EQUITY WORKING GROUP FOR
BLACK STUDENT
ACCESS AND SUCCESS
IN IL HIGHER EDUCATION

**Presentation to
The Illinois Commission on Equitable
Public University Funding**

November 9, 2021

Equity Working Group for Black Student Access and Success in Illinois Higher Education

- Origin: CSU creates statewide Equity Working Group

  "Chicago State University will begin convening higher education thought partners to collectively identify strategies and policies that eliminate barriers to access and completion for Black students." President Z Scott

- Working Group Composition: Leaders from secondary and postsecondary education, elected officials and government agencies, business, nonprofits, philanthropic, and community-based organizations

- Support: Civic Consulting Alliance provided a framework and project management support; the Lumina Foundation provided technical assistance through facilitation

- Outcome: **Cross-industry action plan** for increasing Black student enrollment in higher education institutions across Illinois, for closing the race-based gap in college degree attainment, and improving labor market outcomes for Black families

- Phase 1 (convenings) and Phase 2 (action plan release): completed

- Phase 3: Launch the Center for Education Equity to begin implementation of the action plan

Foundation for our work: Addressing the root causes of equity gaps for Black students at every step of the path to and through higher education

CHICAGO STATE UNIVERSITY

Mission Statement:

The Equity Working Group will identify actions needed to close equity gaps to enable Black students, families and communities to thrive and survive in Illinois.

The Equity Working Group applied this framework to understand root causes and potential interventions

Dropout points for Black students, prioritized by the largest divergence, will be considered...

➤ The Fact Pack analysis will provide a common understanding of the detail for the dropout points

✓ **Transition to post-secondary education**

✓ **Enrollment patterns**

✓ **Persistence to completion**

✓ **Labor market outcomes**

...within seven focus areas and their drivers...

- AFFORDABILITY
- INSTITUTIONAL FUNDING
- INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS & SUPPORT
- ENROLLMENT AND PROGRAM CHOICE
- CLIMATE AND CULTURE
- STUDENT WELL-BEING
- CONNECTION TO CAREER

...for each part of the ecosystem, leading to a solution to drive outcomes.

▪ **High School and alternative paths to secondary completion**

▪ **Community colleges**

▪ **Four-year colleges and universities**

▪ **State legislature**

▪ **Employers**

▪ **Community-based organizations**

▪ **Philanthropy**

Each Focus Area was assessed for potential interventions

1 **AFFORDABILITY**

Can a student cover costs associated with enrolling, completing college and preparing for a career?

2 **INSTITUTIONAL FUNDING**

What incentives are created from funding?

3 **INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS & SUPPORT**

How are placement and service models impacting student success?

4 **ENROLLMENT AND PROGRAM CHOICE**

How are institutions supporting students to enroll?

5 **CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

How is community built for students and graduates so that everyone feels welcome?

6 **STUDENT WELLBEING**

What services/support are available and how are students connected to these resources?

7 **CONNECTION TO CAREER**

Are students connected to employment to make a living and equitable wage?

The plan has actionable solutions for each focus area

Overview of directives in the Action Plan:

AFFORDABILITY

- Make existing financial aid more accessible to Black families
- Accessible barrier-reduction grants to help Black students persist and complete college

INSTITUTIONAL FUNDING

- **Ensure that institutional funding for public universities and community colleges is equitable**

INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS & SUPPORT

- Provide additional institutional supports for Black first-generation students, Black students from low-income backgrounds, Black adult learners, and others for whom the transition to college might be more difficult

ENROLLMENT & PROGRAM CHOICE

- Reform developmental education to shorten time-to-degree
- Make the admissions process more inclusive
- Provide robust, culturally competent advising for Black students

CLIMATE & CULTURE

- Examine campus policies to improve Black student safety and inclusion on campus

STUDENT WELL-BEING

- Provide culturally competent mental health services for Black students on campus and in the workplace

CONNECTION TO CAREER

- Build a stronger bridge between college and career by improving career supports
- Hiring practices to prioritize closing equity gaps in the workforce

Actionable solutions specific for two-year and four-year institutions

AFFORDABILITY

Financial aid:
- Increase culturally relevant financial aid outreach, targeting Black schools and families
- Conduct comprehensive internal audits of financial aid and reprioritize to center equity
- Collect, share, and utilize data on MAP, both for the applicants who receive MAP and those who do not

Barrier reduction:
- Collect institutional data on additional student financial need and grant distribution, and develop in-house early alert systems to identify students who need additional financial resources
- Make institutional barrier-reduction grants more accessible for Black students
- Implement debt-forgiveness for returning students who have small remaining balances
- Form partnerships with other sectors to direct emergency funds to Black students most in need

INSTITUTIONAL FUNDING

Resource allocation:
- Distribute emergency budget funds using an equity lens
- Where budget cuts must be made, distribute cuts equitably, not evenly
- Create an evidence-based funding formula for public universities that prioritizes Black students
- Gather data over time to evaluate the effectiveness of reforms

Actionable solutions specific for two-year and four-year institutions

CLIMATE & CULTURE

Policies:
- Commit to regularly examining school use of campus and/or local police
- Commit to examining student codes of conduct and implementing state standards
- Use campus climate and culture assessments and micro-surveys to guide policy changes

Communities:
- Fund on-campus Black communities
- Remove barriers for Black students to engage with all student spaces on campus
- Collect data and track on retention, persistence, and completion rates for Black students who participate in Black student communities

Hiring:
- Prioritize diversity in faculty hiring

Actionable solutions specific for two-year and four-year institutions

STUDENT WELL-BEING

Mental health:
- Require mental health providers to be licensed therapists and trained in cultural competencies and implicit bias
- Require all faculty and staff to be trained in culturally competent and anti-racist mental health awareness

CONNECTION TO CAREER

Career support:
- Allocate resources to career centers
- Connect Black students with mentors who will help guide them through college and into the workforce
- Provide career-field specific scholarships for Black students pursuing specific career paths

Collaboration with corporate:
- Increase collaboration between university faculty and workforce/industry partners:
    - Build partnerships to give Black students more opportunities to interact with employers on campus
    - Build cross-sector partnerships to connect Black students to careers

Next steps to ensure the work is a living initiative

✓ **The implementation work will be housed at the Illinois Center for Education Equity** within the Institute for Solutions of Urban Populations, part of the Illinois Innovation Network

✓ **An Advisory Council will be appointed,** to help oversee and provide strategic guidance for the Center's director and staff

Phase 2: Action Plan Release

- Released in May 2021
- Media release strategy is initiated with materials for Members to amplify the work
- With the Action Plan release, a roadshow will take place to share with new audiences across different sectors

Phase 3: Center Launch

- Campaign for financial support to support the retention of the Center's director and team
- Appoint EWG members and other industry leaders to cross-sector Advisory Council
- The IBHE Strategic Plan has incorporated elements from the draft EWG Action Plan

Phase 4: Ongoing Implementation

- Using metrics developed in the Action Plan, analyze data and track progress for recommendations
- Re-convene the group bi-annually to update members on progress and share successes
- Publish the implementation process annually
- Host programming to platform and promote education equity

Close and Questions

" The death of George Floyd has further widened a wound in America that never seems to heal. We must consider the real work that will bring meaningful change. Now more than ever, our students are needed to be developed into community leaders to provide new directions towards social justice for lasting change.

- Zaldwaynaka Scott, Esq.

June 1, 2020 statement from President Scott regarding George Floyd's murder and Chicago State University's decision to lead an Equity Working Group