

Contact: José García | garcia@ibhe.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 31, 2024

Illinois' Public Universities Collectively Achieve Highest Enrollment in Eight Years

Freshmen enrollment increases for fourth consecutive year

SPRINGFIELD – Today, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) released its fall enrollment report for the state's public universities for the fall semester of the 2024-25 academic year. Illinois public universities also achieved progress across a range of key variables including:

- Increased undergraduate enrollment by 2%,
- Increased new full-time transfer student enrollment by 5.1%,
- Increased African American undergraduate enrollment by 2.8%,
- Increased Latino undergraduate enrollment by 1.4%, and
- Increased freshmen enrollment by 0.6%, the fourth consecutive year of growth.

There are an additional 2,993 students across all state universities this fall, which represents an overall enrollment increase of 1.6% and a total overall enrollment of 185,590 students – the highest overall enrollment in eight years. Fall 2024 undergraduate enrollment at Illinois public universities increased by 2% compared to the previous year, increasing for the second consecutive year, and freshmen enrollment at Illinois public universities increased by 0.6% compared to the fall semester of the prior academic year.

Overall enrollment of African American students at Illinois universities increased by a noteworthy 3.5% according to the report. Similarly, undergraduate and freshmen enrollment of African American students at state institutions increased 2.8% and 2.6% year-over-year, respectively. Enrollment of Latino students also increased in two key areas. Overall and undergraduate enrollment of Latino students at state universities increased 2.3% and 1.4% year-over-year, respectively.

“Achieving the highest enrollment in eight years not only marks a significant win for our students and state, but it also demonstrates that our investments in higher education are working,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “We have higher transfer rates, more freshmen, and more Black and Latino students enrolling in our public universities, which means that we’re building a stronger, more equitable educational system.”

“Reaching the highest enrollment across the state's universities in eight years compounded with the overall enrollment increases of African American and Latino students is proof that we are moving our higher education system to one where everyone has access to a college degree,” **said IBHE Chair Pranav Kothari**. “A college education is one of the leading predictors for social and economic mobility, and I’m energized to keep working alongside Governor JB Pritzker to make our system the best in the nation.”

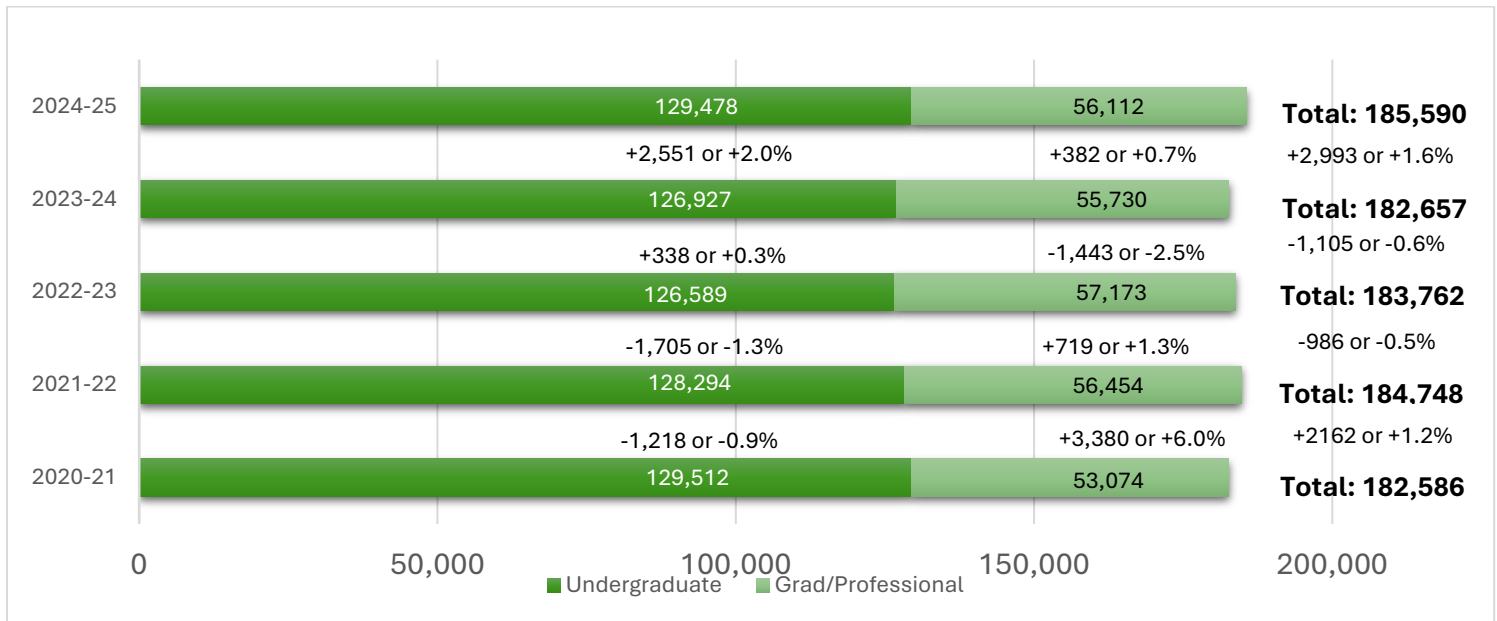
“When we set out to transform our state’s higher education system through an equity lens with the implementation of a [new strategic plan](#) in 2021, we knew that it was going to take some time to tackle decades of inequities made more obvious by a pandemic, and we are seeing the positive impact of that strategic plan,” **said IBHE Executive Director Ginger Ostro**. “It is encouraging to see more students walk into our state universities, and we will continue to make the path toward graduation more equitable for all students in Illinois.”

Retention at the state’s public universities increased one percentage point compared to the previous year. More than eight out of every 10 (81.3%) new freshmen at Illinois public universities who were enrolled in the fall of the 2023-24 academic year were still enrolled in the fall semester of 2024.

Enrollment of transfer students increased 5.1% year-over-year. Seven of the 12 Illinois public universities experienced year-over-year increases in new transfer students. And more students of color are pursuing advanced degrees. Graduate and professional enrollment of African American students increased by 6%, the first increase since the 2021-2022 academic year, and graduate and professional enrollment of Latino students increased by 6.8%.

These new data come in the heels of the Illinois Community College Board’s [enrollment data](#) which reports an overall increase of 7.4%, the largest fall-to-fall enrollment growth in the last 15 years, outpacing last year's fall enrollment increase of 5.7%.

Figure 1: Illinois Public University Headcount Enrollments from Fall of Academic Year 2020-21 to 2024-25



The report, *IBHE First Look – Fall Enrollment 2024-25 – Illinois Public Universities*, is available online and can be accessed [here](#).

###

About Illinois Board of Higher Education

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) is the planning and coordinating body for the state’s higher education system. In June 2021, IBHE adopted the new strategic plan, “A Thriving Illinois,” to accomplish three goals: close the equity gaps for students who have historically been left behind, build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions, and increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth.