
Equity Plan & Practices Framework Baseline Plan

Background:

A New Strategic Plan Grounded in Equity

In 2021, after extensive stakeholder engagement, the Illinois Board of Higher Education adopted, and the Illinois Community College Board and Illinois Student Assistance Commission endorsed, a new strategic plan for higher education. Called [A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth](#), the plan centers equity and recognizes that Illinois' economic growth and educational equity are inseparable. The plan includes 25 strategies to achieve the three goals of Equity, Sustainability, and Growth: close equity gaps for students who have been left behind (Equity); build stronger financial futures for individuals and institutions (Sustainability); and increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth (Growth).

Grounded in data that show significant gaps in enrollment, persistence, advancement, and completion of students of color, low-income students, working adults, and rural students, *A Thriving Illinois* calls for each institution to establish and implement an equity plan and practices to close its access, progress, completion, and attainment gaps. This includes:

- Review and revision of existing policies and practices that exacerbate equity gaps, including funding distribution, financial aid, transfer mechanisms, admissions, placement tests, remedial programs, or structured pathways.
- Interrogating disaggregated data to understand points of intervention and whether solutions are working, including early indicators and other predictive analytic tools.
- Incorporating equity impact analysis to ensure decisions are made only after analysis of impact on underserved or minoritized groups.
- Conducting campus climate surveys, with action based on findings to improve the experience of historically underserved or underrepresented students.
- Professional development designed to achieve equity, including cultural competency training with a trauma-informed lens and a focus on intersectionality.
- Strategies to support the ongoing learning renewal of students and systemic implementation of evidence-informed student support practices, such as summer bridge programs, extended learning opportunities, proactive and comprehensive advising, implementing research-based high impact practices, and meeting students' basic needs.
- Equitable talent management practices to increase and retain faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees of color.

Establishing Equity Plans and Practices in Statute

In response to the strategies outlined in *A Thriving Illinois*, P.A. 102-1046 (110 ILCS 205/9.16) requires each public institution of higher education and encourages each private institution of higher education to develop and implement an equity plan and practices for its institution that, at a minimum, close gaps in enrollment, retention, completion, and student loan repayment rates for underrepresented groups, including students of color, low-income students, working adult students, rural students, and individuals with disabilities so that individuals, families, and communities throughout the state can thrive.

IBHE, in collaboration with ICCB, is charged with:

- Requiring and collecting from each public institution of higher education an Equity Plan and encouraging each private institution to submit an Equity Plan;
- Conducting periodic review of each institution for compliance and notifying the institution of steps to achieve compliance;
- Providing advice and counsel;
- Conducting studies on the effectiveness and outcomes of the Equity Plan's strategies and methods;
- Requiring components of the Equity Plans, including developing guidance;
- Mandating all public institutions and encouraging private institutions of higher education to submit data necessary to assess the Equity Plans; and
- Report to the Governor and General Assembly annually with an assessment of the Plans and the effectiveness and outcomes of the strategies implemented by each institution.

Equity Plan Guidance

The Equity Plan Guidance that follows provides the framework for institutions to develop, implement, and assess Equity Plans and Practices as outlined above in *A Thriving Illinois* and statute.

The Equity Plan framework was developed in partnership with an Advisory Committee composed of 20 individuals from all sectors of higher education and was co-convened by the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Community College Board. The charge to the Advisory Committee, full list of members, resources, and presentations can be found on the [Equity Plans Advisory Committee](#) page of the IBHE website.

Equity Plan and Practices Defined:

Illinois Higher Education Equity Plans and Practices are student-centered practices that are designed to meet the need and support the success of historically underserved and underrepresented students so that all students have the tools they need to succeed. While the framework focuses on populations where the data shows gaps in outcomes - Black, Latinx, low income, rural, women, individuals with disabilities, working adults, and other racially minoritized groups, as outlined in statute - it is designed for sustainable actions across all marginalized populations. Illinois Higher Education institutions commit to practices that support student success and achievement in their academic and career goals while promoting respect, fairness, diversity, equity, inclusion, and access.

