ILLINOIS COMMISSION ON
EQUITABLE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Welcome to the Illinois Commission on Equitable Public University Funding. The goal of the Commission is to make recommendations on "specific data-driven criteria and approaches to the General Assembly to adequately, equitably, and stably fund public universities in this State and to evaluate existing funding methods."

Over the next 22 months, the Commission will review relevant content, hear from experts in the field, model a funding formula, craft recommendations and submit a final report to the General Assembly no later than July 1, 2023.

Background
During the 2021 legislative session, the Illinois legislature passed and the Governor signed SB 815 (P.A. 102-0570), establishing the Commission on Equitable Public University Funding (Commission). The Illinois Board of Higher Education's (IBHE) strategic plan, A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth, outlines the need to invest in higher education in a way that is equitable, stable and sufficient, creating core principles that will inform this work.

The Commission must provide a report of its findings to the General Assembly no later than July 1, 2023. The legislation notes that the report must include recommendations for an equity-centered funding model to distribute state resources to public universities and outlines several criteria that need to be addressed as part of the recommendations.

Logistics
The first meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 9, 2021 from 1:00pm to 3:30pm CT. Beginning with Meeting #2, each of the Commission meetings will be scheduled for three hours. We ask that you come prepared to engage thoughtfully and bring your ideas and expertise to the table during these meetings.

Next Steps & First Meeting
In accordance with the legislation, the Commission will meet at least quarterly through July 2023. A full list of meeting dates will be provided following the first meeting. At this time, meetings will be conducted virtually over WebEx. You will receive a WebEx link and calendar invite for the meeting.

Points of Contact
Should there be any questions or concerns, please contact one of the following Points of Contact:

Ja'Neane Minor	Katie Lynne Morton
Chief of Staff	Associate
Illinois Board of Higher Education	HCM Strategists
minor@ibhe.org	katie_lynne_morton@hcmstrategists.com

Meeting Schedule and High-Level Topics

Meeting 1: Welcome, Introductions and Overview of Commission's Work
- November 9, 2021

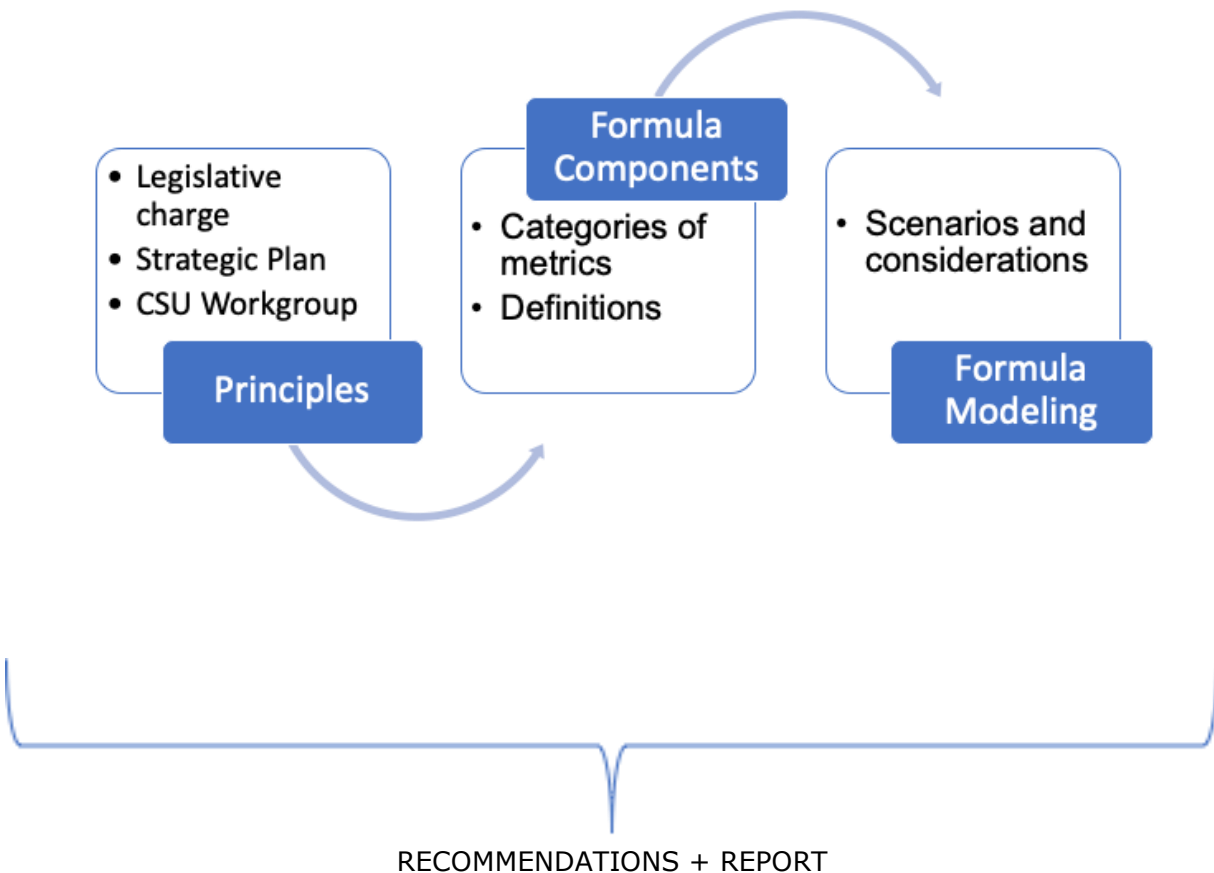**Meetings 2-5: Research and State Practices**
- February 2022
- April 2022
- June 2022
- September 2022

Meetings 6-7: Formula Components, Modeling + Review
- December 2022
- February 2023

Meetings 8-9: Recommendations + Report Development
- April 2023
- June 2023

RECOMMENDATIONS + REPORT

ILLINOIS COMMISSION ON
EQUITABLE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Background
Please find P.A. 102-0570 attached at the end of this document.

Open Meetings Act: The Commission meets the definition of a "public body" as defined in Section 2 of the Open Meetings Act (5 ILCS 120) and it shall conduct all meetings in accordance with the requirements of that law. A quorum of the Commission is 17 members, and a "meeting" occurs when a majority of the quorum of the Commission (9) engages in "contemporaneous interactive communication" about Commission business. Commission members are responsible for compliance with the Open Meetings Act, including the completion of mandatory training through the Illinois Attorney General.

Regular Meetings: The Commission shall hold at least one meeting per quarter for a total of nine (9) meetings. All regular meetings shall be publicized through a public notice on the IBHE website listing the dates, times, and places of such meetings.

Meeting Locations: All meetings of the Commission shall be held in locations that are convenient and open to the public. To the extent feasible, meetings shall be held in locations that support video conferencing to promote attendance of the Members and the broadest possible public participation. The Commission will endeavor to stream audio and video of all public meetings.

The Commission will plan to meet through video or audio conference, during such times when a disaster proclamation is in place, related to public health concerns and consistent with the provisions of the Open Meetings Act; the head of the public body will determine if an in-person meeting is not practical. For any such teleconference or virtual meetings, the Commission shall ensure the public is able to observe and comment on the proceedings virtually or by attending an accessible Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) or other state location.

Public Notice: Public notice of all meetings shall meet the requirements of the Open Meetings Act. At a minimum, public notice of the annual meeting schedule shall be given by posting a copy of the schedule at the IBHE offices in Springfield and on the IBHE website, including the dates, times and locations of all scheduled meetings. Notices of individual meetings shall be posted 48 hours in advance on the IBHE website and at the IBHE offices in Springfield. The meeting notice shall include the preliminary agenda.

Public Participation: Commission meetings shall be open to the public and public participation is encouraged. A public comment period will be part of the agenda of each meeting. Public comments are limited to three (3) minutes

per person. Written comments may also be submitted for review by the members. Public comments should be limited to matters on the agenda or related to the purpose and duties of the Commission.

Reporting: The Commission shall issue a report based upon its findings to the Governor and General Assembly on or before July 1, 2023.

Meeting Norms
We will:
- Be prepared and come ready to engage. Please read the agenda and complete any pre-work ahead of time.
- Respect everyone's time by starting and ending on time.
- Ask questions for clarification to help avoid making assumptions. Assume good intent.
- Make sure everyone's voice is heard.
- Balance your participation - speak and listen.
- Listen actively to colleagues without interrupting others.
- Utilize virtual meeting video feature unless it makes participating impossible due to a poor internet connection.
- Capture off-topic items in a 'parking lot' and agree to discuss them later at a more appropriate time.
- Challenge past assumptions and sacred cows.
- Be concise and to the point.
- Be open to feedback.
- Be sure your information is accurate.
- Separate our personal feelings from what's best for the group/students.
- Look ahead to positive action.

Everyone is responsible for upholding the norms. Please acknowledge if you notice we are not doing so.

Guiding Questions
- What is the current state of Illinois public university finance?
- What are the various factors and conditions that influence how the state invests in universities?
- What are the implications for advancing equity and other state goals and priorities?
- What are recommendations to establish a more adequate, equitable and stable funding system?

Goals & Scope
- Create a shared understanding of how Illinois' public universities are funded and the alignment of these approaches to critical state goals and objectives.
- Cultivate information from other state approaches for financing postsecondary education that promotes equitable access and success.
- Consider how to address the various functions of a university and account for different institutional missions.
- Develop recommendations for an adequate, equitable and stable formula centered around increasing access and success for underrepresented and historically

underserved student populations while reflecting the varied missions of Illinois' public universities.

Commission Members

Name	Title	Organization
Kimberly Lightford, Co-Chair	Senate Majority Leader	Illinois General Assembly
Carol Ammons, Co-Chair	Representative	Illinois General Assembly
John Atkinson, Co-Chair	Board Chair	Illinois Board of Higher Education
Martin Torres, Co-Chair	Deputy Governor of Education	Office of the Governor
Scott Bennett	Senator	Illinois General Assembly
Dan Brady	Deputy Republican Leader	Illinois General Assembly
Dale Fowler	Senator	Illinois General Assembly
Mike Marron	Representative	Illinois General Assembly
Chapin Rose	Assistant Republican Leader	Illinois General Assembly
Katie Stuart	Representative	Illinois General Assembly
Sheila Caldwell	Vice President for Antiracism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Andreas Cangellaris	Provost	University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Lisa Castillo-Richmond	Executive Director	Partnership for College Completion
Dr. Wendi Wills El-Amin	Associate Dean of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion	Southern Illinois University School of Medicine
Cherita Ellens	President and CEO	Women Employed
Lisa Freeman	President	Northern Illinois University
Gloria Gibson	President	Northeastern Illinois University
David Glassman	President	Eastern Illinois University
Cheryl Green	President	Governors State University
Dr. Diane Hayes	Professor	Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
Guiyou Huang	President	Western Illinois University
Terri Kinzy	President	Illinois State University
Brandon Kyle	Vice-Chair	IBHE Student Advisory Council; Governors State University Student
Dan Mahony	President	Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
Ralph Martire	Executive Director	Center for Tax and Budget Accountability
Dennis Papini	Provost	University of Illinois Springfield
Javier Reyes	Provost	University of Illinois Chicago
Zaldwaynaka "Z" Scott	President	Chicago State University
Robin Steans	President	Advance Illinois
Respicio Vazquez	General Counsel	Elgin Community College
Simón Weffer	Associate Professor	Northern Illinois University
Jack Wuest	Executive Director	Alternative Schools Network
Eric Zarnikow	Executive Director	Illinois Student Assistance Commission

ILLINOIS COMMISSION ON
EQUITABLE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Illinois Commission on Equitable Public University Funding
Meeting #1, November 9, 2021 from 1:00pm-3:30pm CT
via WebEx

MEETING OBJECTIVES
1. Share an overview and introduction of the Commission.
2. Create an environment for collaboration.
3. Review logistics and offer space for level-setting.

AGENDA

1:00 pm   **Welcome & Background**
Legislative Co-Chairs
Kimberly Lightford, Senate Majority Leader, Illinois General Assembly
Carol Ammons, Representative, Illinois General Assembly

1:10 pm   **Introductions**
Co-Chairs, Commission Members, HCM Strategists

1:50 pm   **Overview of Charge**
Co-Chairs
Martin Torres, Deputy Governor of Education, Office of the Governor
John Atkinson, Board Chair, IBHE

2:15 pm   **IBHE *A Thriving Illinois* Principles for an Equitable, Stable, and Sufficient funding system**
Ginger Ostro, Executive Director, IBHE

2:30 pm   **Chicago State University Equity Working Group on Black Student Access and Success Findings & Recommendations**
President Zaldwaynaka ("Z") Scott, Chicago State University

2:45 pm   **Logistics and Workplan**
Martha Snyder, Senior Director, HCM Strategists

3:05 pm   **Public Comment**
Facilitated by Toya Barnes-Teamer, Principal, HCM Strategists
Instructions for Members of the Public:
Please use the chat to indicate if you wish to make public comment and kindly wait for your name to be called for your turn to speak. Public comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per person.

3:20 pm   **Next Steps and Looking Ahead to Meeting #2**
Martha Snyder, Senior Director, HCM Strategists

3:30 pm   **Closing Announcements and Adjournment**
Kimberly Lightford, Senate Majority Leader, Illinois General Assembly
Toya Barnes-Teamer, Principal, HCM Strategists
Next meeting: February 2022

Meeting notices are posted on the IBHE webpage.

AN ACT concerning education.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois, represented in the General Assembly:

Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the Commission on Equitable Public University Funding Act.

Section 5. Findings. The General Assembly finds all of the following:

(1) Historical and continued systemic racism has created significant disparities in college access, affordability, and completion for Black, Latinx, and other underrepresented and historically underserved students in this State.

(2) Improvements in postsecondary access, completion, and success rates are required in order to meet State goals for equity in attainment and will require further investments in the higher education system to support historically underrepresented and underserved groups, including Black, Latinx, and low-income students in particular.

(3) This State's approach to funding education has contributed to racial and socioeconomic inequities in access to resources and educational outcomes.

(4) Great strides have been made in this State in

addressing inequity in funding the kindergarten through grade 12 public school system, including the adoption of an evidence-based funding formula, which has resulted in new funds being targeted to the highest-need districts.

(5) Adequate, equitable, and stable investment in higher education is the key to ensuring that every institution of higher education can provide adequate academic, financial, and social-emotional support and services that improve persistence and completion.

(6) In this State, higher education appropriations have effectively been cut in half since fiscal year 2002. Institutions of higher education serving higher percentages of Black students are more reliant on State funds and have been disproportionately harmed by this disinvestment in higher education.

(7) As a result of historic underfunding and level cuts to institutions of higher education, this State's public universities have needed to increase tuition to make up the funding shortfalls.

(8) Combined with the high cost of college and insufficient State financial aid, racial income and wealth disparities caused by structural racism contribute to the accumulation of student debt and make college enrollment and persistence more challenging for Black and Latinx students.

(9) Despite similar numbers of Black high school

graduates, about 25,000 fewer Black students enrolled in institutions of higher education in this State in 2018 compared to 2008.

(10) State appropriations make it possible for colleges to provide essential academic services, social-emotional support and services, and institutional aid to students to improve student persistence and completion.

(11) This State must strategically invest in higher education to address wide disparities in degree completion. Public community colleges currently graduate Black and Latinx students at a rate of 14% and 26% within 3 years, respectively, compared to 38% of white students. At public universities, Black and Latinx students currently graduate at a rate of 34% and 49%, respectively, compared to 66% of white students, within 6 years.

(12) This State has a moral obligation and economic interest in dismantling and reforming structures that create or exacerbate racial and socioeconomic inequities in higher education.

(13) This State benefits from a public higher education system that receives adequate and stable resources for student success and that strategically uses those resources to maximize the potential of each public institution of higher education and to maximize the benefits to this State, including, but not limited to,

improved college access and attainment and higher median

wages for all residents, reduced income inequalities,

improved economic output and innovation, increased access

and engagement in world-class research opportunities, and

improved college enrollment, persistence, and completion

of underrepresented and historically underserved students,

including Black and Latinx students and students from

low-income families.

Section 10. Commission on Equitable Public University

Funding; purpose.

(a) There is created the Commission on Equitable Public

University Funding.

(b) The purpose of the Commission is to, at a minimum,

recommend specific data-driven criteria and approaches to the

General Assembly to adequately, equitably, and stably fund

public universities in this State and to evaluate the existing

funding methods used for public universities.

Section 15. Membership; administrative support;

compensation.

(a) The membership of the Commission shall include, at a

minimum:

(1) One member of the Senate appointed by the

President of the Senate, who shall serve as

co-chairperson.

(2) One member of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, who shall serve as co-chairperson.

(3) The chairperson of the Board of Higher Education or a designee, who shall serve as co-chairperson.

(4) One member appointed by the Governor, who shall serve as co-chairperson.

(5) One member of the Senate appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate.

(6) One member of the House of Representatives appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.

(7) The chairperson of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission or a designee.

(8) The chairperson of the Higher Education Committee of the House of Representatives or a designee.

(9) The Minority Spokesperson of the Higher Education Committee of the House of Representatives or a designee.

(10) The chairperson of the Higher Education Committee of the Senate or a designee.

(11) The Minority Spokesperson of the Higher Education Committee of the Senate or a designee.

(12) Twelve members representing the public universities in this State each appointed by the President of each public university.

(13) One member representing a higher education

advocacy organization focused on eliminating disparities in college completion in this State for low-income and first-generation college students and students of color appointed by the Board of Higher Education.

(14) One member representing a statewide advocacy organization focused on improving educational and employment opportunities for women and adults appointed by the Board of Higher Education.

(15) One member representing a statewide advocacy organization focused on developing an equitable birth-to-career educational system appointed by the Board of Higher Education.

(16) One member representing a statewide organization that advocates for alternative education and bridge programs and the re-enrollment of students in this State appointed by the Board of Higher Education.

(17) One member representing a fiscal policy research organization focused on the impact that State-level budget and tax policies have on equitable education funding solutions appointed by the Board of Higher Education.

(18) Two members representing an organization that advocates on behalf of public university faculty members who are each employed by a different university appointed by the Board of Higher Education.

(19) One health care expert from the public higher education arena appointed by the Board of Higher

Education, in consultation with the presidents and chancellors of the public universities.

(20) One member who has legal expertise in higher education funding and finance appointed by the Board of Higher Education.

(21) One postsecondary student enrolled at a public university in this State appointed by the Board of Higher Education.

(b) The Board of Higher Education shall recognize and consider the representation of underrepresented and historically underserved groups, including those who are Black, Latinx, or from low-income families, and the racial and geographical diversity of this State when making appointments to the Commission.

(c) The co-chairpersons may identify and invite experts to speak to the Commission on issues, including, but not limited to, higher education funding, finance, health care, and research and development.

(d) The Board of Higher Education shall provide administrative support to the Commission, including any related workgroups, and shall be responsible for administering the Commission's operations and ensuring that the requirements of this Act are met.

(e) The members of the Commission shall serve without compensation for their services as members of the Commission.

Section 20. Meetings; reports.

(a) The Commission shall meet at least once per quarter beginning no later than October 15, 2021.

(b) On or before July 1, 2023, the Commission shall deliver to the General Assembly and publish on the Board of Higher Education's Internet website or otherwise make publicly available a report on the Commission's recommendations, including specific criteria and funding approaches in accordance with all applicable laws, to establish an equity-based funding model for the allocation of State funds to public universities. The recommendations included in the report must be equity-centered and consider all of the following areas:

    (1) Remediating inequities in funding that have led to disparities in access, affordability, and completion for underrepresented and historically underserved student groups, including students who are Black, Latinx, or from low-income families.

    (2) Ensuring that this State adequately, equitably, and stably funds public institutions of higher education in a manner that recognizes historical and current inequities impacting underrepresented minorities' higher education access and completion.

    (3) Providing incentives to all 4-year institutions of higher education in this State to enroll underrepresented and historically underserved student groups, including

students who are Black, Latinx, or from low-income families, in proportion to the diversity of this State's population.

(4) Allowing ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement of the public university funding models by requiring transparency and accountability in how State appropriations are expended and identifying a mechanism to study and review the implementation of any funding model developed and the long-term implications of this Act.

(5) Creating guidelines for how funding is distributed during times of significant economic hardship, as defined by the Commission, so that public institutions of higher education are able to adequately, equitably, and stably serve students.

(6) Ensuring that this State adequately and stably funds public institutions of higher education that serve underrepresented and historically underserved student groups, including students who are Black, Latinx, or from low-income families, and graduate and professional students, including doctors, dentists, pharmacists, and veterinarians.

(7) Supporting the diverse individual mission of each public university, including its commitment to research and health care enterprises that serve and enhance the well-being of the residents of this State.

(8) Fostering the economic activity and innovation

generated by a university's activities, while recognizing
the impact historic funding inequities may have had on the
university's activities.

(9) Taking into consideration the percentage of
institutional aid provided from an institution's annual
budget.

(10) Taking into consideration the number of
undergraduate students engaged in research at each
university.

(11) Supporting institutional efforts to recruit and
retain world-class faculty and university leaders.

(12) Ensuring stable and adequate funding for all
institutions and that all universities are held harmless
to their current funding level. The Commission may
consider and report approaches to and the impact of a hold
harmless funding provision for institutions of higher
education as part of its final recommendations.

(13) Taking into consideration the long-term
implications and outcomes of the funding systems.

The recommendations must fulfill the principles
established by the Board of Higher Education's Strategic Plan.
The recommendations may also be informed by the data-driven
findings and recommendations established by the Chicago State
University Equity Working Group and other groups researching
equity in higher education and higher education funding and be
aligned to this State's postsecondary attainment goal and

related equity targets.

   Section 25. Compliance. Notwithstanding any other law or
provision to the contrary, all public institutions of higher
education and State agencies regulating public institutions of
higher education shall furnish such data and information to
the Commission as the Commission deems necessary to fulfill
the requirements of this Act.

   Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon
becoming law.

A Thriving Illinois:
Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth

From the Illinois Board of Higher Education

To the People of Illinois:

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), whose mission is to create and sustain a world-class educational system in Illinois that allows students from all communities and backgrounds to reach their full potential and achieve their dreams, respectfully submits the IBHE higher education Strategic Plan – **A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth.**

IBHE's work has begun to shine a light on the reality that not all Illinois residents have the same opportunities to thrive and significant gaps exist that disproportionately leave behind Black, Latinx, adult and rural learners.

Weeks before the initial planned launch of the strategic planning process, the COVID-19 pandemic changed our lives and the ways we all engage with the higher education system. In addition to the pandemic, 2020 was a year of reckoning as the realities of racism and injustice caused massive displays of protest and civil unrest. That reckoning caused colleges and universities, both public and private organizations, to recommit to the work of equity.

This strategic plan was also developed in a time where changes in the nature of work are accelerating and innovative disrupters to traditional postsecondary education are growing. Under the leadership of Governor JB Pritzker and the General Assembly, Illinois is reinvesting in higher education despite long-term economic uncertainty.

These realities informed our process and sharpened our focus on ways that we can create more fair and future-ready educational experiences that benefit individual learners and the entire state of Illinois. This challenge is our opportunity. To unlock the economic and social progress Illinois needs to thrive we must be equipped to meet these learners where they are.

Higher education institutions have shown that they have the power to take on the world's problems, offer paths towards transformative change, and create better futures for individuals, families, and communities across Illinois. Our vision of a thriving Illinois is one with an inclusive economy with broad prosperity and equitable paths to opportunity for all, especially those facing the greatest barriers. Now is the time to realize this vision through educational paths that drive toward equity, sustainability, and growth.

The 25 strategies outlined in this plan are designed to accomplish these three goals:

- Equity: Close the equity gaps for students who have historically been left behind
- Sustainability: Build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions
- Growth: Increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth

Higher education has always been a path to a better future, for individuals, communities, and the entire state of Illinois. The challenge of the next decade is to focus on creating broad paths to a prosperous future for every learner, leader, and community that we engage. We can do this with a commitment to a higher education ecosystem that reinforces equity, sustainability, and growth. That's the vision of a thriving Illinois.

John Atkinson
Chair
Illinois Board of Higher Education

Ginger Ostro
Executive Director
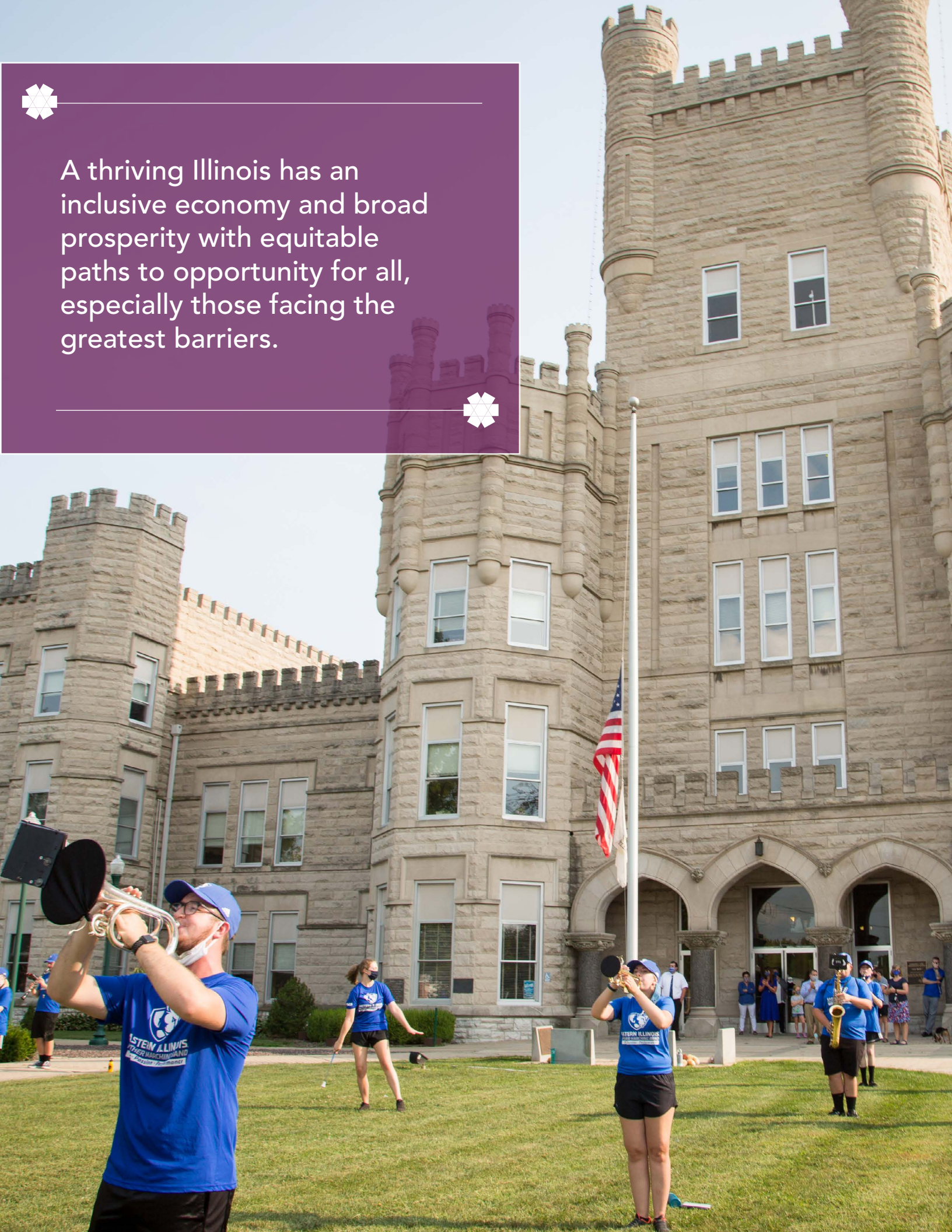Illinois Board of Higher Education

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A thriving Illinois has an inclusive economy and broad prosperity with equitable paths to opportunity for all, especially those facing the greatest barriers.

A Thriving Illinois

Over the past century, Illinois' world-class higher education system has changed millions of lives and made our state an economic powerhouse. Our higher education institutions support students to become the next generation of thinkers, leaders and researchers who contribute to communities, culture, service and democratic society. Employers, too, value and hire graduates who are adept at critical thinking, solving complex problems, working on diverse teams, and who are civically engaged.

Higher education institutions also serve as the cultural and social anchor of their communities, often offering access to theater, art, music, lectures, sports. Institutional clinics and medical facilities lead world-renowned research and care, serving those close to home and those from far away. Faculty across our colleges and universities engage in teaching, scholarship and research that create new knowledge, pushes the bounds of innovation and artistry and advances technologies.

Our universities are leaders in fundamental, basic and applied research, whether it is in areas as diverse as high energy physics that involves collaboration among public universities and national laboratories, the impact of severe weather on agriculture or best practices for trauma-informed teaching. The societal benefits of the research enterprise are now being recognized in the worldwide effort to combat COVID-19. Universities contributed through epidemiological modeling, development of the rapid saliva test, invention of emergency ventilators, new treatments, and the development of vaccines, as well as providing health care through hospitals and clinics.

Our community colleges prepare students for careers in every industry in the state, lead the country in preparing students for transfer into four-year institutions, and connect directly with Illinois' K-12 system to promote the seamless transition into higher education. Community colleges are intimately connected to their local employers, reaching 9,500 employers across the state and providing career instruction in over 4,000 programs that position students to earn a living wage, to advance in their careers and to meet the local workforce needs of their communities.

> **Higher education institutions have shown that they have the power to take on the world's problems, offer paths towards transformative change, and create better futures for individuals, families, and communities that make Illinois thrive.**

Higher education institutions have shown that they have the power to take on the world's problems, offer paths towards transformative change, and create better futures for individuals, families, and communities that make Illinois *thrive*.

A thriving Illinois has an inclusive economy and broad prosperity with equitable paths to opportunity for all, especially those facing the greatest barriers.

To sustain a thriving state, we must create a more equitable reality. For too long, African American, Latinx, low-income students, rural students, and working adults have been left behind. Together, we must change that.

Illinois has the diverse human capital base to drive economic growth and a higher education system to ensure the diverse workforce has the tools necessary to lead our growing economy. **Educational equity and economic growth are inseparable.**

Now is the time to realize this vision of a thriving collective future for individuals, families and communities across Illinois through educational paths to drive toward **equity, sustainability and growth.**

ILLINOIS' HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

12 public universities	**48** community colleges	**100+** independent institutions	**40+** out-of-state institutions with Illinois presence	**250+** postsecondary schools

Illinois' higher education system includes:

- 12 public universities
- 39 community college districts with 48 community colleges
- Over 100 independent institutions
- Over 40 out-of-state institutions with a presence in Illinois
- Over 250 postsecondary schools that offer short-term training

3 Goals: Equity, Sustainability & Growth

The strategies outlined in this plan are designed to close equity gaps, create educational paths that are financially sustainable for students and higher education institutions, and foster economic and institutional growth for a thriving Illinois.

EQUITY

Close the equity gaps for students who have been left behind.

SUSTAINABILITY

Build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions.

GROWTH

Increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth.

EQUITY

It's time to close the equity gaps that have left too many students behind.

Illinois' population is becoming more and more diverse, and the labor market increasingly demands post-high school education and ongoing training for all but entry-level jobs. This means the Illinois higher education system must do much better in serving students of color, low-income students, rural students and working adults.

Data shows equity gaps throughout the educational path for too many students. We have untapped potential in the adults who haven't yet received a postsecondary degree/credential.

