that accredits the University) in June 2009 prior to the fall 2009 submission of the prior program review self-study report for the health information management program. The online plan of study is designed to serve students located in areas of the state lacking ready access to undergraduate health information management programs. To promote the seamless transition of students from an associate's program to the online plan of study, the Department of Health Sciences has articulation agreements with several community colleges, including Danville Community College, Rend Lake College (Ina), Richland Community College (Decatur), and Southern Illinois Collegiate Common Market (based in Herrin).

The B.S. in Health Information Management program at Illinois State University is one of three undergraduate health information management programs offered by public universities in the state. Among the three, the program at Illinois State has had the highest enrollment and has conferred the most degrees in recent years.

Enrollment by Plan of Study, Fall Census Day, 2010-2017

B.S. in Health Information Management, Illinois State University

First Majors Only

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
HIM on-campus plan of study	94	74	88	96	119	89	102	81
RHIT-HIM online sequence	5	8	0	1	1	14	10	5
Total	99	82	88	97	120	103	112	86

Degrees Conferred by Plan of Study, Graduating Fiscal Year 2010-2017*

B.S. in Health Information Management, Illinois State University

First Majors Only

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
HIM on-campus plan of study	13	9	17	24	23	NA	23	25
RHIT-HIM online sequence			3	2	5	NA	7	5
Total	13	9	20	26	28	29	30	30

* Summer, fall, and spring terms (e.g., graduating fiscal year 2017 consists of the following terms: summer 2016, fall 2016, and spring 2017)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Program goals

- To provide a comprehensive academic program to prepare future health information professionals to meet the needs of the health care industry
- To teach American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) entry-level competencies at the appropriate Bloom's level
- To develop faculty competencies to teach in the discipline, ensuring that the educational needs of the students are being met
- To recruit, retain, and graduate a diverse group of students
- To provide distance education to meet a geographic need
- To utilize the advisory committee to improve the program and respond to community needs

Student learning outcomes

The program is designed to teach students 102 entry-level competencies developed by the Commission on Accreditation of Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM). These 102 competencies can be aggregated into the following broad student learning outcomes.

- Apply the knowledge and technical skills required of a competent health information manager
- Apply data governance principles to manage health data in an electronic environment
- Collect and maintain health data to meet health information users' needs
- Analyze health data to address health information users' needs
- Use written and verbal communication skills required to be successful in the profession
- Solve health information related problems within legal and accreditation guidelines

Program curriculum (2017-2018)

Students are enrolled in one of two plans of study: a HIM on-campus plan of study for students beginning the program with no health information management credential or a RHIT-HIM online plan of study for students transferring into the program with an associate's degree in the field and Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) certification.

Graduation requirements (HIM on-campus plan of study):

120 credit hours consisting of 22 credit hours of prerequisite courses, 49 credit hours of courses in the discipline, 39 credit hours of General Education courses, and electives needed to complete 120 credit hours. Graduation requirements include a clinical professional practice experience and a management professional practice experience. Students can complete an information technology minor and still earn the B.S. in Health Information Management within four years.

Graduation requirements (RHIT-HIM online sequence):

An associate's degree in health information technology from a program accredited by the Commission on the Accreditation of Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM), certification as a Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT), 66 credit hours earned through Illinois State University including 33 credit hours of new coursework and 33 credit hours earned as proficiency credit based on courses taken at a community college, and any courses needed to meet General Education requirements of the University. Requirements met through Illinois State University include a professional practice experience in management. Transfer students enrolling in this sequence can complete it within 18 months provided they have enough articulation credits for an associate of science degree.

Program delivery

The HIM on-campus plan of study is offered on the Normal campus. Courses in the HIM on-campus plan of study are taught face-to-face. The RHIT-HIM online plan of study is taught online.

Department faculty (Fall 2017)

16 tenure track faculty members (5 Professors, 5 Associate Professors, and 6 Assistant Professors)

8 non-tenure track faculty members (3 full-time and 5 part-time, totaling 4.38 FTE)

Student to faculty ratio: 20.1

Student to tenure-line faculty ratio: 25.9

Department of Health Sciences faculty members collectively provide instruction for students enrolled in one of five undergraduate degree programs offered by the department. Core faculty members of the B.S. in Health Information Management program (one of those five programs) include two tenure track faculty members (both full-time) and two non-tenure track faculty members (one full-time and one part-time). All core faculty members are Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA) certified. The program coordinator is also a Certified Professional Coder (CPC) and Certified Coding Specialist (CCS), while another core faculty member is a Certified Tumor Registrar (CTR). Faculty members publish in peer-reviewed journals in the discipline and present at regional and national conferences. Two faculty members have been recognized by the Illinois Health Information Management Association (ILHIMA) as education ambassador of the year. Other professional affiliations of faculty members include the Regional Association of the American Academy of Professional Coders and the Central Illinois Health Information Management Association (CIHIMA).

