



# What's New for the Illinois Career Information System 2012-2013

*by Lola Lucas*

**E**ach year IDES updates the Illinois Career Information System, or CIS, with the latest information on occupations, schools and financial aid. This helps high school and college students make informed decisions about both potential careers and the education needed to reach their goals. The 2012-2013 version of CIS has been updated with new localized wage data, worksheets that can be filled out online, “how-to” videos on such topics as interviewing for jobs and searching for financial aid, and an overall improved process for finding scholarships.

## **Wage Data for Local Areas Available**

Wage data in the *Occupations* section was revised to show more local geographical areas. Students can now see wage data for national, state, county and city areas, instead of just a dozen broader regions. This is particularly helpful in southern Illinois, where CIS now distinguishes between several urban areas instead of showing a huge “balance of state” region. Wages can vary quite a bit within Illinois: an experienced accountant in the Decatur area can expect

# Logging in to CIS:

1. Go to [www.ides.illinois.gov/careerinfo](http://www.ides.illinois.gov/careerinfo).
2. Click on *Illinois Career Information System* from the list.
3. Click on the link “Visit CIS today!”
4. Use the Illinois resident log-in (*Enter your city and zip code*).
5. Set up My CIS Portfolio to create your own user name and password.
6. *Hint: bookmark the site or add to your favorites to quickly return next time.*

about \$29.94 an hour compared to the DeKalb-Elgin-Aurora area, where someone with similar experience may earn \$66.45 an hour. Knowing typical wages helps with salary negotiation as well as deciding whether to relocate. Employers can use the numbers to arrive at what salaries are typical in their own cities instead of broader state wages.

## Worksheets Now Completed Online

Every worksheet within CIS has been converted into a PDF that students can fill out online and save in the *My CIS Portfolio* and to their computers. In addition, all *My Career Plan* section worksheets have been converted to full classroom lesson plans and added to the Career Information System curriculum. This saves time for teachers who can use the worksheets immediately when presenting units on career planning.

## Financial Aid Easier to Sort

*Financial Aid Sort* has been completely revised to make it easier than ever to find financial aid that matches the students’ needs. A new embedded video tutorial gives tips on using the sorting features. *Financial Aid Sort* first builds a list of possible scholarships, loans, grants, and other awards, and then it refines the list

to customize results. Factors can be added or eliminated from consideration, such as financial need. Then students can save their selected awards to their My CIS Portfolio. Most scholarships have websites and online applications, so the whole process is streamlined. Scholarship applications now take a few hours instead of days of effort.

## Better Integration of “Reality Check”

A final update to CIS involves the improved integration of *Reality Check*, a very popular CIS module that encourages students to think about how much they will need to earn in order to afford the lifestyle they want. Students can now save and restore their Reality Check results from their My CIS Portfolio. Teachers sometimes use Reality Check as part of class projects to get across that higher earnings are often tied to getting more education and training after high school.

Tutorials on various features of CIS are available in the *How to Use CIS* and *Tools for Counselors and Teachers* sections. The tutorials give step-by-step instructions on tasks such as setting up portfolios in CIS and generating site reports on student usage of CIS. All CIS updates were provided by IDES information analysts and intoCareers, a consortium of 21 states that jointly produce the Career Information System.

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