We need a higher education ecosystem in Illinois focused on meeting the needs and supporting the success of historically underserved and underrepresented students. Today there is no "typical" higher education student and no single path that serves all students. We need broad paths and specific strategies to progress for all regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, geography, or age—for high school graduates and adult learners—so all can contribute to and benefit from economic growth. *It is both a moral imperative and an economic imperative.*

It is long past time for our educational system to recognize and address these needs and be accountable for closing equity gaps.

To thrive, this plan calls on us to close equity gaps that disproportionally impact African American, Latinx and other students of color, low-income students, working adults, and students from rural communities.

SUSTAINABILITY

Illinois needs educational paths that are financially sustainable for students and for higher education institutions to meet our vision of a thriving Illinois. **If we believe in the power of higher education to transform lives and create a better future, we must invest more and invest through an equitable, stable, and sufficient funding system.** We want higher education to be affordable for students and families. We need a higher education system that is financially ready for the future. One with equitable, reliable investments to serve our students and our state.

Until the recent investments by Governor JB Pritzker and the General Assembly, Illinois' long history of underfunding higher education has made many students reasonably hesitant to commit to our public colleges and universities, while others have shouldered massive individual debts to make up for funding failures and insufficient state and federal student financial aid. These uncertainties not only lost Illinois valuable intellectual and economic capital in those students who never returned, but the local economies that have grown around our colleges and universities also suffered.

As student and workforce needs have changed, the state funding system simply has not kept up. It is time to build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions of higher learning. That will build a stronger financial future for Illinois.

To thrive, this plan calls for reliable, equitable and sufficient state investments through a new higher education funding system.

GROWTH

Talent, research, and innovation drive our economy. Illinois cannot thrive without a future-ready workforce plus the institutional research and innovation that are crucial to driving economic growth. **To get there, we need a strong, nimble, and innovative higher education system, including career education, inclusive talent development, innovation and job creation for tomorrow.** Institutional contributions to idea generation, innovation, invention, economic engagement and community development are essential for the Illinois to thrive.

The pandemic has also shown us how quickly the nature of work can evolve. Even before the virus, we have long known that the future of work looks very different from the past. More people change jobs mid-career and have many employers throughout their working lives. Our more fluid career trajectories call for nimble educational models that can meet student needs beyond traditional two- and four-year models that come directly after high school.

To grow our state, our higher education institutions must lead the way in educating and preparing people for the future of work so that students can navigate at all stages of their careers. Regional higher education and employer partnerships are essential to preparing

the workforce for the growth areas outlined in the state's economic development plan. These partnerships can build upon the state's community colleges that continue to be the economic engines of their local communities.

Higher education-led innovation can also drive inclusive economic growth. Investments in efforts like the Discovery Partners Institute and the Illinois Innovation Network reach across the state and anchor more than enterprise—they can also support a more inclusive economy.

We must align our higher education strategies with our economic development plans and our understanding about the future of work to build more robust, more diverse talent pipelines and to support research and innovation that create new enterprises. Together higher education strengthens Illinois communities.

To thrive, this plan calls for an increase in diverse talent pipelines prepared for the future of work, engagement of employers and industry leaders, and innovation toward inclusive economic growth and development.

Higher education has always been a path to a better future, for individuals, communities, and the entire state of Illinois. The challenge of the next decade is to focus on creating broad, sustainable, and equitable paths to a prosperous future for every learner, leader, and community that we engage. We can do this with a commitment to a higher education ecosystem that reinforces equity, sustainability, and growth. **That's the picture of a thriving Illinois.**

The challenge of the next decade is to focus on creating broad, sustainable, and equitable paths to a prosperous future for every learner, leader, and community that we engage.

Higher education institutions are among the most important economic engines both locally and in the State of Illinois. Collectively, higher education:

Educates nearly 775,000 students annually

Employs approximately 165,000 people across the state

Serves every county in the state with extension offices and other outreach activities

Trains most of the *doctors, dentists, social workers, nurses, other healthcare workers,* as well as many other essential workers in the state

Represents more than $50 billion annual impact on the state's economy

Strategic Planning Process Overview
A Plan Developed for the Future but Grounded in the Present

A THRIVING
ILLINOIS

IBHE

2021

11

A Plan Developed for the Future but Grounded in the Present

The Illinois Board of Higher Education planned to launch the strategic planning process in early 2020 with a focus on equity.

However, the planning process was put on hold as the state, and the world, focused on health and safety. Institutions pivoted quickly to remote learning to keep students on track and to new operating models to keep employees safe. Later that spring, the world was shocked by the killing of African Americans George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery.

We decided we had waited long enough to begin the strategic planning process that would elevate the role and outline the steps for higher education to close equity gaps and bring us closer to a truly thriving Illinois. We launched the strategic planning process in Fall of 2020. While strategic planning was underway, in the Spring of 2021, we were shocked by the killing of women of Asian descent in Atlanta. This added even more urgency to our work.

Now, as we prepared to release *A Thriving Illinois*, major changes to higher education policy were proposed by President Biden and are being contemplated at the federal level, including two years of free community college, subsidized tuition at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) for families making under $125,000; grants to MSIs to build capacity and to prepare graduate students for careers in health; expanding funding for future teachers, special education teachers, and teachers seeking additional certifications. The President's proposals also call for universal preschool for 3- and 4- year-olds and investments in the early childhood workforce.

Each of these proposals, if adopted, would mean fundamental changes to higher education. While the strategic plan could not have anticipated these federal changes, the strategies outlined here are closely aligned with the federal goals and mean Illinois will be well positioned to be a national leader.

The impact of *A Thriving Illinois* will be felt not just in higher education but throughout the state, as students of color, low-income students, and other historically underserved students have access to new opportunities that will enable them—and our state—to thrive.

> We decided we had waited long enough to begin the strategic planning process that would elevate the role and outline the steps for higher education to close equity gaps and bring us closer to a truly thriving Illinois.

Strategic Planning Process Overview
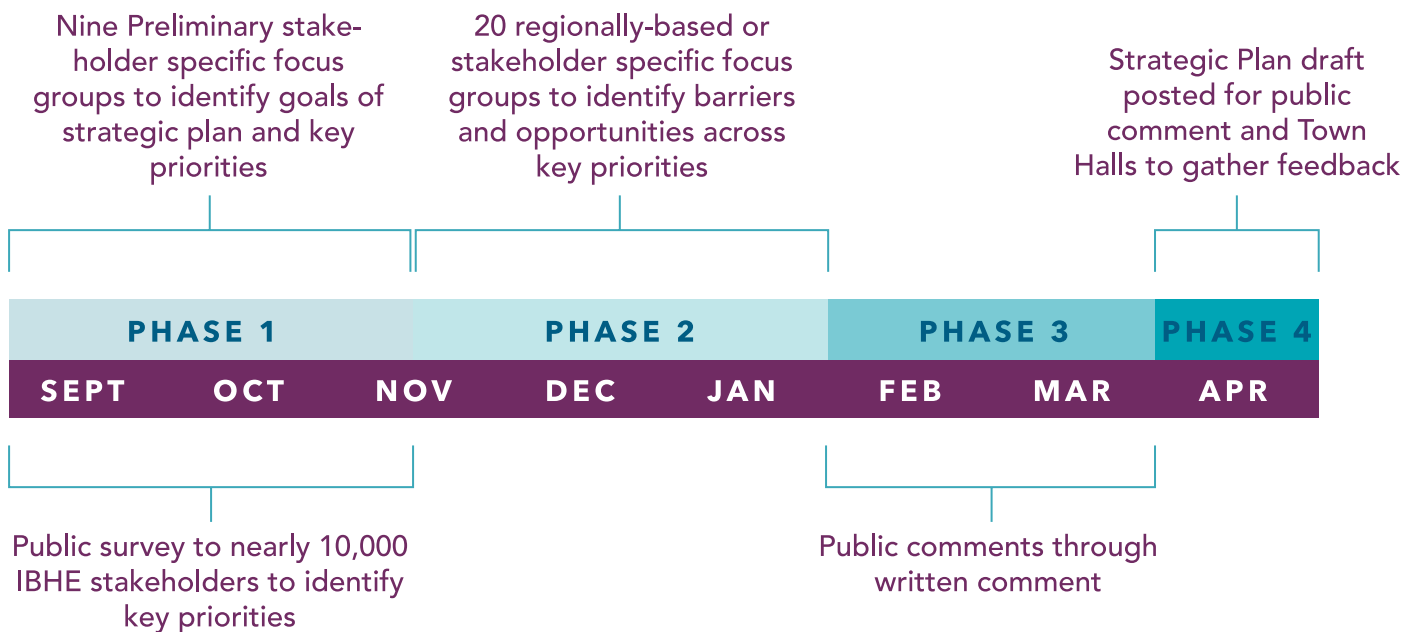## *A Plan Built on Community Engagement*

A Plan Built on Community Engagement

The strategic planning process was grounded in community engagement. We began with a series of early focus groups to answer the questions of why a higher education strategic plan is important and what it should accomplish. From there, a survey of a broad group of stakeholders, including educators and staff throughout the P20 system, students, business leaders, community organizations, and others, received nearly 10,000 responses identifying priorities for the strategic plan to address.

As the Board outlined three goals built on this input, additional focus groups involving 170 people were held regionally and for specific stakeholder groups to identify opportunities and barriers to achieving the goals. Then, the Board convened a 37-person Advisory Committee to shepherd the strategy-development process, engaging nine Design Work Groups of 200 stakeholders, including Board members of the IBHE, ICCB, ISAC, institution trustees, presidents, faculty, staff, community organizations, advocates, philanthropy, and other experts, to develop detailed recommendations.

Draft documents were posted on the IBHE Strategic Planning website and open for public comment. Two virtual Town Halls were held to receive public comment on the draft plan. Throughout the process, the Board held five meetings to discuss progress on the Strategic Plan and accepted public comment at each.

Additional information on the engagement process is included in the Appendix.

Nine Preliminary stake-holder specific focus groups to identify goals of strategic plan and key priorities

20 regionally-based or stakeholder specific focus groups to identify barriers and opportunities across key priorities

Strategic Plan draft posted for public comment and Town Halls to gather feedback

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4
SEPT OCT NOV	DEC JAN	FEB MAR	APR

Public survey to nearly 10,000 IBHE stakeholders to identify key priorities

Public comments through written comment

Core Principles

Students are our priority.

We exist to serve students—at whatever age and stage—and provide them with an excellent, well-rounded education and supports that meet their needs, give them access to careers and enhanced upward mobility, and foster their civic engagement and leadership potential.

Equity drives our system.

We make equity-driven decisions, elevating the voices of those who have been underserved, and actively identify and remove systemic barriers that have prevented students of color, first generation college students, low-income students, adult learners, rural students, and others from accessing and succeeding in higher education. Access and affordability are embedded in our definition of equity.

Higher education is a public good that enriches life.

We depend on higher education to preserve, expand, and transmit knowledge, offer solutions to society's challenges, serve as a civic partner, and enrich life. Research at our institutions expands understanding and drives innovation and economic development. Learning is enhanced when students participate in research and hands-on experiences. Liberal arts and humanities ensure we support the whole student and better understand the human condition. Institutions are vibrant anchors of communities.

Our diverse institutions work in concert.

We seamlessly serve the educational and workforce needs of our life-long learners across the state's institutions. We value the diversity of our institutions and programs including public and private, research and regional, four-year and two-year institutions, and credential and certificate programs. We will operate as an aligned and articulated system to meet student and state needs.

We reinforce the P-20 education continuum.

We are connected to all parts of the education system, reinforcing relationships so that students have a seamless educational experience independent of where they enter or transfer. We embrace our role in developing the educator workforce.
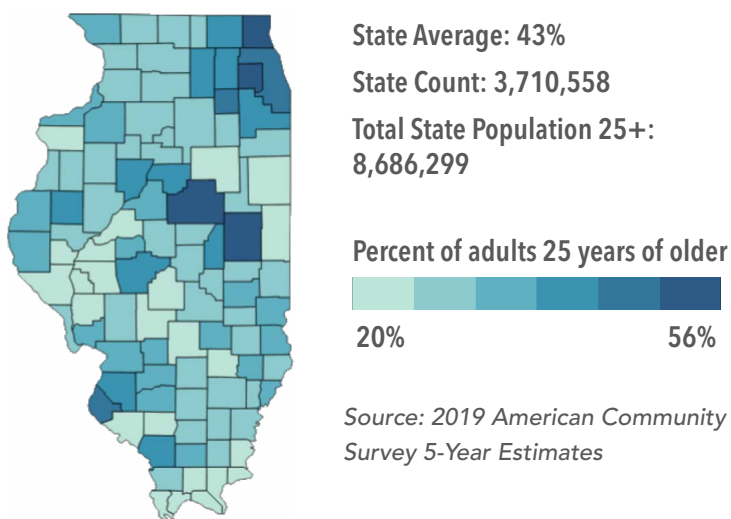
Talent, research, and innovation drive our economy.

We see a strong, nimble, and innovative higher education system, including career education, as essential for the state's talent development, innovation, job creation, and economic growth.

Postsecondary Attainment in Illinois

Postsecondary education is key to ensuring individuals, families, and communities across Illinois can thrive. Individuals who hold a postsecondary credential have higher earnings, greater social mobility, improved health, and other positive life outcomes than their peers with less education.

2019 ASSOCIATE'S DEGREES OR HIGHER

State Average: 43%

State Count: 3,710,558

Total State Population 25+: 8,686,299

Percent of adults 25 years of older

20%   56%

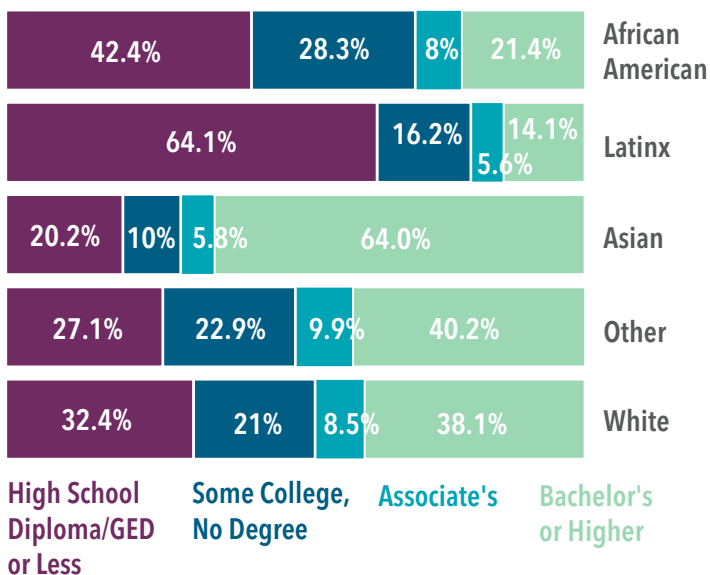*Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*

Ten years ago, Illinois adopted the **60 by 25 goal: that 60% of adults would have a postsecondary degree or credential by the year 2025** to meet projected workforce needs. Today, the percentage of jobs requiring postsecondary education is even higher. In 2009, approximately 38% of adults in Illinois had an associate's degree or higher. In 2019, over 43% do. As the map shows, postsecondary attainment varies widely across the state, from a low of 21% of adults to a high of 57% of adults having an associate's degree or higher.

While this data only reflects degree attainment, credentials are also considered in the 60% target. According to the Lumina Foundation, Illinois' attainment is at 55% when certificates and short-term credentials are included.

The disparities in attainment outcomes are stark when we disaggregate by race/ethnicity. While 47% of white adults have a post-secondary degree, only 29% of African Americans and 20% of Latinx adults do. For Bachelor's degrees, Illinois has the 11th largest gap of any state in attainment between African American and white adults and the 7th largest gap between Latinx and whites.

