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**Report to the Governor and General Assembly on Underrepresented Groups in**

**Illinois Higher Education**

**2013 Annual Report**

April 2014

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1/13-30

**Introduction**

Pursuant to the Board of Higher Education Act (110 ILCS 205/9.16) the Underrepresented Groups Report to the Governor and General Assembly presents data on the academic progress, enrollment, retention and completion rates of students identified as members of underrepresented groups (URGs) in Illinois postsecondary institutions. This annual report is intended to help develop and guide policy and to measure the academic success of underrepresented student groups.

Illinois statute defines underrepresented citizens or resident aliens as persons who are minorities, including African American, Hispanic, Asian American, Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaskan native, women, persons with disabilities, and students identified as first generation college participants. The group identified as “first-generation” was added to the list of underrepresented groups beginning January 2012 and will be further developed in scope and definition through ongoing discussions with institutions of higher education.

Since 2009, the *Illinois Public Agenda for Career and College Success* has guided Illinois as it works to increase educational attainment for all Illinois students. Goal one of the *Public Agenda* is “to increase educational attainment to match the best-performing U.S. states and world countries.” This goal, however, is a moving target as states and countries around the world accelerate their progress through strong commitments to education attainment goals. Illinois has focused on a quantifiable goal of a post-secondary educational program completion for sixty percent of Illinois residents by 2025. This goal was set based on the understanding that nearly two-thirds of all the new and replacement jobs in Illinois will require a high quality college credential in the near future.

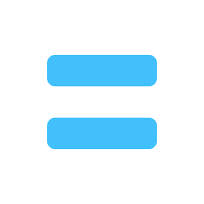
While educational attainment has been rising modestly in recent years, Illinois must accelerate progress and focus on increasing college success for its fastest growing and largest populations: low income, first generation, and adult students as well as students of color, especially Hispanics. Demographic trends clearly show that improving the educational outcomes for URGs will help build the Illinois economy, ensure a bright future for the state, and is the only way to reach the 2025 goal.

Increased college opportunity for underrepresented groups is a focus of current state and national higher education conversations. The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education has documented plans to increase educational attainment that emphasized accessibility for lower and middle-income families. The focus on the importance of access to quality education is not new in this country. American scientist and educator, George Washington Carver, championed the idea when he wrote, “Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom.” This door is one that the State of Illinois is working to unlock for all students, regardless of background or financial means.

Achieving Illinois’ 2025 goal requires a focus on both increased college participation and increased college completion. This report monitors progress in improving participation and completion for underrepresented groups in Illinois, as illustrated in Fig. 1.

**Fig.1**

**Focal Areas for URG Success in Reaching Illinois 2025 Educational Attainment Goal**



ACCESS

RETENTION

COMPLETION

**2025**

**60% Illinois Attainment Goal**

Academic

and financial

SUPPORT

**Participation**

**Overall Student Participation**

Successful participation in higher education is a key goal outlined in the *Illinois Public Agenda for Career and College Success*. Student enrollments at Public Institutions of higher education are identified in the following tables.

**Table 1  
Enrollment at Public Institutions of Higher Education**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Fall 2011 | Fall 2012 | Decrease |
| Undergraduate | 525,008 | 507,029 | -17,979 (or -3.42%) |
| Graduate | 51,228 | 49,940 | -1,288 (or -2.51 %) |
| Total | 576,236 | 556,969 | -19,267 (or -3.34%) |

Source IBHE and ICCB records

Compared to the prior academic year, overall student enrollment has declined at both undergraduate and graduate levels at public institutions. To place this decline in context, enrollments dramatically increased during the recession. The current enrollments are comparable to those a decade ago. However, to meet its 60 percent goal Illinois must sustain and grow the increases that occurred during the recession. To reverse this trend Illinois’ needs to focus on more aggressive strategies to increase the flow of students from the traditional pipeline as well as strategies to enroll and support adult learners returning to the system. More than half of Illinois’ current workforce lacks a two or four year college degree. Twenty-two percent of those adults already have college credits toward a degree.

