

A Public Agenda for Illinois Higher Education: Planning for Career and College Success

The changing nature of the emergent innovation economy requires the State of Illinois to rethink and retool its education system to meet the economic demands and the challenges of citizenry in the 21st Century. A comprehensive, long-term vision and public agenda for higher education will help ensure that citizens are well prepared for the workforce of today and tomorrow. Here's why:

Society is changing: Illinois' population is aging and becoming rapidly and dramatically more diverse.

The economy is changing: Competition for jobs is now global and the nature of work has been transformed significantly, with the majority of the fastest-growing and highest-paid jobs requiring at least 2 years of postsecondary education.

Higher education is changing: The growth of nontraditional students and students of racial and ethnic diversity and those with disabilities is altering the face of postsecondary education. In addition, technology and a more competitive environment are changing the landscape of higher education.

State needs and opportunities are changing: There is a convergence between the state's economic needs and what higher education provides – knowledge, skills, training, entrepreneurialism, and the ability to work in diverse settings.

FACT: 55% of new jobs by 2012 will require postsecondary education, one-third of new jobs will demand a bachelor's degree.

FACT: Between 2000 and 2020, the working-age population will decline by 4% in Illinois, while the over-65 population will increase by 61%. The white working-age population will drop about 4%, while the Latino working-age population will grow nearly 40%.

FACT: 85% of whites/Asians complete high school; only 54% of Latinos and 49% of blacks do.

FACT: About half of white/Asian students are prepared for college when they graduate from high school; just 17% of Latinos and 11% of blacks are considered college-ready after high school.

Creating a public agenda for higher education is a critical endeavor for the Illinois Board of Higher Education, colleges and universities, the Illinois corporate community, teachers and faculty at all levels, and the state's long-term economic and social wellbeing.

Why? Because it will tell us:

- What the state must do to meet the demands of employers and the needs of workers over the next 10 years and how Illinois can capitalize on the contribution of higher education to the economic vitality of the state.
- How the state can ensure that low-income students successfully complete a college degree, while promoting the effective use of state financial aid dollars.
- How the state can best target limited resources to maximize educational attainment, ensure that colleges and universities have adequate support to maintain high-quality academic programs, and develop each institution's mission and each sector's role in the higher education system.

- What the state must do to improve student success, close the gap in achievement and attainment for minority and low-income students, reduce remediation in postsecondary education, strengthen teacher training and school leader preparation, and ensure that high school graduates are ready for the demands of the workforce and the rigors of college.

These issues will be the centerpiece of the planning process that will deepen our understanding of the challenges presented by the dramatic demographic changes facing Illinois, how well our P-20 education system is positioned to meet those challenges, and what our elected leaders, corporate community, labor unions, and civic and education stakeholders must do to prepare our citizens for the dynamic economic future we face.

A public agenda for higher education will address the needs and opportunities of Illinois' future by advancing policies, priorities, and performance to address concerns and questions confronting the state, its elected leaders, its business and labor community, its system of P-12 and postsecondary education, and its citizens.

The Task Force on Higher Education and the Economy will be comprised of:

- The Chairwoman of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, serving as Chair;
- 4 members of the General Assembly;
- 20 members appointed by the Governor from nominees recommended by the Illinois Board of Higher Education, including:
 - a president or senior administrator of a public university;
 - a trustee of a community college;
 - a president or senior administrator of a community college;
 - a representative of the independent not-for-profit education sector;
 - 3 business leaders from statewide business associations, an Illinois corporation, or the Illinois Workforce Investment Board;
 - a leader of a civic or nonprofit organization or foundation;
 - a leader of the healthcare industry;
 - a labor leader representing a statewide labor organization;
 - an expert in student financial aid;
 - a school district superintendent;
 - 2 faculty members or academic professionals from community colleges;
 - 2 faculty members or academic professionals from public universities;
 - 1 faculty member nominated by the Faculty Advisory Council to IBHE;
 - 1 student nominated by the Student Advisory Committee to IBHE;
 - 1 nationally recognized leader in higher education policy;
 - 1 representative of the proprietary education sector.