Equally significant are the percent of adults with some college, but no degree. That represents 324,000 African American, 195,000 Latinx, and 1.2

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN ILLINOIS (AGE 25+) BY RACE/ETHNICITY

	High School Diploma/GED or Less	Some College, No Degree	Associate's	Bachelor's or Higher
African American	42.4%	28.3%	8%	21.4%
Latinx	64.1%	16.2%	5.6%	14.1%
Asian	20.2%	10%	5.8%	64.0%
Other	27.1%	22.9%	9.9%	40.2%
White	32.4%	21%	8.5%	38.1%

million white adults who started college but never earned a degree.[1] And it is worth noting the very large percentage, especially of Latinx adults, who have only a high school diploma, GED or less.

The challenge becomes even more clear as we look at the demographic projections out to 2050. The percent of the state's population that is white is projected to decline by 17.5%, while the Latinx population is projected to grow by over 60%, and the African American population is projected to stay relatively steady.

Illinois is also facing a projected decline in the number of high school graduates due to demographic shifts. According to recently released demographic projections by WICHE in Knocking at the College Door, the number of Illinois high school graduates each year is projected to decline, most precipitously starting in 2026, from just over 148,000 in 2025 to approximately 115,000 in 2037.[2]

We must address these disparate attainment rates and demographic shifts. It cannot be done by focusing on high school students alone, although better serving high school graduates is essential. We must re-engage adults in higher education and ensure their success.

> There are 324,000 African American, 195,000 Latinx, and 1.2 million white adults who started college but never received a degree.

1   Because the data only shows postsecondary degree, we cannot tell what percent of these may have attained a credential rather than a degree.

2   A projected growth in Latinx high school graduates through 2025 helps to moderate the overall decline in high school graduates. The near-term declines are primarily being driven by the reduction in the number of white high school graduates. When we reach 2026, the number of Latinx graduates begins to rapidly decline and contributes to the larger overall declines.

The annual number of African American high school graduates declines slightly between now and 2025. However, beginning in 2026, the declines begin to get larger, as well.

Asians and those in the two or more races category will continue to incrementally grow, but neither group is large enough to offset the losses among the other groups.
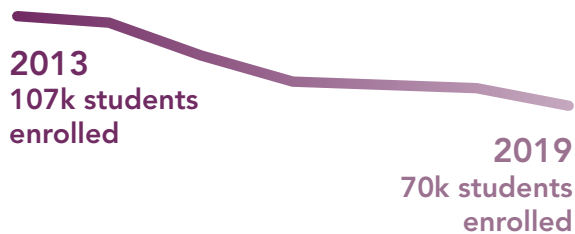
Equity Gaps Facing African American Students

Enrollment has dropped **34%** for African Americans.

2013
107k students enrolled

2019
70k students enrolled

Enrollment has dropped 34% for African Americans. Undergraduate enrollment in all sectors of higher education has declined by 19.4% between 2013 and 2019. Enrollment for white students has dropped by 25.9% overall, while it has dropped disproportionately for African Americans, even before the impact of COVID-19. In 2019 there were just over 70,000 African Americans enrolled in Illinois colleges and universities, down from 107,000 in 2013. And the proportion of the student population that is African American has declined every year from 14.7% to 12.2%, even though the percent of the state population that is African American has stayed steady.[3]

African American first-year students are placed in developmental education at higher rates than white students. At public universities, 15% of African Americans are placed in non-credit developmental education compared to 5% of whites, while in community colleges, 65% of African Americans and 40% of white students are. There is even a gap in the number of credit hours African American and white students accumulate when placed in math developmental education at public universities, with African American full-time freshmen accumulating only 8.4 credit hours in the first semester, while white students accumulate 10.6 on average. One would expect full-time students to accumulate at least 12 credit hours in a term, and 15 hours to stay on track to graduate in four years.

Even earlier in their education career, African Americans have less access to Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Credit early college experiences. As a result, they miss out on the opportunity to earn credits or get exposure to college-level work. African Americans made up 15% of the high school graduating class in 2018. Yet, of the seniors enrolled in dual credit, only 9% are African American, while 65% are white. A similar pattern holds for AP.

Public universities retained 85% of white freshmen, but only 66% of African American freshmen. Non-profit private universities retained 82% of white freshmen while retaining only 63% of African American freshmen.

3   Data is also disaggregated by gender on the IBHE website.

Public universities are less likely to retain and advance African American students.[4] Public universities retained 85% of white students, but only 66% of African American first-time freshmen and advanced in class status (e.g. accumulated enough credits to move from freshman to sophomore status) 70% of white students and 33% of African American students.
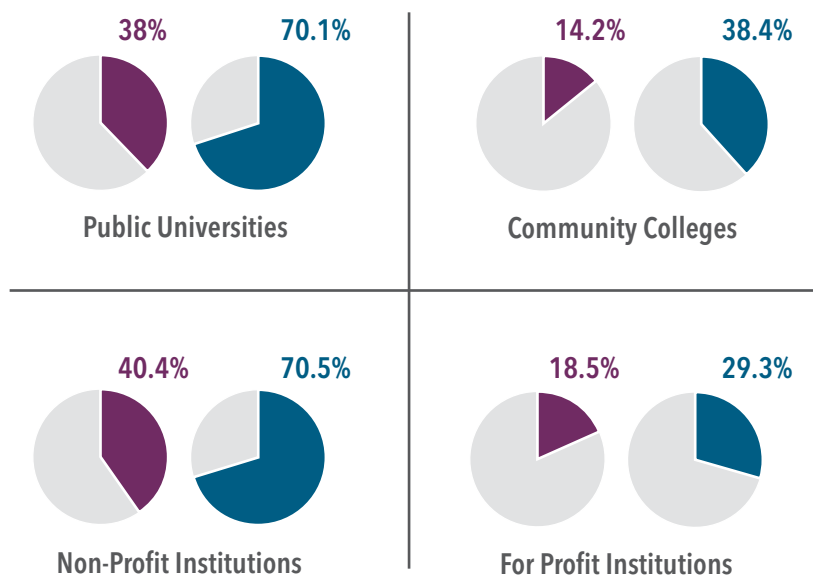
The experience of transfer students is better, but significant gaps remain. Public universities retained 74% of African American transfer students, while retaining 85% of whites and advanced 70% of whites, while advancing only 56% of African Americans.

Non-Profit private universities have retention and advancement gaps. Non-profit private universities retained 82% of white freshmen while retaining only 63% of African Americans. Similarly, these institutions advanced 75% of white freshmen and 46% of African Americans. For transfer students, non-profit private institutions retained 77% of white students and 59% of African Americans, while advancing 65% of white and 45% of African American students.

2019 GRADUATION RATES

African American
White

38%   **70.1%**

Public Universities

14.2%   **38.4%**

Community Colleges

40.4%   **70.5%**

Non-Profit Institutions

18.5%   **29.3%**

For Profit Institutions

IPEDS Graduation Rates at 150% of Normal Time for students who first enrolled full time. The percent of full-time undergraduate students varies by sector: 88.4% for Public Universities; 35.4% for Community Colleges; 91.3% for NFP Private Colleges; and 41.1% for For-Profit Private Colleges.

All this leads to dramatic and persistent gaps in the rates institutions graduate students. As we look at the percent of first-time, full time students who complete their degrees within 150% of expected time (e.g. 6 years for a bachelor's degree) at the same institution they started, we see significant and persistent gaps in the rates at which institutions in all sectors graduate white compared to African Americans students.

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4   From fall to fall

Equity Gaps Facing Latinx Students

Enrollment for Latinx undergraduates has increased. Enrollment for Latinx undergraduate students has increased by over 8% between 2013 and 2019. With the declines in enrollment for white and African American students, Latinx students are increasing as a proportion of undergraduate enrollment.

Enrollment has increased by over **8%** for Latinx students.

2019
128k Latinx students enrolled

2013
118k Latinx students enrolled

Latinx students are more likely to be placed in developmental education. Public universities place 12% of Latinx freshman in developmental education, while placing only 5% of white students. For community colleges the rates are 58% of Latinx and 40% of whites. And the gaps continue in credits gained in the first semester. For students placed in developmental math, as one example, Latinx students accumulated only 8.7 credits, while white students accumulated 10.6 on average in the first semester, compared to a needed 12-15 credit hours to stay on track for timely graduation.

Latinx students have less access to dual credit but proportional access to AP coursework in high school. Latinx students were 24% of the high school graduates, but only 18% of those enrolled in dual credit courses were Latinx high school seniors. However, of high school seniors enrolled in AP, 25% were Latinx.

Gaps persist in public university retention and advancement of Latinx freshmen. Public universities retain 85% of white full-time freshmen but only 76% of their Latinx peers. Similarly, nearly 70% of white freshmen will be advanced, while only 53% of Latinx will.

However, public universities retain Latinx and white transfer students at nearly the same rates. Over 83% of Latinx transfer students are retained, while 85% of white transfer students are. Gaps in advancement rates are evident, with just over 64% of Latinx transfer students advancing to the next class status, while 70% of white students do.
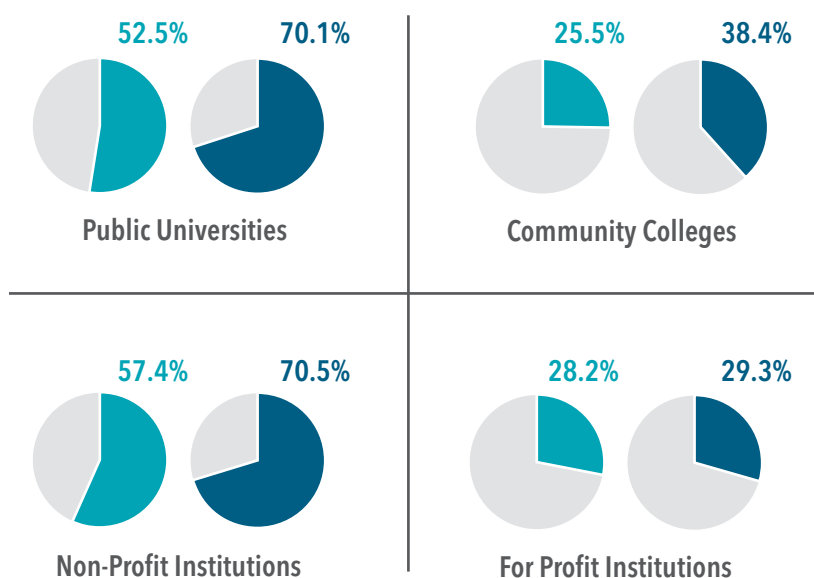
Public universities retained 85% of white full-time freshmen but only 76% of their Latinx peers. Non-profit private institutions retained 82% of white and 78% of Latinx freshmen.

Data Analysis
Equity Gaps: Latinx Students

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2021
19

2019 GRADUATION RATES

Latinx
White

52.5%	70.1%	25.5%	38.4%
Public Universities		**Community Colleges**	
57.4%	70.5%	28.2%	29.3%
Non-Profit Institutions		**For Profit Institutions**	

Based on 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 IPEDS Graduation Rates at 150% of Normal Time for students who first enrolled full time. The percent of full-time undergraduate students varies by sector: 88.4% for Public Universities; 35.4% for Community Colleges; 91.3% for NFP Private Colleges; and 41.1% for For-Profit Private Colleges.

Gaps exist in non-profit private university retention and advancement rates. Non-profit private institutions retained 82% of white and 78% of Latinx freshmen, while advancing 74% of white and 65% of Latinx freshmen. For transfer students, these institutions retained 77% of white students and 76% of Latinx students. Private institutions advanced 65% of white transfer students and 61% of Latinx students.

Institution completion gaps persist over time. As the charts illustrate, there are gaps in the rates at which institutions complete white and Latinx freshmen. These gaps have persisted over time.
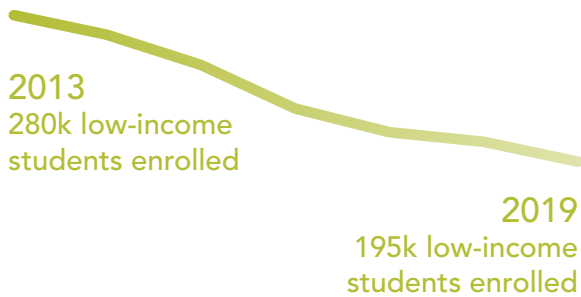
Equity Gaps Facing Low-Income Students

Enrollment has decreased by **33%** for low-income students.

2013
280k low-income students enrolled
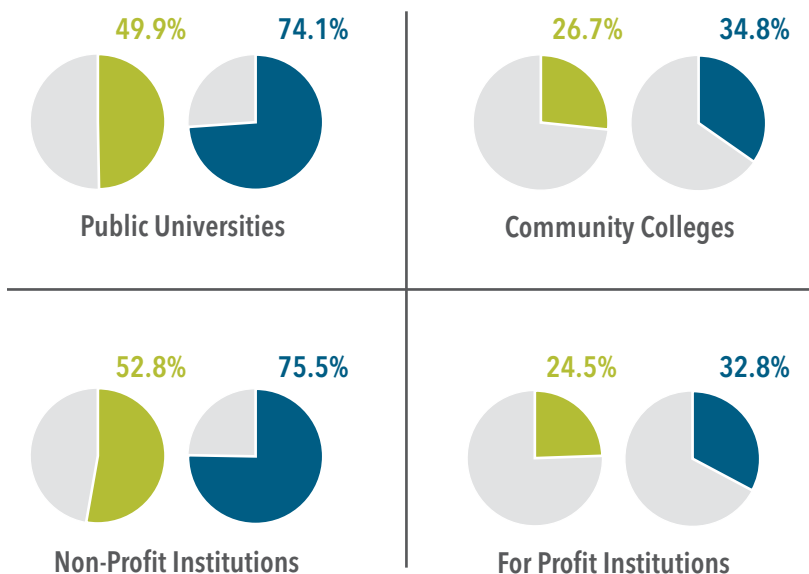
2019
195k low-income students enrolled

The same patterns of inequity exist for low-income students. About half of the students in the K-12 system come from low-income families, yet low-income students are less likely to go to college: only 53% of low-income Illinois high school graduates go to college within 6 months of graduating, while 74% of non-low-income students do. Between 2013 and 2019, Illinois enrolled over 85,000 fewer low-income undergraduate students, a 32.7% decrease, compared to a 14.9% decrease for non-low-income students.

Low-income students are less likely to have had access to AP and Dual Credit and more likely to be placed in developmental education. Of recent high school graduates, 41% are from low-income families. However, only 30% of those enrolled in either AP or dual credit were low-income. Low-income students were placed in developmental education at higher rates, with 15% at public universities compared to 5% of non-low-income students, 59% percent compared to 42% at community colleges, 10% compared to 3% at not-for-profit private institutions, and 11.5% compared to 7% at for-profit institutions.

2019 GRADUATION RATES

Pell
Non-Pell

49.9%   **74.1%**

Public Universities

26.7%   **34.8%**

Community Colleges

52.8%   **75.5%**

Non-Profit Institutions

24.5%   **32.8%**

For Profit Institutions

Based on 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 IPEDS Graduation Rates at 150% of Normal Time for students who first enrolled full time.

Institutions are less successful in serving low-income students, with fewer being retained and advanced in their programs. As the chart on the next page shows, there is a 10 percentage-point gap in the rate public universities retain low-income and non-low-income students, a nearly 14 percentage point gap at not-for-profit private colleges, and a smaller gap, but much lower retention overall, for for-profit colleges.

