



## Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Thursday, Feb. 29, 2024

**The Illinois Board of Higher Education Announced as Winner of The Great Admissions Redesign Challenge**  
*IBHE one of three organizations awarded a \$750,000 grant in the national competition to transform how students get into college*

INDIANAPOLIS – [Lumina Foundation](#) has named the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) one of three winners of an implementation grant as part of [The Great Admissions Redesign](#), a competition to revolutionize the admissions process and increase accessibility to higher education for all students. The competition awarded three implementation grants and four planning grants to organizations across the country.

"Lumina is thrilled by the number of outstanding applicants committed to revising the college admission process," said Melanie Heath, strategy director for Lumina. "As a winner of The Great Admissions Redesign, the Illinois Board of Higher Education exemplifies leadership in streamlining procedures and promoting inclusivity, ensuring all students have equitable opportunities to pursue their educational goals."

After reviewing more than 70 applications in a rigorous selection process and using criteria including a commitment to ensuring fair and just outcomes for Black and Brown students, simplicity, and innovation, Lumina is awarding \$3.1 million in implementation and planning grants.

The IBHE was awarded the funding to implement, in collaboration with the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), a direct admissions program for community college students transferring to public universities and recent high school graduates by expanding and connecting two existing efforts: the Public University Uniform Admission Pilot Program and the state's participation with the Common App. The direct admissions program will proactively inform eligible students that they are accepted at a particular institution without the student having to fill out and submit an admission application.

"Studies have shown that using known information to inform students of their eligibility for admission removes barriers and inequities in the complex college admissions procedures, especially for low-income students, students of color, rural students, and those who are first in their families to attend college," said IBHE Executive Director Ginger Ostro. "By joining and expanding upon Illinois' two existing programs, we will empower students on their path to a bachelor's degree by removing systemic barriers and transforming the admissions process in Illinois."

"The Illinois Community College Board is committed to finding more seamless pathways for all community college students to continue their education at a four-year institution. We are excited to join the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission to implement this new pilot program, which will open access for students to create better lives through education," said ICCB Executive Director Brian Durham.

"ISAC looks forward to working with our sister agencies in supporting this important initiative and communicating it to the student populations we serve, including many first-generation college students who often experience challenges navigating the admissions process," said ISAC Executive Director Eric Zarnikow. "As an agency focused on making education after high school more accessible and affordable, a direct admissions program is an opportunity to do just that, and we are excited that Lumina will be supporting these efforts."

Additional grant recipients include the California State University System and Northern Arizona University (both Implementation Grants); as well as the Louisiana Board of Regents, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Washington Student Achievement Council, and Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (all Planning Grants).

### **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.

### **About Lumina Foundation**

Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation in Indianapolis committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all. We envision higher learning that is easy to navigate, addresses racial injustice, and meets the nation's talent needs through a broad range of credentials. We are working toward a system that prepares people for informed citizenship and success in a global economy.