**Underrepresented Students Participation**

Decreased enrollment of African American students largely accounted for an overall decline in enrollment for URGs. Enrollment for African American students declined by 4,838; Asian student enrollment dropped by 94; and Native American enrollment decreased by 84 students.

However, Hispanic enrollments increased by 4,242 students; enrollment for the Two or More Races group increased by 162 students; and Pacific Islander enrollments were up by 21 students. While the increase in Hispanic enrollments is encouraging given the growth of this population in Illinois, some increase would be expected based on population growth. Increases in participation need to accelerate further for all URGs.

Given the size and projected growth for African American and Hispanic students, these trends suggest a need to focus on understanding the reasons for the decline (both statewide and regionally) in order to guide development of new strategies to increase participation, retention and completion rates for these groups.

**Table 2**

**Enrollment of Underrepresented Students at Public Institutions of Higher Education   
Graduate and Undergraduate Students**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Hispanic** | **African**  **American** | **Asian** | **Native American** | **Pacific Islander** | **Two or More Races** | **Total** |
| Fall 2012 | 85,235 | 82,633 | 29,176 | 1,468 | 1,276 | 13,444 | 213,232 |
| Fall 2011 | 80,993 | 87,471 | 29,270 | 1,552 | 1,255 | 13,282 | 213,823 |
| Difference | +4,242 | -4,838 | -94 | -84 | +21 | +162 | -591 |
| Percentage  change | +5.34% | -5.53% | -0.32% | -5.41% | +1.63% | +1.22% | -0.28% |

Source: IBHE and ICCB records

**Students with Disabilities**

The number of students with disabilities in higher education has increased at public universities and decreased at community colleges. This analysis is based on a longitudinal data system that makes no distinction between students with learning disabilities and those with physical disabilities when reporting disability numbers. These two groups present different challenges and require different methods of intervention and developmental resources. Data specifically targeting the unique challenges of the two groups would allow for a more precise focus on the makeup of this underrepresented group, and development of strategies to increase college success for both groups.

**Table 3**

**Unduplicated Headcount of Students with Disabilities  
Self-Reported at Illinois Public Institutions of Higher Education**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Academic Year **2011** | Academic Year **2012** | Difference |
| Public Universities | 4,747 | 5,311 | +564 (or +11.88%) |
| Community Colleges | 14,102 | 12,342 | -1,760 (or -12.48%) |
| Total | 18,849 | 17,653 | -1,196 (or -6.35%) |

Source: IBHE and ICCB records

**Support for First Generation College students**

The category of “first generation” students was recognized in 2012 as an underrepresented group needing inclusion in this annual report. Since then, no further expansions, clarifications, or parameters have been set as an official definition of this population. However, a working definition or guideline for identifying this group would be *students with no immediate family members who have attended and/or completed college*. Postsecondary institutions are not currently reporting data on first generation students, but many schools are working to transition them into the post-secondary setting. This group of students faces unique challenges as they tackle the transition into a post-secondary setting.

In a 2013 report released by ACT and the Council for Opportunity in Education entitled, *The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2013: First-Generation Students,*it was reported that 52 percent of 2013, first-generation high school graduates who took the ACT® college readiness assessment met none of the four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. Many of these students lack necessary higher educational literacy and family financial support.

The IBHE will work with institutions going forward to identify first generation students, assess their participation and completion, and develop interventions that provide the support they need to succeed in Illinois higher education.

**Overall Student Completions**

Student completions of degrees at Illinois public institutions increased modestly during this period. Though this is good news, especially in the face of declining state support, this growth needs to be accelerated dramatically to accomplish statewide goals.