Specialized accreditation

The B.S. in Health Information Management program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM). The program was last re-accredited by CAHIIM in 2013, through 2019. A re-accreditation review is underway at this time.

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand

Among the trends impacting health information management education are expanded emphasis on technology, an increase in the number of health information management professionals who work at home, and promotion of post-baccalaureate degrees as a prerequisite for advancement in the field. Historically, the field of health information management has had data management and personnel management as its foci; however, the health information management industry is evolving to focus less on personnel management and more on data management, including managing and analyzing high volumes of data. The industry is positioning itself to fill a technology skills gap that graduates of information technology programs are unable to fill without clinical knowledge and graduates of health information management programs are unable to fill without acquiring information technology skills. Accordingly, health information management programs, including the program at Illinois State University, are revising their curricula to expand information technology instruction. The appropriate amount and level of that instruction is a matter of discussion nationally within the field, through its specialized accreditation association (Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education, CAHIIM). Traditional functions of health information management departments in the field are being relocated to home-based work spaces, resulting in less need for physical office space for such departments. Consequently, it is more difficult to find office-based health information management departments to host professional practice students. Since the last program review the American Health Information Management Association has been promoting post-baccalaureate degrees as the new standard for advancement in the field. Indeed, several benchmark and aspirational programs examined through this program review offer a post-baccalaureate certificate or a master's degree in health informatics. It is not yet clear whether the bodies governing the discipline and field will embrace this change in the coming years.

Response to previous program review recommendations

Continue to work to improve academic advising and career counseling for the program within the structure of the department's advising system. With some adjustments, advising of students in the health information management program has improved since the 2009-2010 program review. Students have taken more responsibility for their own progress towards graduation and are better prepared for their advising appointments. This development has resulted in improved efficiency and effectiveness for both the academic advisor and the student.

Continue work to improve retention and graduation rates. Faculty continues to monitor retention and graduation rates of health information management students. Since the 2009-2010 program review, faculty members have examined credentials of students leaving the program. Faculty members have also gathered feedback from students regarding their perceptions of the program compared to their expectations of the program before they enrolled in it. Findings from these studies are being used by faculty to strategize approaches to improving retention and graduation rates.

Continue to monitor the passing rate for certification for national standards. Faculty continues to monitor Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA) examination pass rates. Although those rates are declining nationally (to 70 percent or lower), pass rates for graduates of the health information management program at Illinois State University have remained steady at about 80 percent.

Continue to track graduates' placement. Faculty regularly tracks employment of health information management program graduates. Because local and regional healthcare providers have in recent years imposed freezes on hiring for non-patient care positions, faculty has encouraged graduates to seek employment with vendors and insurance companies and to seek employment out of state. Faculty continues to encourage students to begin their job searches earlier in their Illinois State University careers.

Look nationally to identify peer benchmark and aspiration institutions. Faculty has completed analyses of benchmark and aspirational programs in connection with this program review. Results of the analyses are being used by faculty as inputs for strategic program planning.

Major findings

Enrollment in the B.S. in Health Information Management program has fluctuated since the 2009-2010 program review, peaking at 120 in fall 2014. Peak enrollment in the RHIT-HIM online plan of study was 14 in fall 2015. Of students graduating from the program, about half take more than four years to do so. This may be attributed at least in part to the number of students discovering the program and transferring into it from another major at the University. With the curricular changes made by faculty since the 2009-2010 program review, students completing the HIM on-campus plan of study are better equipped to successfully compete for health information management positions having an information technology focus. With that increased emphasis on information technology, a formal marketing plan is needed to recruit more students with interests and aptitudes in science, mathematics, and technology. Implementation of such a marketing plan should increase interest and enrollment in the program and improve retention and graduation rates over time. The RHIT-HIM online plan of study was designed to meet the needs of Registered Health Information Technicians (RHIT) seeking the Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA) certification but residing in areas of the state lacking ready access to undergraduate health information management education. It appears, based on findings of this self-study, that the online plan of study might not be meeting the needs of that population. Additional review is needed, including analysis of potential barriers to enrollment and completion and analysis of the effectiveness of the curriculum with respect to its structure, content, and delivery.

Initiatives and plans

- Address any recommendations resulting from the reaccreditation review by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM), underway at this time.
- Assess the most recent changes to the curriculum and their impact on enrollment, retention and graduation rates, Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA) examination scores, and job placement.
- Perform a comprehensive evaluation of the RHIT-HIM online plan of study with a goal of improving the curriculum and reducing barriers to enrollment and completion.
- Study the feasibility of offering a master's degree in health informatics.

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review Outcome. The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the B.S. in Health Information Management program to be in Good Standing.

The committee congratulates faculty for maintaining accreditation of the program by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM) since the last program review in 2009-2010. The program review self-study report documents successful faculty efforts to maintain alignment of the program with changing accreditation standards that reflect changes in the discipline, principally the increasing emphasis on science, technology, and mathematics. Maintenance of CAHIIM accreditation is critical for student success because only students who graduate from a CAHIIM-accredited program qualify to take the Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA) certification examination.

The committee recognizes expansion of the program since the prior program review to include a fully online sequence intended to qualify students who have an associate's degree and hold Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) certification for advancement to RHIA certification. The sequence serves practitioners residing in areas of the state lacking access to affordable baccalaureate education in the field.

By maintaining a curriculum that reflects changes in the discipline and profession, the Health Information Management program continues to graduate students who pass the RHIA certification examination at rates exceeding national pass rates by approximately 10 percentage points. Also contributing to this success are the balance in the curriculum between theory and practice, efforts by faculty to increase student involvement in research, and support provided to students in preparing for the certification examination. The curriculum includes two professional practice experiences for students in the on-campus sequence and one for students in the online sequence. The program encourages students to present their research findings at the annual university-wide research symposium and to attend professional conferences. Faculty has embedded RHIA certification examination preparation in the capstone seminar course. Also commendable is accommodation in the curriculum for students to earn a minor in information technology, which can aid graduates in their job searches and career advancement.

Greatly enhancing the ability of faculty to maintain program quality are extensive program evaluation and student learning outcomes assessment processes. The degree to which those processes are embedded in the program is particularly praiseworthy. The student learning outcomes assessment plan provides for collecting and evaluating data, use of rubrics in assessment of student learning, and involvement of the program advisory committee in curriculum and program review. The self-study report provides ample evidence that evaluation and assessment findings continue to be used by faculty to design and implement program modifications.

Committee members believe that three issues discussed by faculty in the self-study report warrant further attention by faculty well prior to the next program review: differences in coverage of information technology between the online sequence and the on-campus sequence, viability and sustainability of the online sequence given concerns articulated by faculty regarding student preparedness and emerging competition from other universities, and potential recognition of graduate study as the prerequisite for professional licensure in the field, which may necessitate consideration of establishing a master's degree program. The committee asks program faculty to address each issue and report its findings and decisions in follow-up reports submitted by the Department of Health Sciences to the Office of the Provost.

Committee members are concerned about differences in coverage of information technology between the two sequences given university, state, and Higher Learning Commission requirements that content of the sequences be equivalent. Whatever longer term decisions faculty may make during the next program review cycle regarding the two sequences, curriculum changes are needed at this time to bring coverage of information technology in the two sequences into equivalency to comply with the afore-cited requirements, for the benefit of students already pursuing the degree. The committee asks the program to address this matter and to report actions taken in a follow-up report submitted by the Department of Health Sciences to the Office of the Provost by December 21, 2018.

Committee members believe that the other two issues, future of the online sequence and the possibility of establishing a master's program, are best studied in tandem since resources available to the department are not unlimited. The committee asks faculty to explore whether it intends to continue offering the online sequence and, if

so, how faculty plans to address concerns regarding the sequence articulated in the self-study report, while also exploring whether faculty plans to propose a master's program and, if so, what additional resources the department would need to establish and maintain such a program. The committee asks the program to report its findings and decisions in a follow-up report submitted by the Department of Health Sciences to the Office of the Provost by December 20, 2019. More specific committee suggestions regarding the online sequence are included in the recommendations that follow.

The committee has included analyses of comparator and aspirational institutions in the self-study report outline to provide faculty members opportunities to consider the niche the program has among its peers and to gather information for program planning. The program review self-study report includes a brief discussion regarding one of the two comparator programs in the state and does not identify aspirational programs. Accordingly, the committee asks faculty to revisit their discussions of comparator and aspirational institutions and to summarize findings of those discussions in a report submitted by the Department of Health Sciences to the Office of the Provost by December 20, 2019. The committee notes the opportunity for faculty to use these analyses to inform faculty discussions regarding the future of the online sequence and the potential for offering a master's degree.

Recommendations. The Academic Planning Committee makes the following recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2025, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

Evaluate curriculum changes. The self-study report describes curriculum revisions approved in 2015 and 2017 involving replacement of some program content with expanded coverage of information technology and changes to sequencing of coding courses. The 2017 revisions are scheduled to take effect in 2018-2019. The committee recommends that faculty members closely monitor and evaluate the impacts of the revisions on student recruitment, retention, graduation, licensure, and job placement. Findings from implementation of the extensive program evaluation and student learning outcomes assessment processes already embedded in the program can aid faculty in conducting its analyses and identifying the need for subsequent curriculum revisions.

Plan for recruiting students with science and mathematics interests and aptitudes. The self-study report notes increasing emphasis in the discipline on information technology and articulates the need for future students to have even higher levels of aptitude in science and mathematics to succeed in the field. Accordingly, the committee recommends that faculty develop and implement a plan for recruiting students highly credentialed in science and mathematics. One element of the plan may be expanded use of scholarships to recruit students, either by redirecting scholarships currently offered to students after they are enrolled in the program or by fundraising for additional scholarships. Faculty might consider engaging the program advisory committee in the latter effort.

Improve certification examination pass rates. RHIA examination pass rates among program graduates have consistently exceeded the national average. However, the committee notes that approximately one in five program graduates does not pass the examination on their first attempt. The committee concurs with the goal articulated in the self-study report of striving to improve certification examination results. Given the aforementioned emerging emphasis on information technology, faculty may want to revisit the mathematics requirement for admission to and graduation from the program. The committee also recommends that the program consider working with the English Language Institute to explore ways of assisting students in the program who struggle with coursework and the certification examination because of language barriers.

Investigate time to degree. The self-study report articulates concerns regarding program retention and graduation rates. However, while retention and six-year graduation rates may vary significantly from one year to the next, the rates typically exceed the rates across all undergraduate programs at the University. Volatility in graduation rates is likely due, at least in part, to differentiation of rates between first-time-in-college students and external transfer students and the small number of graduates in one or both categories in some years. While retention and graduation rates warrant ongoing monitoring, the committee is more concerned about time to degree. The committee notes a lower percentage of first-time-in-college students graduating from the program within four years compared to the average across all undergraduate programs at the University. While this difference may in part be attributed to a higher percentage of internal transfer students enrolling in the program compared to other programs at the University, the committee suggests that faculty members further investigate the phenomenon. The committee

suggests that the program document the paths internal transfer students take to enter the program (including the majors from which students transfer) and obstacles those students encounter in completing the program. From that data, faculty might identify common obstacles and develop strategies for mitigating them.

Continue student learning outcomes assessment. The committee encourages faculty to continue its implementation of the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program during the next program review cycle, to continue to utilize data collected through plan implementation to make program revisions as necessary, and to document how that has been done.

Explore strategies for increasing RHIT-HIM enrollment and streamlining articulation through the sequence. The committee has several recommendations for the program should its faculty decide to continue offering the online sequence.

First, as has been noted, comparability of program requirements across delivery modes is required by university, state, and Higher Learning Commission policies, if not by CAHIIM. As revisions to either the on-campus sequence or the online sequence are made by faculty, equivalency of program requirements across the sequences should be maintained.

Second, the committee recommends that the program continue to develop and nurture agreements with community colleges to streamline articulation of students from accredited RHIT associate's degree programs to the Health Information Management program at Illinois State. The committee recommends faculty involvement in developing, implementing, and evaluating those articulation agreements. Through regular communication with faculty and staff of partner associate's degree programs, the articulation arrangements can serve as pipelines for enrolling students in the Health Information Management program for many years to come. Careful crafting of the articulation agreements and ongoing monitoring of students enrolling in the health information management program through them could help mitigate issues articulated by faculty regarding student preparedness. The committee suggests that faculty teaching in the online sequence consider holding periodic face-to-face meetings with the students as is the practice with some other online programs offered at the University. Such meetings can help enrich subsequent online interactions among students and faculty.

Third, articulation agreements have limited value in recruiting students if existence of the agreements is not communicated to prospective students. The committee recommends that program faculty collaborate with community college faculty and staff to develop four-year plans of study for posting on the university and community college websites. The committee suggests that the plans identify options for students to complete general education requirements online either through the community college or through Illinois State.

Fourth, the committee urges faculty to look to experiences of other public universities with delivery of online RHIT-to-RHIA sequences. There are numerous such programs that successfully recruit and matriculate external transfer students despite requiring them to complete a general education curriculum. By studying those programs, faculty might identify practices that could be implemented in the Health Information Management program at Illinois State.