Plan Submission:

Institutions should submit their Equity Plans for Fiscal Year 2025 no later than May 31, 2024.

Public universities and private four-year colleges and universities should submit their plans to EquityPlans@ibhe.org.

Community colleges should submit their plans to the Illinois Community College Board ICCB.EquityPlans@illinois.gov.

IBHE and ICCB will host a series of webinars to provide an overview of the guidance and to delve deeper into aspects of the Equity Plans and Practices to assist institutions in development.

Equity Plan Framework. Each institution should submit an Equity Plan that adopts the following outline and incorporates the information described in each section below.

I. Table of Contents

II. Introduction

A. Institution vision of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility, including:

1. Adopted Institution Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Statements
2. Adopted Institution Mission, Vision, Value Statements
3. Other institutional statements and goals that support DEIA efforts (such as College, Division, or support areas)

B. Institutional vision for Equity

III. Analyze Data: Assess the equity gaps for Black, Latino, low-income, adult, rural students, students with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups, as identified in 110 ILCS 205/9.16.

A. IBHE/ICCB will provide data on current gaps and five-year trends in enrollment, persistence, advancement, completion, and student loan repayment rates, as collected statewide.

B. Provide any additional relevant institution-specific data that you analyzed.

C. Use IBHE/ICCB data and additional institutional data provided from Parts a and b above to identify gaps to be addressed.

D. Identify major barriers in policy and practices that have led to equity gaps for each group identified above.

E. Assess programs, efforts, curricular, or pedagogical changes that have been implemented to address the equity gaps and their outcomes. Describe any “lessons learned” that inform this plan and the practices/policies recommended.

IV. Assess Climate (Campus Climate Surveys):

A. Describe the institution’s methods or approaches used to assess the campus climate and culture, including the campus community’s perceptions and experiences of diversity, equity, belonging, inclusion and other relevant factors. This must include describing the institution’s process for engagement with, at a minimum, staff, faculty, students-including those who are minorities, from marginalized and underrepresented populations, low-income, rural, are individuals with disabilities, adult students, other underrepresented backgrounds. The institution may also include processes to engage local perspectives of key partners providing services to minority, marginalized, and underrepresented populations. Partners may include but are not limited to education, community, policy makers, and employers. Examples of methods or approaches used may include formal campus climate surveys, online surveys, focus groups, etc. Institutions should consider accessibility to ensure inclusion of all minority, marginalized, and underrepresented populations.

B. Indicate how often campus climate surveys or assessments are administered and when the most recent climate assessment was completed. If an assessment has not yet been undertaken or is underway, indicate when it will be completed, and data analyzed.

C. Summarize the key findings of the campus climate assessment that will inform your Equity Plan and Practices.

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- V. **Policies, Strategies, Services, & Practices:** Based on the data analysis, campus climate assessment, evaluation of any current programs/services, outline an **integrated, holistic plan** of research- or practice-informed policies, services, strategies, and practices to be implemented (or continued) to close equity gaps for minority, low-income, rural, adult, individuals with disabilities, or other marginalized, underrepresented groups. Include strategies to close gaps in enrollment, persistence, advancement, completion, and student loan repayment rates. Describe the connection between the analysis, the research, and the strategy chosen.
- A. Outline curricular or pedagogical changes, academic support, student support (including basic needs), faculty/staff diversity efforts, financial assistance (and increasing awareness of financial assistance available), policy, or other changes to be implemented.
 - B. Include a timeline for implementation with appropriate milestones.
 - C. Identify approaches to assess near-term and long-term outcomes of the strategies. Include data and metrics that will be collected and reviewed.
 - D. Describe the institution's approach to the development of the equity plan, including efforts taken to ensure all staff including but not limited to, faculty, student, executive leadership, institutional committees, staff, students, administrative personnel, and transfer coordinators, participated in the design of this plan and how feedback and buy-in at all levels occurred.
 - E. Describe the relationship of this equity plan to other institutional plans (e.g., institution strategic plan, enrollment management plans, other DEIA plans).
 - F. Describe the institution's plans to solicit ongoing feedback and how information will be shared with staff, students, and faculty as well as the community.