



## Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **IBHE awards \$3.37 million in Early Childhood Faculty Preparation Grants to Illinois institutions**

*Funds will be used to increase faculty diversity in early childhood education*

**SPRINGFIELD** – The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) has awarded \$3.37 million in Early Childhood Faculty Preparation Grants to two public and two private universities to implement programs of study primarily for working adults from diverse backgrounds and those who work with diverse populations interested in becoming early childhood faculty. These grants will support scholarships and other academic and holistic supports for 78 students to earn a master’s degree.

“Nearly two months ago, I announced Smart Start Illinois—my administration’s plan to eliminate childcare deserts and make our state the best place in the nation for early childhood education. But adding preschool seats only works if you have the staff to support them,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “These Early Childhood Faculty Preparation Grants will help expand our pool of providers—all while providing new opportunities for a diverse set of prospective early childhood educators. This is how we create a quality, equitable early childhood education system that works for everyone—no matter their background or zip code.”

“The grants will help increase the diversity of faculty in early childhood education in Illinois at a time of great need by expanding the educational pipelines for aspiring early childhood faculty,” said IBHE Executive Director Ginger Ostro. “We are excited to partner with the four selected universities to continue to make progress toward a high-quality early childhood education system in our state.”

The Early Childhood Faculty Preparation Grants are a part of the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) initiative, a key strategy in A Thriving Illinois, the state’s strategic plan for higher education. The ECACE is co-led by the IBHE and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), in partnership with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development, and Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS).

“Through the grant funds, the universities will build innovative models for graduate studies and effective higher education adult learning practices in early childhood,” said ECACE Project Director Christi Chadwick. “Each of the unique programs will support the need for a robust pipeline of diverse faculty in early childhood.”

Those who enroll in the programs are expected to graduate by the summer of 2024.

#### Grant amount by institution:

Illinois State University - \$800,753

Lewis University - \$358,390

National Louis University - \$1,191,511

University of Illinois Chicago - \$1,027,989

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