**Table 4**

**Post Secondary Degree Completion for all student groups**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Academic Year | Total degree completion |
| **2012** | 114915 |
| **2011** | 111281 |
| Difference | + 3634 |
| Percentage Change | 3.27% |

Source: IBHE and ICCB records

**Underrepresented Completions**

Underrepresented student groups’ completion of post-secondary credentials also has shown modest improvement (Table 5). However, the increase (1,828 students) is not at the level necessary to meet Illinois’ 60 percent goal. Game-changing strategies implemented at scale are needed to increase the number of degrees produced per full-time equivalent student enrolled. Many more students must obtain a credential and do so in less time and with fewer excess credits.

One promising approach is being piloted by the Board with three institutions (City Colleges of Chicago, Southern Illinois University, and the University of Illinois Chicago). In this “guided pathways” (GPS) effort Illinois’ is working with other states to implement a series of strategies that have been shown across the country to dramatically increase degree production while significantly reducing gaps for underrepresented groups.

**Table 5**

**Post Secondary Degree Completion for URG at Public Institutions**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **African American** | **Hispanic** | **Asian** | **Pacific Islander** | **Native American** | **Two or more races** | **Total** |
| **2012** | **12879** | **11101** | **6237** | **189** | **315** | **1270** | **31991** |
| **2011** | **12801** | **9841** | **6017** | **184** | **327** | **993** | **30163** |
| **Difference** | **+78** | **+1260** | **+220** | **+5** | **-12** | **+277** | **+1828** |
| **Percentage change** | **0.61%** | **12.8%** | **3.66%** | **2.72%** | **-3.67%** | **27.9%** | **6.06%** |

Source: IBHE and ICCB records

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

The Illinois *Public Agenda for Career and College Success* sets aggressive goals for the state that require dramatic increases in college attainment. These increases are required to meet the demands of Illinois’ changing economy and to improve its overall quality of life. Nearly two-thirds of the new and replacement jobs in Illinois’ economy in the near term will require a high quality college credential. Tens of thousands of jobs in high demand areas are going unfilled because of a lack of educated applicants. The positive impact of a more educated population on public assistance, corrections, and health care costs as well as per capita income is well documented. The only viable path to success for Illinois is improved college participation and completion by students of color, low income and first generation students, students with disabilities, and adult students.

The level of improvement needed will require implementation of game-changing strategies tied to near and longer term goals, and transparent metrics. Possible strategies include:

* **Implementation of the Common Core State Standards and Assessments**. Higher education has a significant role to play in redesigning teacher preparation and professional development programs; integrating assessments into college placement and admissions processes; and ensuring pathways are created for underrepresented student groups. Creating a college going culture in K-12 schools and improving readiness will reduce developmental education costs and increase college participation and completion.
* **Increase funding and improve the Monetary Assistance Program (MAP)**. The buying power of MAP grants has seriously eroded. The program funding was depleted this year by February 28, the earliest cut-off date in its history. Increased funding and strategies to increase the college success of MAP recipients are needed.
* **Scale up Guided Pathways Programs (GPS).** Illinois has a number of pathways initiatives being implemented. Effective pathways programs have been proven as game changers for college success for minority and low income students in other states. These efforts need to be integrated and implemented across the higher education system.
* **Improve student support services for underrepresented students.** While academic supports are crucial, they are not sufficient. Social supports that address the needs of the whole student will be necessary to improve college completion for underrepresented student groups especially.
* **Expand opportunity** for students who have “stopped out” of college to reenroll, gain skills, and productively participate in the job market. Providing college opportunity for adult learners, especially those from underrepresented groups, is required if Illinois is to meet its goals.
* **Improve data systems and analysis at the state and institutional levels.** In addition to better assessing the progress of disabled and first generation students, systems are needed that provide “just in time” monitoring of student progress that allow for interventions before students drop out.

The IBHE will work to continuously improve its monitoring of the progress of URGs in our higher education system. The state needs a richer and more complex picture of the status of these students in our system. While participation and completion are the key indicators, a more complete picture of these students’ experiences and challenges is needed. There is no time to waste in defining and implementing strategies that increase college success for URGs in Illinois. They are the future of our workforce and our state.

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