Rates of advancement are much lower and the gaps much wider with public universities advancing 71% of non-low-income students and 49% of low-income and the not-for-profit private institutions showing rates of 73% compared to 54% for low-income students.
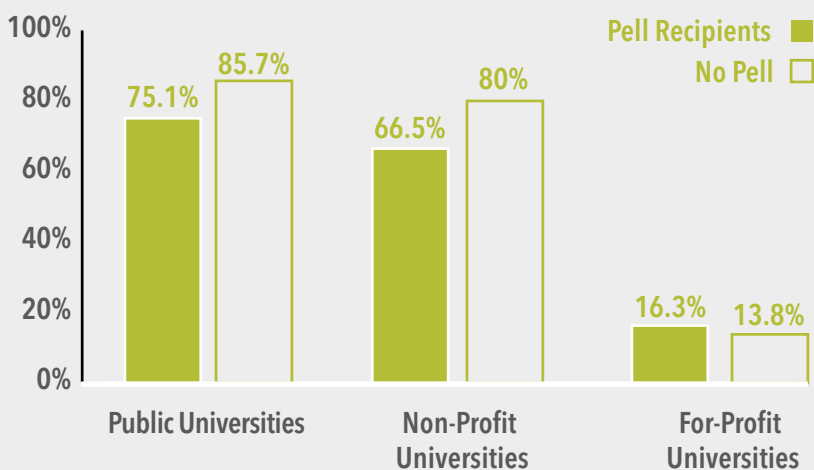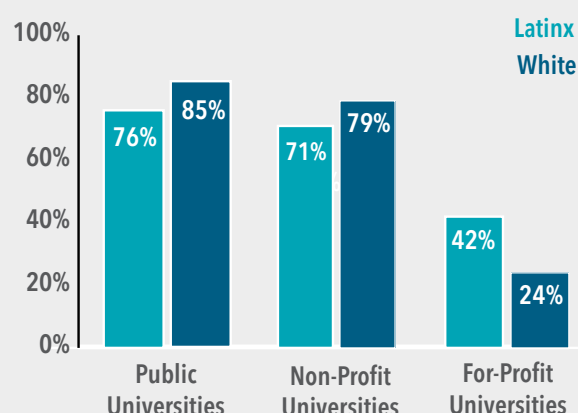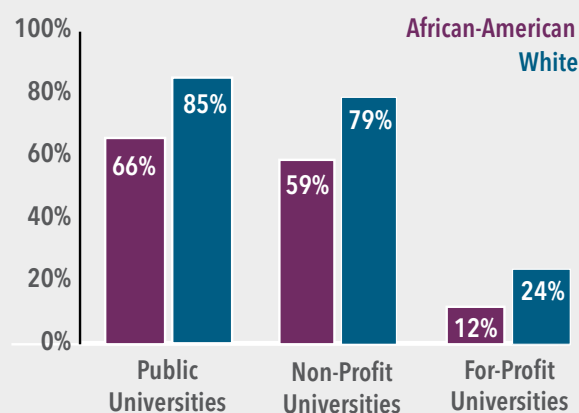
The results are better for transfer students, with the overall retention rate higher and gaps smaller: two percentage points at public universities, but still eight percentage points at non-profit private colleges.

Not surprisingly, completion rate gaps between low-income and non-low-income students are stark. Further, as we now know, low-income students were disproportionately – and dramatically – impacted by COVID-19, suggesting that without additional intervention, we will see further decreases in enrollment and completion.

RETENTION RATE GAPS SUMMARIZED

Return rates for full-time freshmen.

African-American / **White**

	Public Universities	Non-Profit Universities	For-Profit Universities
African-American	66%	59%	12%
White	85%	79%	24%

Latinx / **White**

	Public Universities	Non-Profit Universities	For-Profit Universities
Latinx	76%	71%	42%
White	85%	79%	24%

Pell Recipients / **No Pell**

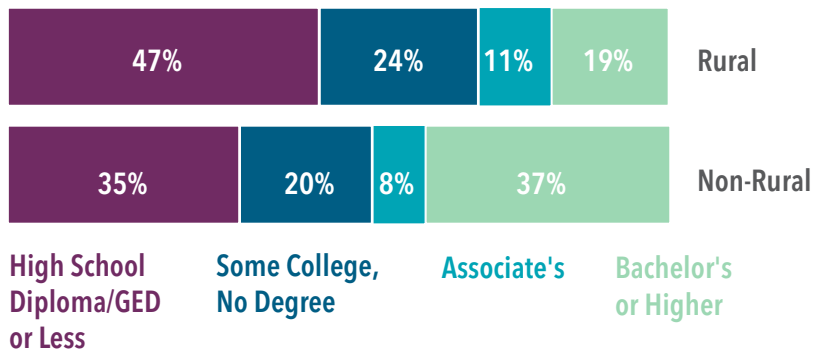|	Public Universities	Non-Profit Universities	For-Profit Universities
Pell Recipients	75.1%	66.5%	16.3%
No Pell	85.7%	80%	13.8%

Institutions are less successful in serving African-American, Latinx and low-income students, with fewer being retained and advanced in their programs.

Equity Gaps Facing Students from Rural Communities

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN ILLINOIS (AGE 25+) BY RURALITY

47%	24%	11%	19%	Rural
35%	20%	8%	37%	Non-Rural

High School Diploma/GED or Less **Some College, No Degree** **Associate's** **Bachelor's or Higher**

Rural counties generally have smaller proportions of their working-age population with an associate degree or higher, as illustrated in the interactive maps on the IBHE website. Conversely, rural counties have higher proportions with a high school diploma or less and slightly higher proportions with some college, but no degree.
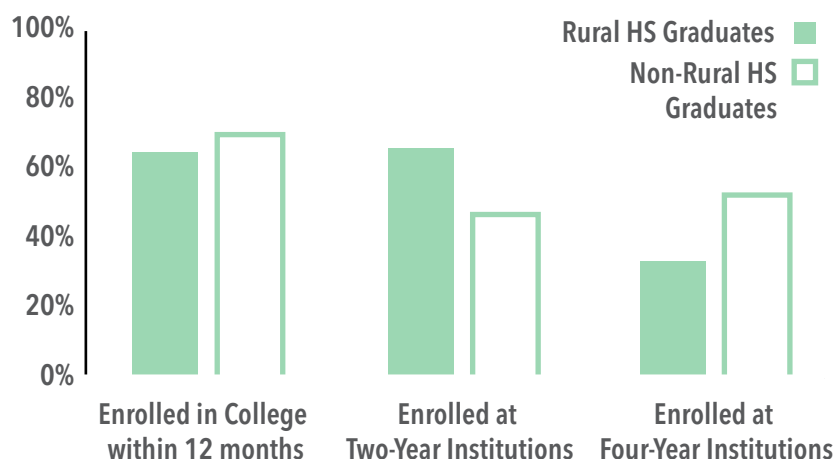
Rural students have greater access to dual credit, but significantly lower proportions have access to AP compared to students in non-rural high schools. Sixteen percent of rural students (based on high school location) had access to dual credit programs, while only 10% of non-rural students did. However, only 7% of rural students had access to AP programs, while 27% of non-rural students did.

Rural high school students are less likely to go to college right after high school, and when they do, they are more likely to go to community colleges. The average college enrollment rate within 12-months of graduation for rural high schools was 65.0%, compared to 70.2% for high schools located in non-rural areas. For those that do enroll, 66% will go to a community college, compared to 47% of students from non-rural areas. The rate of enrollment at four-year institutions was lower among students from rural high schools (34% to 53%).

ENROLLMENT DATA FOR RURAL VS NON-RURAL STUDENTS

Rural HS Graduates
Non-Rural HS Graduates

Enrolled in College within 12 months
Enrolled at Two-Year Institutions
Enrolled at Four-Year Institutions

While rural students are underrepresented among freshmen at Illinois public universities, institutions retain rural and non-rural freshmen at same rates. In fall of 2019-20, rural students represented approximately 7% of the freshmen at public universities and about 14% of transfer students. Institutions retained just under 80% of rural and non-rural freshmen and advanced rural freshmen at a greater rate than urban. However, rural transfer students are retained and advanced at lower rates than their non-rural counterparts. [5]

5 The analysis in this section comes from data collected by IBHE. There are too few cohorts of data to report at this time on completion comparing rural and non-rural students.

Funding for Higher Education:

For years, Illinois has dramatically underfunded its higher education system. Since Fiscal Year 2002, higher education appropriations declined significantly in absolute terms. After accounting for inflation and new unfunded mandates, the buying power in Fiscal Year 2021 is just 55.5% of what it was in Fiscal Year 2002.

During the budget impasse, universities and community colleges received just 30% of Fiscal Year 2015 funding in Fiscal Year 2016, a cut of $1.2 billion to higher education.
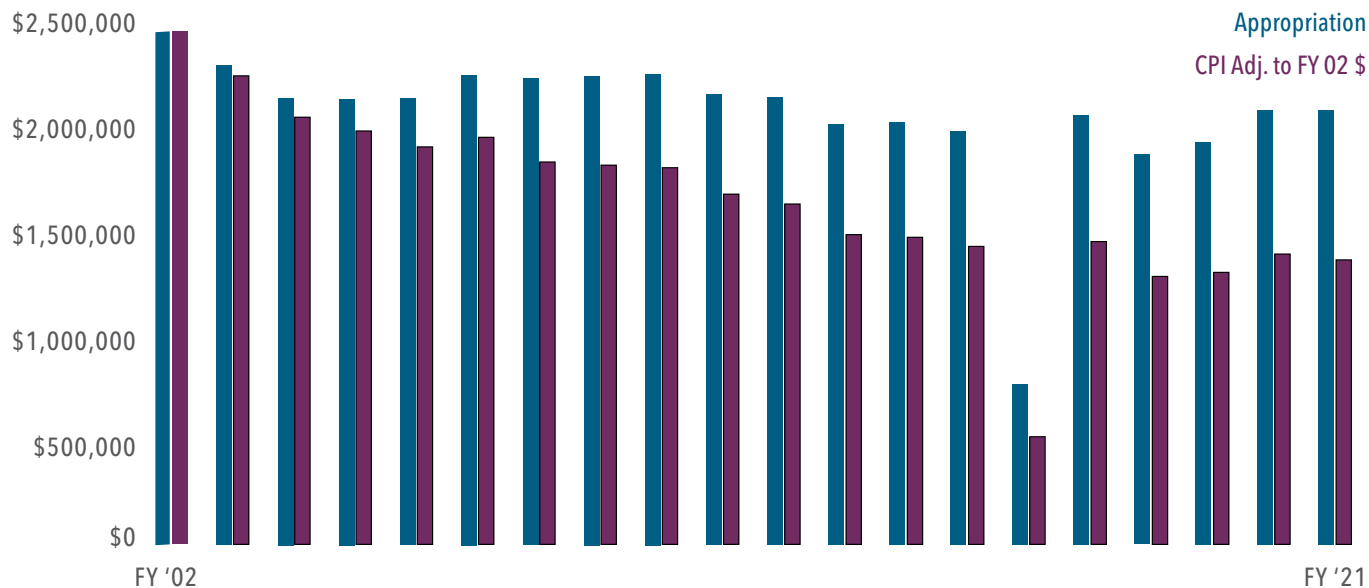
As state appropriations for institutions declined, tuition increased. In FY 2002, state funds on average covered 72% of public university costs vs. 28% from tuition and fees. *In FY 2020, the situation has flipped, with the state covering 35.6% vs. 64.4% from tuition and fees.*

The impact for community colleges has been similar but shifts the burden to tuition and property taxes. In FY 2002, state appropriations on average covered 27.4% of costs, tuition and fees covered 30.6%, and property taxes the remaining 42%. In FY 2019, *state appropriations had declined to 14.4% of community college costs, with tuition and fees covering 40.4%, and property taxes 45.2%.*

The state has begun to make a turnaround, with Governor Pritzker's Fiscal Year 2020 budget representing the largest percent increase in higher education funding since 1990, and that funding level being maintained despite the fiscal challenges brought on by the pandemic.

> The buying power of Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations is just 55.5% of what it was in Fiscal Year 2002.

HIGHER EDUCATION OPERATIONS APPROPRIATIONS
Adjusted for Mandates & Inflation (CPI-U)

Appropriation
CPI Adj. to FY 02 $

FY '02   FY '21

Strategies Drive Toward Equity, Sustainability & Growth

Based on the data laid out above, the results of the survey and focus group findings, the IBHE has set **a vision of a higher education ecosystem that ensures individuals, families, and communities across the state can thrive.**

The following strategies are organized according to our interconnected goals for a thriving Illinois: that we have equity, sustainability and growth.

EQUITY

Close the equity gaps for students who have been left behind.

SUSTAINABILITY

Build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions.

GROWTH

Increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth.

EQUITY

Close the equity gaps for students who have been left behind.

Data shows equity gaps throughout the educational path for too many students. We need a higher education system in Illinois designed to meet the needs and lead to the success of historically underserved and underrepresented students, with particular attention paid to Black, Latinx, Low-Income, rural, and working adult student groups, so that all students can thrive.[6]

This Plan's Equity Strategies were formed with the following in mind:

- **Today's higher education system serves students throughout their lives and careers.** We must support a higher education system that serves all students of different ages and at various points in their careers, who need to re-skill, up-skill or change career paths.

- **We have done much to smooth the path from high school to college and career but more still needs to be done.** Too many students face barriers in getting to and through higher education. The data shows significant equity gaps in access to early college experience, placement in developmental education, rates of retention, advancement and completion, and career outcomes.

- **Tighter alignment and transfer supports will help students navigate multiple on/ off ramps through higher education.** Today there is no "typical" higher education student and no single path that serves all students. Illinois leads the nation in bachelor's degree completions among community college transfer students (53.8%), yet students face challenges in ensuring academic credits transfer; that paths are clear for degree completion; and that courses and services are available at times and in ways that are responsive to their needs.

- **We have untapped potential in the adults who haven't yet received a postsecondary degree/credential.** It is both an equity imperative and an economic imperative that the higher education system works to bring back working adults as students, while recognizing and valuing their unique family, work, and community experiences and needs.

- **We must rebuild our systems for a post-pandemic world.** We must take the lessons learned through the pandemic to build a stronger system that is more agile, supports students, and is prepared for the future of learning.

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6   The strategies outlined were designed with recognition of equity gaps for many more groups, including Black, Latinx, Asian American, Low-Income, first-generation, rural, working adult students, students leaving foster care, students with disabilities, immigrants, undocumented students, justice-involved students, indigenous students, LGBTQ students, and veteran students, recognizing the intersectionality of these identities.

The recommended strategies outlined here incorporate data-driven and best practices that help to address the persistent equity gaps in higher education and lay the framework for an aligned higher education system that serves students independent of the path they take.

They generally focus on the <u>non-financial</u> supports required to close equity gaps and create a thriving Illinois. Financial strategies are covered in the Sustainability section of the report.

We need a higher education system in Illinois designed to meet the needs and lead to the success of historically underserved and underrepresented students, with particular attention paid to Black, Latinx, Low-Income, rural, and working adult students, so that all students can thrive.

Strategies for a Thriving Illinois
Equity

IBHE
A THRIVING
ILLINOIS
2021
27

Equity Strategies:

1 **Support the ongoing learning renewal of students and systemic implementation of evidence-informed student support practices.**

The pandemic disproportionately impacted students from low-income families and families of color, exacerbating the factors that place students at risk of not enrolling, continuing, and completing higher education. It is critical to provide differentiated academic and social and emotional support that students need to ensure they return to their pre-pandemic learning trajectory. While these strategies are essential to address pandemic-related educational impact, they should be implemented as systemic solutions that will address equity gaps for the long-run.

- *Leverage resources developed by the Illinois P-20 Council* to support social/emotional well-being and learning renewal. These high impact practices were identified to help the education system best direct federal funds provided through relief packages.

- *Scale summer bridge programs* that support students' academic and social-emotional transition to college and help them succeed.[7]

- *Extend learning opportunities to mitigate learning loss and accelerate time to degree*, such as offering targeted summer courses to full-time students who have earned less than 30 credit hours in their prior academic year.[8]

- *Provide proactive and comprehensive advising*, first-year experience, experiential learning, professional support for students with disabilities, along with wrap-around supports.

- *High-impact practices,* including service learning, learning communities, research with faculty, writing-intensive courses, and internship and field experiences, with a specific lens on serving underrepresented minority students, contribute to the success of student learning and retention.[9]

- **Support for meeting students' basic needs**, including housing, food security, mental health/wellness services, and child care, among others.

- Reformed financial policies, including polices on financial holds, financial literacy, emergency financial assistance.

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7   Summer bridge programs, including, for example UIC's Summer College and LARES program for Latinx students, have been shown to increase retention and graduation rates.

8   To bring such programs to scale would require additional resources, like extending MAP to summer term.

9   The Summer Research Opportunities Program at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign provides a summer program for undergraduate students from groups underrepresented in graduate study to conduct research with faculty and explore careers in research.

- Professional development to provide all faculty and staff the skills to <u>support students with disabilities</u> or students coming from under-resourced communities, as well as professional development for trustees to better understand student needs.

2 Establish and implement institution-level equity plans, practices to close access, progression, completion and attainment gaps.

Sharing best practices across the state will help strengthen each institution's individual work. Equity plans should outline each institution's specific steps to close equity gaps in access, progression, and timely completion, including solutions in Equity Strategy 1:

- *Review and revision of existing policies and practices that exacerbate equity gaps.* Review should include funding models, financial aid, admissions, placement tests, remedial programs or structured pathways.
- *Practices of interrogating disaggregated data at multiple levels to understand the points of intervention and whether solutions are working.* This should include early indicators and other predictive analytics tools that can help inform interventions to change a student's graduation trajectory.[10] Such predictive analytics tools should be coupled with other information (e.g. non-cognitive student need surveys) to ensure students receive appropriate services.
- *Equity impact analysis* for a structured approach to ensuring decisions are made only after analysis of impact on underserved or minoritized groups.
- *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.

3 Implement equitable talent management to increase and retain faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees of color.

There are significant gaps in representation of faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees of color in higher education. Several strategies have been shown to be effective.

- *<u>Training on faculty hiring practices</u> to avoid issues of microaggression* that can occur in job interviews and review of CVs.
- *Appointing a faculty diversity recruitment liaison in search committees.*

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10   As one example, the University of Illinois-Chicago developed early indicators that predict whether a first-year student is likely to graduate within 6 years. These indicators include academic and financial metrics in the first two semesters.

- *Cluster hiring programs*, a research-based approach that fosters faculty retention and diversity, means institutions bring on faculty of color in a cohort to provide shared experiences and support.
- *Pipeline programs* can be expanded to identify promising scholars from diverse backgrounds to support their development as graduate students and post-doctoral fellows.[11]

4 Attract working adults through outreach and supports specifically for them.

As the economy evolves, many adults will need to upskill with additional credentials or will need to complete a college degree. Illinois needs an active effort to re-engage and support adults, particularly adults of color as they continue their postsecondary path.

- *Re-engage adults who dropped out or stopped out* due to barriers such as advising errors, life circumstances, transfer release, pandemic related challenges, financial holds, etc.[12]
- *Provide wrap around student services for adults,* including the resources and counseling necessary—when and how students need them—to navigate the higher education ecosystem.
- *Pursue financial strategies to mitigate barriers to enrollment* such as debt forgiveness, adult-oriented scholarship programs, etc. (Also see strategies in the Sustainability section).
- *Adopt teaching and learning methodologies and practices most appropriate for adult students* and professional development opportunities to deliver quality learning.

5 Consider implementation of a direct admissions program.

Under a direct admissions program, students are automatically notified of admission to all participating four- and two-year institutions for which they meet the admissions criteria. This means students would not have to search for which college they want to attend but would be able to choose from institutions that they have already been accepted to. Illinois has already adopted the Common App single application for all public universities and should explore a complementary direct admissions policy to simplify the college search and admissions process.[13]

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11   The state's Diversifying Faculty in Illinois (DFI) program is one example.

12   Consider programs such as the Tennessee Reconnect and Minnesota Reconnect models.

13   Research on a direct admissions program coupled with a common application found an 88% increase in applications, a 6.2% increase in the college-going rate, and a 3% decrease in students enrolling in out-of-state schools.

6 Expand equitable access, support, and success in rigorous and strategic early college coursework.

Access to high-quality early college opportunities, gives students the opportunity to earn college credit while in high school and strengthen their path to degree completion with structured student support. However, as the data above shows, students of color and students from rural communities have inequitable access to early college programs.

- *Build capacity to support Black, Latinx, and rural students' access to early college through flexible, online, and other delivery options*

- *Consider financial support to institutions to offer dual credit/ enrollment courses.*

- *Expand graduate-level learning opportunities* that ensure Illinois high school teachers earn the credentials to teach dual credit coursework in their high schools.[14] Four-year institutions could design graduate-level certificates/programs to provide educators with coursework leading to an endorsement in dual credit instruction on the Illinois State Board of Education Professional Educator License. Additionally, IBHE, ISBE and Colleges of Education should convene to determine if the Master's in Teaching could be revised to include a pathway for the required 18 credit hours within a discipline for dual credit credentialing (e.g., as done in WI, MN, and IN).

Postsecondary Workforce Readiness Act (PWR) Establishes Paths to College and Career

The 2016 PWR Act laid the foundation for four student-centered strategies to help high school students prepare for college and careers. The Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) framework outlines what students should know and do from middle school through 12th grade to prepare for college and careers. The competency-based high school pilots allow districts to focus on student mastery of skills and knowledge, removing the constraints of "seat time." Transitional math and English, a key strategy to developmental education reform, provides high school students a path college readiness before high school graduation and to bypass a placement test for entry into college coursework. School districts can award College and Career Pathway Endorsements on diplomas to indicate a student is ready for postsecondary education or a career.

7 Provide technical assistance to support implementation of developmental education reform.

Reforms are underway as a result of the SJR 41 Task Force, PA 101-0654, the adoption of placement recommendations by the Illinois community college system, and other related legislation. Such efforts should include evidence-based models that allow for expeditious placement into credit-bearing coursework.

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14   Examine appropriate mechanisms for scaling these efforts (e.g., the Midwestern Higher Education Compact's Graduate Quest program, etc.).

8   Expand the role of college access and support models to positively impact college-going and completion rates.

Near-peer mentoring, transitional coaching, and other support models, like the ISACorps, have been shown to minimize summer melt, and improve matriculation, retention, and completion outcomes.[15]

> These recommended equity strategies incorporate data-driven and best practices that help to address the persistent equity gaps in higher education and lay the framework for an aligned higher education system that serves students independent of the path they take.

15   Programs such as NEIU's Projecto Pa'Lante or One Million Degrees for community college students are examples.

SUSTAINABILITY

Build a Stronger Financial Future for Individuals & Institutions

Affordability is one of the biggest barriers to higher education access and success, especially for low-income students, students of color, working adults, rural students, and many others who are underserved by the higher education system.

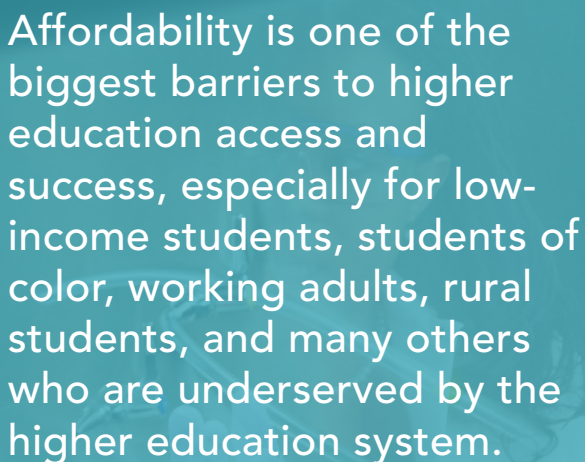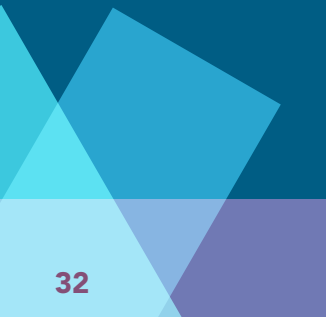**For years, Illinois has dramatically underfunded its higher education system. As state appropriations for institutions have declined, tuition has increased, creating an increasingly untenable financial burden on individuals. As student and workforce needs have changed, the state funding system simply has not kept up.**

To date, funding for higher education in Illinois has not been connected to state's goals for student success and the system of public and private institutions that supports them. For decades, public universities have been funded through an "across-the-board" approach, where all institutions receive the same percentage decrease or increase of funding from the prior year; and, while community colleges receive state funding by formula, it has been underfunded for years.

Neither approach acknowledges the changing needs of our students and our economy nor accounts for the socio-economic status of students, their family circumstances, or financial capacity to pay tuition. **Furthermore, both university and community college funding approaches have exacerbated inequities** and have lead to an increase in the amount of debt students and families take on.

Affordability is one of the biggest barriers to higher education access and success, especially for low-income students, students of color, working adults, rural students, and many others who are underserved by the higher education system.

Existing Financial Aid Programs Are No Longer Enough

Illinois has a strong state-funded need-based grant program, the Monetary Award Program (MAP), providing support for low-income students who apply via the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid.

However, over time, the state appropriation for MAP has not kept up with rising tuition and fees, creating a gap in purchasing power. In Fiscal Year 2002, MAP covered 100% of average tuition and fees at Illinois public universities and community colleges. However, by Fiscal Year 2020, MAP awards dropped to 34% of average tuition and fees at universities and 36% community colleges, even after an additional $86M infusion to MAP between Fiscal Year 2018 and Fiscal Year 2020.

Because MAP is awarded to eligible students on a first-come, first-served basis, students who complete their FAFSA later in the year are at risk of missing out on a grant. In Fiscal Year 2020, funds were insufficient to grant MAP awards to an estimated 53,000 eligible students, most of whom were potential community college students.[16]

Even with federal and state financial aid, many low-income students are unable to afford college. In Fiscal Year 2020, the estimated total cost of attendance (tuition and fees plus living expenses) for an in-state student at a four-year public university in Illinois was just under $30,000.

- *A low-income student who receives the maximum MAP grant, Pell grant, Federal Work Study, and Direct Federal Student loans, without additional scholarships, loans, wages, or family resources, would be **$12,000 short** in being able to pay for the full cost of attendance at a public university.*

- *Community college students not living with their parents face average total costs of attendance of just under $17,000, for which the maximum MAP, Pell, and Direct Student Loans still leave the students **short by over $3,000.***

As a result of the high costs and a lack of good information about college costs and student financial aid,[17] many students turn to additional expensive private loans to fill the financial gaps between available financial aid and college costs.

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16   It is estimated that this number will be less than 23,000 when FY21 ends because fewer low-income students are completing the FAFSA. Late-applying students are more likely to be independent, have limited resources for college, and plan to go to a community college compared to students who receive a grant.

17   The report of the Chicago State University Equity Working Group for Black Student Access and Success Action Plan calls for reaching students, parents, and families to expand their financial aid awareness; requiring comprehensive, evidence-based and culturally-relevant financial literacy education for every student to prepare them for post-high school success; and building trust surrounding financial aid and FAFSA applications.

Recent legislation and federal changes will also simplify the FAFSA process and increase transparency beginning in 2023, but without deliberate strategies to increase student and family financial literacy, students and families still may not be able to access and use all the public resources available to them.

Illinois Needs a New Higher Education Funding Policy Centered on Equity

The strategies outlined here work together to ensure Illinois' system of higher education is affordable, equitable, and supports students. We focus on ensuring students have access to financial assistance, minimizing reliance on private debt; managing the operating costs of higher education through shared administrative services; and rebuilding and reinvesting in the state's system of funding higher education to ensure it is equitable, stable, and sufficient so that underinvestment no longer holds Illinois back from thriving.

Sustainability Strategies:

1 **Invest in public higher education through an equitable, stable, and sufficient funding system that meets all the principles laid out below.**

An equitable, sufficient, and stable funding system would:

- *Provide equitable funding so that students can receive the best educational experience and succeed at whichever institution they attend.* Illinois needs a funding system for higher education that supports equitable access, progression, and timely completion and accounts for the robust student support services (counseling, advising, wellness, bridge, mental health and child care supports, to name a few) that help students get to and through completion. Students should have equitable access to institutions, and institutions should have resources necessary to provide students the supports that enable them to succeed. Inequitable resources available to community colleges resulting from over-reliance on property taxes must also be recognized and addressed.

- *Support a thriving postsecondary system that enriches the state and its residents.* Illinois depends on higher education to preserve, expand, and transmit knowledge, offer solutions to society's challenges, serve as a civic partner, produce well-educated residents, and enrich life. Research at our institutions expands our understanding of the social and physical world, enhances the health and well-being of our residents, and drives innovation and economic development in our communities. Educating students in the humanities and liberal arts support the whole student and ensures that the leaders of the future better understand the human condition. Institutions are vibrant anchors of communities. In short, the postsecondary system enables students to better build knowledge, create wealth, and be civically engaged. Illinois' higher education funding system should support these values and goals.

- *Fund institutions sufficiently to achieve student, institutional, and state goals.* Illinois must provide sufficient (i.e. adequate or full) funding necessary to achieve the state goals set out in the higher education Strategic Plan, for each institution to fulfill

its mission, and to support students in achieving their goals. For the higher education system to deliver on these expectations, we must ensure that institutions are funded to do so.

- *Ensure affordability for all students.* The funding system should ensure that students can start and complete college and access a career of their choice without excessive student debt. This means tuition must be affordable. To do so the funding system must recognize the interrelationship among federal student aid, state funding for public universities and community colleges, state need-based (MAP grants) and other student aid, tuition, local property taxes, and capital appropriations. Our funding system should ensure that college is affordable for the most vulnerable students in the state.

- *Recognize institutional uniqueness.* A value of the state's higher education system is its diversity of colleges and universities, each with different missions, yet all working in concert to serve the state. This calls for a funding system that recognizes these different missions and accounts for variation in institutional portfolios that serve the state (e.g. returning adult students, first-generation students, graduate and professional training, health care provision, research, community engagement, etc).

- *Provide predictability, stability, and limited volatility.* Students and families need predictability to plan for college. Institutions need predictability and stability to build and maintain programs and services that effectively support students. Funding should not dramatically fluctuate from year to year and the funding pattern should provide plenty of time for short- and long-range planning.

Colleges and Universities Essential in the Fight Against COVID-19

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic and since, Illinois colleges and universities have worked to support the learning, health, and well-being of students, campus communities, and the state. Institutions pivoted to remote learning and provided students with laptops, Internet access, and virtual advising and tutoring. They joined a state effort to make Wi-Fi accessible across their campuses, spreading connectivity to spaces like parking lots, often the only viable internet access point for students and communities. Institutions leveraged private funds and federal resources to provide emergency grants to help students with rent, food, child care, and other basic living needs. Faculty and staff reached out to students individually to ensure their well-being and connect them to campus and community resources for mental health supports and health care. Colleges and universities across Illinois donated PPE to community health care facilities, made campus spaces available for testing and quarantine, and manufactured testing supplies. Researchers built epidemiological models to project COVID-19 patterns and inform state policy. The University of Illinois designed and produced emergency ventilators and developed a rapid saliva test for COVID-19 that is used by colleges, universities and school districts across the state and country.

- *Include a "hold-harmless" provision.* In an environment where public institutions are insufficiently funded, the funding system should build toward sufficient funding without reducing current state appropriations to any institution.

- *Support accountability.* A *Thriving Illinois* includes a call for an accountability plan, with a set of measures to ensure that the state is making progress toward the goals of closing equity gaps, increasing attainment to meet the state's talent needs, and improving access and affordability. The funding system should support accountability.

- *Support a collaborative higher education system.* Students are well served by having access to this rich higher education ecosystem that provides multiple ways to enter, transfer, and successfully exit the system throughout their career (and life). The funding system should reinforce the interconnectedness of the higher education system and support student success within and across institutions, especially as new, innovative networks, collaborations, partnerships, and consortia are developed.

- *Encourage partnerships outside higher education.* Partnerships are vital to a strong higher education ecosystem. The higher education system should seek to build partnerships, such as with businesses, non-profits, the philanthropic community, the federal government, and regional, national, and international collaborations that have a vested interest in a flourishing higher education system in Illinois. The goal is to reinforce support for this crucial public good in the state.

- *Articulate rationale for public support.* A transparent funding system should point the system toward meeting individual, institutional, and state goals. A funding system that fulfills the principles outlined above makes the case for public support.

2 Invest an additional $50M each year to reach $1 billion in MAP funding over 10 years.

MAP is shown to be effective in helping low-income and minority students enroll in and complete college. Investing in MAP is smart policy. As the data above show, thousands of students do not receive MAP because the funding runs out.

Estimates suggest that an initial $50M investment, if targeted to ensuring late-filing students have access to MAP, would both address the decades-long problem of MAP funds running out, which disproportionately impacts community college students, and would meet the goal of a student from a family with less than $45,000 annual income being able to attend community college full-time free of tuition and fees using MAP and Pell grants.

A $50M additional annual investment in MAP is estimated to ensure that all students can continue to be served[18] and that a MAP grant will cover 50% of average tuition and fees in 10 years.

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18   Under assumptions about the number of students completing FAFSA, tuition and fee increases, etc.

3 **Allow MAP grants to be used for year-round study.**

MAP can only be used for fall and spring semester, while currently Pell can be used year-round. For many students, taking some courses over the summer can keep them on track to degree completion.[19]

4 **Build programs to address challenges of "holds" on student accounts.**

The practice of institutions placing a "hold" on a student account because of an outstanding balance has significant equity implications. Illinois students should not be locked out of completing a degree due to small outstanding balances.

However, there is a tension between the institutional need to collect revenue owed and the impact on students, who, unable to re-enroll, drop out. A hold could also mean the student in the future cannot access a transcript to enroll elsewhere (thus losing credits) or secure employment.[20] These significant consequences can result even if balances are relatively small or the student is close to graduation.

Innovative debt forgiveness programs exist, like Chicago State University's <u>Finish Strong</u> or City Colleges of Chicago's <u>Fresh Start</u>, that help students get back on track to completing their degree. Another idea is to create a clearinghouse so that students attempting to attend a different school could have their transcript released as a result of the institutions connecting through the clearinghouse and making a financial agreement.

5 **Work with the Office of the Treasurer to provide low-cost loans to low-income students to cover total cost of attendance.**

The data cited above shows the large gap between tuition and fees and the full cost of attending college for students who depend on MAP and Pell.

The Treasurer's Office is developing loan products for students to cover the costs above MAP, Pell, and Federal Direct Student Loans to avoid students relying on high-cost private loans to cover these additional costs. Agencies should work closely with the Treasurer to ensure students in need of additional financial resources are connected to this program.

6 **Implement creative options for building family savings through Illinois' 529 savings plans.**

19   Recent data also shows that summer programs targeted to students who do not complete 30 credit hours in their first year helps keep them on track to graduation.

20   A <u>report</u> by IthakaS+R consulting analyzes the extent of the "stranded credit" problem. They also estimate that in Illinois, over 275,000 students have nearly $800M in outstanding debt to Illinois institutions, an average of $2,900.

The Treasurer's Office provides robust college savings plans through the Bright Start and Bright Directions 529 programs. Research shows that simply the presence of such savings increases the likelihood of children attending college by three times and the likelihood of completing by four times.[21] The Treasurer's Office estimates that an $8M - $10M investment annually could fund the Children's Savings Program -- which provides $50 in a 529 account to each Illinois child at birth (PA 101-0466).

An endowment of $100 million could fund the program sustainably. Less would be needed if only low-income families were supported. Such an "early scholarship" program could grow into substantial funds for families for higher education by the child's high school graduation.

7 Pilot and expand shared services to reduce institutional administrative costs.

Higher education institutions share many similar administrative functions and there are opportunities to shift routine functions to a statewide or regional centers to free up local staff for more strategic work or to invest savings in student-facing services.

- *Human resources* should be explored as a place to start since public universities are all already part of the State Universities Civil Service System, the state-administered benefit plans, and the State Universities Retirement System.

- *Shared IT services* are another promising area. The South Metropolitan Higher Education Consortium provides its 11 member institutions—public and private four-year institutions and community colleges—an opportunity to share costs related to major and expensive IT services, such a disaster recovery, compliance, and security audits. The services provided through these joint efforts are more robust than any individual institution could afford to secure alone.[22]

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21   Terri Friedline, William Elliott, Ilsung Nam. "Small-dollar children's saving accounts and children's college outcomes by race." Children and Youth Services Review. Vol. 35, No. 3, March 2013. Pages 548-559.

See also Elliott, W. & Rauscher, E. (2013). From disadvantaged students to college graduates: The role of CSAs (Chapter 4-Brief). In W. Elliott (Ed.), Giving children a financial stake in college: Are CSAs a way to help maximize financial aid dollars? (Biannual Report of the Assets and Education Field). Lawrence, KS: Assets and Education Initiative.

22   Additionally the "Mutual Aid" agreement covers support in the event of natural disasters, communicable disease outbreak, or the like. The member institutions step in to provide needed resources such as IT support, facility resources, classroom space, supplies or counseling and media support to the impacted institution.

8 Expand joint purchasing among institutions.

- *Procurement:* The Illinois Public Higher Education Consortium (IPHEC) serves public universities and community colleges across the state by providing joint procurement efforts. Currently, IPHEC procures $400M of goods and services annually on behalf of public universities and community colleges. Still, there are tremendous opportunities to expand and reduce cost, particularly if upfront commitments and quantities can be secured and for highly consistent commodities. There are also ongoing saving opportunities are available to Illinois higher education institutions through the Midwest Higher Education Compact for IT programs and services.

- *Student health insurance:* A statewide student health insurance pool/purchase should be considered. Each institution procures its own student health insurance plans. However, the student risk profile varies across the state, with some institutions serving a younger student body and others serving older adults. There is also variation in the health outcomes of the communities different institutions serve. As a result, students pay disparate rates for health insurance based on their institutional peers. A broader risk pool would both increase negotiating power and spread cost across the state.

Our strategies for sustainability focus on ensuring students have access to financial assistance, minimizing reliance on private debt; managing the operating costs of higher education through shared administrative services; and rebuilding and reinvesting in the state's system of funding higher education to ensure it is equitable, stable, and sufficient so that underinvestment no longer holds Illinois back from thriving.

GROWTH

Increase Talent & Innovation To Drive Economic Growth

We are in an era of rapid change in the nature of work and the future of learning. The skills and knowledge that students need to be successful are evolving with an increasing focus on connecting ideas, solving problems, and building relationships. The nature of work and the entire economy are changing as technology, automation, and ubiquitous access to information alter how and where people do their jobs. Life-long learning is essential as people need to continuously develop skills, gain knowledge and prepare for multiple career changes over their lifetimes. The higher education system must provide future-ready learning opportunities that meet student needs for flexibility and portability while allowing students to build upon their learning over time and across settings.

The Governor's economic development plan, A Plan to Revitalize the Illinois Economy and Build the Workforce of the Future, recognizes that equity and growth are inseparable and that Illinois must reduce equity gaps for economically-disadvantaged communities to create a thriving inclusive economy for all. That plan highlights specific growth and focus industries within various regions across the state. Regional higher education and employer partnerships are essential to preparing the workforce in these growth areas. We also need statewide analysis to ensure that our higher education system and employer needs remain aligned.

Our state's universities are hubs of research, discovery, and innovation that continue to drive the economy forward and contribute to Illinois' growth.

Higher education's role in preparing the educators of the future, and particularly diverse educators, is fundamental to the state's success. A well-qualified, diverse educator workforce is essential to ensuring that all children have a high-quality education that meets their needs. Yet, there is a well-documented shortage of educators in Illinois across educational roles, sectors, levels, and regions. Illinois school districts reported 4,494 unfilled positions in the 2021 school year, an increase of 124% from 2017.[23]

To increase access to preparation programs, our higher education institutions should work together to make the acceptance of previous academic and relevant work experience consistent, seamless, and systematic, and to create options for rural, place-bound, and working adults that allow a student-centered choice between local and virtual coursework and completion.

Our state's universities are hubs of research, discovery, and innovation that continue to drive the economy forward and contribute to Illinois' growth. We must leverage the intellectual capital and investment in the higher education system to grow the economy across the state.

The strategies outlined below ensure our higher education system will continue to be the engine of developing talent, innovation, and inclusive economic growth for a thriving Illinois.

Illinois Innovation Network

The Illinois Innovation Network (IIN) seeks to improve the state's economy through an inclusive approach to innovation, research, and education. Its 15 hubs include all the state's public universities and many community colleges. Each hub has its own distinct concentrations, such as Chicago State University's Center for Solutions to Urban Problems, with its emphasis on improving health outcomes in minority communities and equity in higher education. Eastern Illinois University and Lake Land College's partnership will promote sustainability of critical social and natural system and an expansion of the Center for Energy and Resource Education. For more information, visit the IIN website.

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23   While vacancies exist in all staffing areas, teaching positions consistently make up most vacancies with Special Education and Bilingual positions experiencing the highest vacancy rates. Shortages of early childhood educators mirror these trends. The intensity of the teacher shortage varies across the state but is most severe in rural areas in the Central, Southern, and Northwest regions. Furthermore, shortages also exist in administrative and student support roles.

Growth Strategies:

1 Leverage the Illinois Innovation Network (IIN) to strengthen regional focus, while connecting the state.

The IIN is a $500 million state investment in university-based regional hubs to drive inclusive innovation, equitable workforce development and sustainable economic growth, in support of the state's inclusive economic development plans. The Discovery Partners Institute, a component of the IIN, is building a tech hub in Chicago, with a focus on supporting promising and diverse tech talent through its Talent Development Programs and research for industries vital to Illinois.

- *We must rally around the work of the IIN,* bringing in more partners, and spurring the economy in areas throughout the state, with our community college and four-year institutions as the foundation.

2 Establish a statewide Business and Employer Advisory Council to the IBHE to invest and partner in the development of a diverse talent pipeline and to keep higher education abreast of evolving needs.

New knowledge, technologies, market demands, and social change create brand new jobs even as they refresh and reestablish how work is done. Insight from industry leaders will enable institutions to design programs in anticipation of these new jobs and careers and ways of working. Businesses can build diverse talent pipelines by supporting students in college and on their path to careers through apprenticeships,[24] scholarships, internships and other supports. The Council can lead to scaling of such efforts.

3 Align the state's economic development and higher education strategies, ensuring both address historic inequities.

- *Support new and existing regional partnerships* among leaders in higher education, business and industry, and the P-20 system to meet economic and societal needs, ensuring alignment within each region and across the state. Build on community colleges' broad and deep relationships with the local employer community. Create opportunities for periodic industry-wide input.

- *Conduct annual supply and demand analysis* to identify areas of need to inform institutional and IBHE reports and approvals.

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24   The Chicago Apprenticeship Network is a creative example of partnerships to drive talent.

4 Encourage high school graduates to enroll in *our* higher education system and keep talent in Illinois.

Forty-seven percent of 2019 Illinois high school graduates who went to four-year institutions enrolled at out-of-state colleges and universities. Illinois has consistently ranked 49 out of 50 in the net migration of college freshmen.

AIM HIGH, a state-funded pilot hybrid need/merit aid program established by the General Assembly and first launched in FY20, was designed, in part, to stem outmigration. The first-year program report found that institutions implemented the program with a focus on equity[25]. The AIM HIGH pilot runs through October 1, 2024.

- *An evaluation of the AIM HIGH pilot—including its impact on stemming outmigration—should be used to guide the decision whether it should continue.*

- *The Direct Admissions program in conjunction with the Common App,* described in the Equity section, are additional tools to help retain high school graduates in Illinois.

Common App Simplifies Illinois' College Application Process

Starting in Fall 2021, students can apply to all Illinois public universities and 35 private institutions in the state using a single online platform called the Common Application (Common App). Students enter their information one time and designate multiple colleges and universities to which they want to apply. Illinois is one of two states in the nation with all public universities participating in the Common App. Illinois public universities will now be even more accessible to Illinois students and out-of-state students seeking higher education here.

5 Establish a consortium of community colleges and universities to better serve the incumbent early childhood workforce.

Often the educators of our youngest children are the least credentialed in the educator workforce, despite the research that shows the importance of the earliest years on brain development.

- *The IBHE and ICCB will establish a consortium including all public universities and community colleges with early childhood programs to streamline, coordinate, and improve access to credentials and degree completion for the incumbent early childhood workforce.* If successful, the consortium could be expanded to serve other areas of educator preparation.

- Goals for enrollment, persistence, and completion within the Consortium will be established.

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25   In the first year, 7,400 students received AIM HIGH scholarships. Sixty-four percent of the scholarships went to students with family incomes below $75,000, including 32% to those with incomes below $30,000. Of the scholarships awarded, 17% went to Black students, 17% went to Latinx students, and 58% of the students receiving scholarships were Pell eligible.

- Students' Associate in Applied Science early childhood degree will be accepted in full at all four-year institutions in the consortium, including any credit for prior learning.

- Programs will be offered in formats, times, and locations to meet the needs of working adult students.

- Students will be able to access courses across institutions within a regional "hub" if they are not offered at their home institution.

- A standard method for awarding credit for prior learning will be developed.

- A full range of supports will be provided to keep students on track to completion.

- Admissions, financial arrangements, registration, and other services will be handled seamlessly across institutions without students having to navigate multiple institutions.

- Institutions will work with local school districts and early childhood employer partners to regularly determine demand.

- A broad advisory committee of employers and experts will be jointly convened by IBHE, ICCB, ISBE, Illinois Department of Human Services, and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development to provide guidance on the operation of the consortium.

6 Expand higher education models of teaching and learning that provide opportunity for students to succeed in the work of the future.

Components of future-ready learning include:

- *Use of effective online, hybrid, adaptive and self-paced learning models.* This includes flexible scheduling, flexible delivery methods of instruction, and accelerated learning opportunities. Technologies can be used to enhance the learner experience through immersive and simulation-based platforms, on-demand access to technology-enabled advising and student support services to supplement in-person services, and student-owned learner records. Equitable access to technology, including equipment and internet, must be provided so that all students can access these new models of learning.

- *Competency-based approaches and other models that offer a personalized path to completion and career.* With faculty guidance and other instructional supports, students can progress more quickly when they have concentrated time, spend additional time and effort on content that requires more practice to master, and demonstrate competence through well-designed performance assessments.

- *High-quality experiential and work-based learning opportunities, internships, and apprenticeships across a variety of sectors*. This ensures relevance between learning in the classroom and the rapidly changing skill and knowledge needs in the workplace across diverse sectors.

- *Shorter-term, industry-recognized credentials of value* that stack embedded within degree programs that provide learners supported on-ramps and off-ramps to employment and higher education.

- *Support for faculty, staff, and administrators within and across institutions.* Professional development is needed to support future-ready learning approaches, assess prior learning, create collaborative synergies, and more efficiently use resources for design and implementation. Training should be developed and extended that targets effective and culturally competent teaching and advising strategies in working with diverse groups of students, including students from under-resourced backgrounds, students with disabilities, adults and undocumented students.

7 Enhance access to educator preparation programs.

The educator shortage is a multifaceted issue. Solutions exist at each point in the educator pipeline, from recruitment to preparation, to induction and retention in the field (including wages). Access to educator preparation programs is one set of these solutions.[26]

- *Scale transfer pathways* to allow students to complete courses at a community college and transfer seamlessly to a university through 2+2 and 3+1, dual degree programs.

- *Work with the ISBE* on flexibilities in General Education licensure requirements.

- *Leverage technology tools* that allow candidates to practice skills in a virtual, simulated environment before entering a classroom with students; expanding fully online programs; and utilizing virtual (remote) supervision.

- *Create personalized paths and flexibility for individuals with work experience in education* using prior learning assessment, competency-informed approaches, residency and apprenticeship models, for post-baccalaureate certificate for licensure. Disseminate ISBE information on flexibilities and options currently available to preparation programs.

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26   In 2019, ISBE data show there were a total of only 20 fully online options for educator preparation in Illinois across all licensure areas. In addition, a 2020 joint report by the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Community College Board outlined several opportunities for improving transfer related to the field of education.

8 Strengthen the statewide, coordinated transfer system to ensure students have seamless paths to build on previous academic learning and earn postsecondary credentials.

Students increasingly take courses at multiple institutions of higher education to earn their degrees. However, without careful attention and alignment, students can also accumulate credits that are not recognized at subsequent institutions, with the result that their time to and cost of degree is extended. The IBHE and ICCB, working in cooperation with transfer leaders across the state, identified ways to enhance transfer so that adults with some college but no degree can finish their degrees. In 2019-2020, the agencies also undertook a study of options for improving the state's transfer infrastructure.

- *Create a state communications campaign* to locate and target adults who hold substantial college credits about their options to finish up a degree or be awarded a degree for which they are already eligible.

- *Publicize and scale options for reverse transfer* so that individuals who transferred from a community college prior to completing the associate degree can receive the associate degree while working toward a bachelor's degree; leverage reverse transfer options in certain STEM fields where it may be more efficient for the student to transfer before completing their associate degree.

- *Evaluate impact of public universities offering associate degrees* for students who may have to drop out before completing a bachelor's degree. If students have completed a course of study equivalent to an Associate of Arts degree at the university, they could be awarded the degree, reducing the number of people who leave school with some college but no degree. Evaluation should focus on potential near- and long-term impacts on the higher education ecosystem.

Transfer Infrastructure Leads the Nation in Results

Illinois is first in the nation in bachelor's degree completion among community college students, full- or part-time, who transfer to a four-year institution according to national data from 2017. Illinois data show that low-income, African American, and Latinx new transfer students persist at higher rates than their same-group peers who enroll as first-time freshmen at public universities. This success results from the state's transfer infrastructure, the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI), and a set of supporting policies, which provide a framework for the transfer of General Education and major coursework. Over 100 colleges and universities participate in the IAI, including all public institutions. Faculty and administrator panels routinely review the more than 9,000 courses in the IAI system to ensure transfer integrity. The IAI, institutional transfer agreements, the My Credits Transfer system, and alignment efforts by transfer coordinators constitute the robust set of supports for student transfer. This approach has served as a national model with other states, including California and Indiana, adopting policies similar to the IAI.

- *Develop strategies for maximizing transfer of degree-applicable courses* including math pathways and meta-majors.

- *Develop transfer options for students holding the Associate of Applied Science degree* and evaluate near-term and long-term impacts on the higher education ecosystem of establishing authority for community colleges to offer baccalaureate degree programs in specific fields.

- *Expand the use of 2+2, 3+1, and dual degree agreements* to ensure students have clear information about and coordinated advising for their academic journey

- *Launch a transfer guarantee initiative* that provides students with upfront information about their total cost, time to degree and full details about their transfer path.

- *Enhance student information and advising about transfer* in relation to high-demand majors, majors with specific licensure requirements, and institution-specific requirements for graduation at receiving institutions.

- *Provide stable funding for the Illinois Articulation Initiative, MyCredits Transfer, and Transferology.* These state systems ensure that students have supports for transfer in cases where they are taking courses but do not know to what institution they wish to transfer or which major they want to transfer.

9 Consider the role the Private Business and Vocational sector plays in meeting the state's workforce needs.

There are 250 Private Business and Vocational Schools (PBVS), offering short-term vocational training in a wide variety of fields, including some highly specialized areas such as violin-making. This sector serves an estimated 45,000-50,000 students annually. Yet, this sector is rarely included in conversations about State expectations and goals of higher education.

Illinois can achieve the vision of a higher education system that ensures individuals, families, and communities across the state can thrive. *A Thriving Illinois* outlines three ambitious but attainable goals of Equity, Sustainability and Growth to fulfill that vision. The multiple strategies outlined here require determined, on-going action by the state, higher education agencies, institutions, employers, community-based partners, and other stakeholders if we are to achieve the goals.

We know that implementing the strategies will happen over time. But we must begin with a deliberate plan of implementation. Here we outline some immediate next steps.

Develop an Accountability System

If we are going to achieve the three goals laid out in this plan, we must hold ourselves accountable. Accountability should be a cycle of continuous improvement—by identifying where we have made progress and where not, we can take steps to get back on track. We believe that the work we have outlined in *A Thriving Illinois* is a shared enterprise, that by bringing people together we can share best practices and create learning communities. We see transparency as a key component because it leads to learning.

IBHE and ICCB will continue to report data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, age group, income status, and geography for enrollment, retention, progression, completion, and attainment.

There are many other measures and metrics that should be reported to ensure we stay on track. As one of the first steps after the Board's adoption of this plan, IBHE and ICCB will convene a diverse group, including institutions of higher education and other stakeholders, to further develop the accountability system, and once it is developed, IBHE and ICCB will regularly update and report on progress.

Launch Development of Institutional Equity Plans

A first step in closing equity gaps is for each institution to assess its current state and develop the Equity Plan outlined in earlier sections. Many institutions have already developed Equity Plans under the Illinois Equity in Attainment initiative of the Partnership for College Completion. IBHE and ICCB will build on and support that work underway.

Convene a Business and Employer Advisory Council to IBHE

IBHE will begin right away to develop a charter and identify the leaders for the Council. This Council will help bring alignment between the state's economic development plans and the higher education efforts and ensure that institutions have an early understanding of changes in the nature of work with the lead-time needed to develop new programs. Focus will also be on how business can invest in students and build diverse talent pipelines. IBHE will also undertake the analysis of employer needs compared to degree/credential production in the first phase of implementation.

Develop a Higher Education Funding System

A Thriving Illinois calls for new investment in public higher education through an equitable, stable, and sufficient funding system and outlines a set of principles. These principles were embodied in SB815, which passed the General Assembly on June 1, 2021, and calls for a Commission on Equitable Public University Funding to be convened by October 15, 2021. IBHE is given responsibility for administrative support and ensuring that the requirements of the legislation are met. IBHE will begin this work immediately.

Reinforce Learning Renewal and Social-Emotional Supports

As students return to campuses after the worst of the pandemic, implementing the learning renewal and social-emotional supports with an equity lens as outlined in *A Thriving Illinois* is an urgent priority. Institutions and community partners with the support of IBHE, ICCB, and ISAC will use the federal relief funds to concentrate efforts in ensuring the state meets students' current needs and the system adapts these best practices for the future.

Reengage Adults

IBHE and ICCB will begin efforts to identify the supports and programs adult learners need so that they can enroll for the first time or return to college to prepare for the next phase of their career, whether they were displaced during the pandemic, their careers are threatened because of the changing nature of work, or they just want to finish what they started.

Respond to Early Childhood Educator Shortage

The urgency of addressing the educator shortage cannot be overstated. Of particular importance—and opportunity—is the need to help the incumbent early childhood workforce upskill to the associate and bachelor degrees required to best serve our earliest learners. The IBHE and ICCB will establish the Consortium developed through the strategic planning process and outlined in HB2878, which passed the General Assembly May 31, 2021. The Consortium, including all public universities and community colleges with early childhood programs, will streamline, coordinate, and improve access to credentials and degree completion for the incumbent early childhood workforce.

Enhance Transfer Infrastructure

The state's transfer infrastructure is key to supporting the timely progression of students to completion of a postsecondary credential. Throughout *A Thriving Illinois*, strategies related to transfer are noted, including the pilot of a "transfer guarantee." The IBHE, ICCB, and institutional transfer leaders, working in partnership with other stakeholders such as the ISBE, will begin work on these strategies immediately.

Develop Full Implementation Plan

The steps outlined here are only a few of the immediate next steps. Success in each of the strategies requires a detailed implementation plan. The higher education agencies, in partnership with stakeholders, will come together to develop the implementation plan.

This plan could not have been developed without the thoughtful input and support of the many individuals who contributed.

We would like to thank the Advisory Committee Co-Chairs for their dedication and leadership: former State Senator Pat McGuire; City Colleges Chancellor Juan Salgado; Chicago State University President Zaldwaynaka ("Z") Scott; and 1871 CEO Betsy Ziegler. We would also like to thank the members of the Advisory Committee and the Design Work Groups whose expertise informed every strategy and whose diversity of experience and perspective led to difficult conversations but a stronger plan. Membership of the Advisory Committee and the Design Work Groups is included in the Appendix.

We thank the nearly 10,000 people who completed our survey about their priorities for the higher education system, the 200 participants of our focus groups who informed our strategies, and the many people who submitted public comments.

We are grateful for the work of the Chicago State University Equity Working Group for Black Student Access and Success. We drew on their work, with their insights and recommendations informing and sharpening our thinking.

This plan also could not have been possible without the leadership and support of UPD Consulting, Stomping Ground Strategies, Rikeesha Phelon, and the SIU School of Medicine. Special thanks to Jacqueline Moreno and Teresa Ramos who volunteered their time as facilitators and thought partners.

Pranav Kothari, IBHE Board member and Founder & CEO of Revolution Impact, deserves special mention. Not only did he serve as the Board liaison to the Advisory Committee, he volunteered his time and expertise as a facilitator. Throughout, he provided guidance and served as a key thought partner every step of the way.

The IBHE, ICCB, and ISAC staff went above and beyond to provide research, support, and assistance. Special acknowledgment goes to ICCB Executive Director Brian Durham, ISAC Executive Director Eric Zarnikow, and IBHE Executive Deputy Director Stephanie Bernoteit. Special thanks to IBHE Deputy Director for Information Management and Research Eric Lichtenberger who led the work on the data presented in this report.

We are also grateful for the ongoing support and leadership of the Governor's Office.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the many institutions that provided photographs —we regret that we could not use them all!

Finally, we are grateful to our funding partners, including the Joyce Foundation, Lumina Foundation, the Steans Family Foundation, and an anonymous donor, who ensured we had the resources we needed, including their always wise counsel.

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Illinois' higher education and workforce systems are failing Black students. Between 2013 and 2018, postsecondary enrollment for Black Illinoisans dropped 29.2%, indicating a crisis for Illinois and its Black students. Additionally, Black students in Illinois who do enroll in college are significantly less likely than their white peers to be retained by institutions and to complete with a degree or credentials.[1]
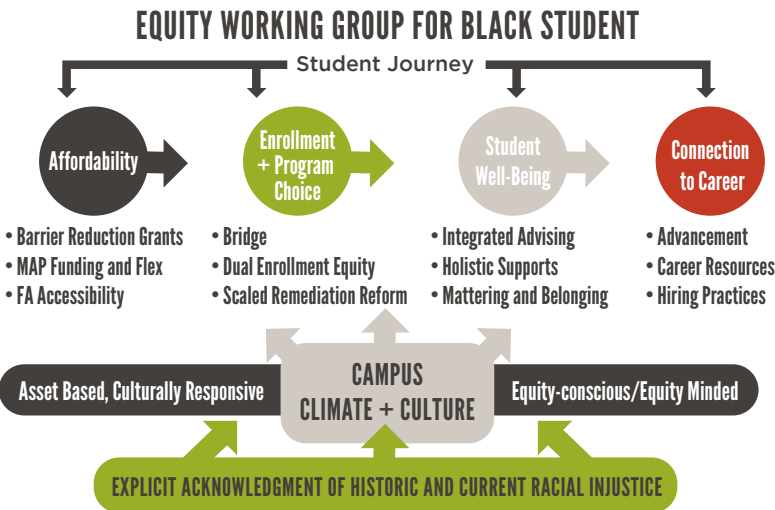
To address racial equity gaps that exist from high school graduation through entry in the workforce, over 40 leaders from across the state representing secondary and postsecondary education, elected officials, government agencies, business, community-based organizations, and philanthropy were convened by Chicago State University President Zaldwaynaka Scott to form the Equity Working Group for Black Student Access and Success in Illinois Higher Education. With the mission to identify actions needed to close equity gaps to enable Black students, families and communities to thrive and survive in Illinois, the Equity Working Group (EWG) was oriented by two key questions: How can we address systemic racism that shows up in our practices and policies and change those practices and policies to be equitable. How can we

collaborate and work jointly to knock down barriers that have prevented our system from serving students and families equitably?

The multi-sector action plan outlined in this report flows from deep examination of these two questions and is oriented by four guiding principles. First, Black students should be treated as experts of their own experience, as well as customers of educational institutions, and should be involved in sustained efforts to evaluate, redesign, and improve the policies, practices, and systems of support. Throughout the report, student voices and perspectives are elevated. Second, data must be collected, analyzed, and shared over time to ensure that equity goals are being met, both within institutions and at the state level. Third, it is not enough for a promising program to exist; investments must be made to allow full access and success for Black Students and programs should be evaluated on their contributions to closing racial equity gaps. Finally, addressing the challenges facing Illinois' Black students requires an examination of, and perhaps thinking differently about, institutional and philanthropic funding priorities. Innovating within current budget constraints and allocating more resources to achieving equity goals both must be prioritized.

Taken together, the framework (see Figure 1?) summarizes the solution areas identified by the group. At the most foundational level, closing equity gaps for Black students in Illinois requires honest acknowledgement of the historic and current racial injustices embedded in postsecondary policies and practices in our nation and state. From a commitment to dismantling racial injustices embedded in educational practices flows a commitment to the creation of a higher education funding formula that prioritizes racial equity and that includes clear state-defined metrics to track the impacts of institutional funding on closing existing equity gaps over time. In addition to increasing financial resources for institutions serving large numbers of Black students, institutional leadership must prioritize making college and university campuses safe and supportive environments in which Black students' sense of belonging is prioritized and in which Black students see themselves represented in the faculty and staff that serve them. From this grounding, solutions aimed at dismantling unfair barriers to Black student success must be pursued at each step of the educational journey.

Higher education must be truly accessible and affordable; policies and practices that impact Black students enrollment and persistence in a program of choice must be equitable; a holistic approach to Black student well-being must be prioritized by institutions; and ensuring Black graduates entering the workplace are connected to jobs with family sustaining wages and compensated in the same manner as their white peers must be prioritized across and beyond the learning journey.

EQUITY WORKING GROUP FOR BLACK STUDENT

Student Journey

Affordability → Enrollment + Program Choice → Student Well-Being → Connection to Career

- Barrier Reduction Grants
- MAP Funding and Flex
- FA Accessibility

- Bridge
- Dual Enrollment Equity
- Scaled Remediation Reform

- Integrated Advising
- Holistic Supports
- Mattering and Belonging

- Advancement
- Career Resources
- Hiring Practices

Asset Based, Culturally Responsive — CAMPUS CLIMATE + CULTURE — Equity-conscious/Equity Minded

EXPLICIT ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF HISTORIC AND CURRENT RACIAL INJUSTICE

REFERENCES

1 https://www.ibhe.org/equity.html

ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

MAKE HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE FOR ALL ILLINOIS BLACK STUDENTS

All Black students in Illinois should be able to access and afford a high-quality postsecondary education.

College access and affordability presents a significant barrier to Black students' enrollment and success in Illinois higher education. To make higher education accessible and affordable for all Illinois Black students, Illinois must:

DIRECTIVES
- Remove the ability to pay as a barrier for Black students through barrier-reduction grants that provide small amounts of money to cover costs which might otherwise prevent students from persisting in college.
- Increase need-based funding and program flexibility to help low-income Black students overcome cost barriers in their postsecondary education.
- Make college more accessible by strengthening early connections to college-affirming experiences, including asset-based high school counseling and culturally-responsive financial literacy and financial planning support for Black students and their families.

Indicators of Success
· With greater targeted financial aid and barrier-reduction grants, the average net price of college for low-income Black families is at an affordable level, as defined by the Institute for Higher Education Policy or a similar metric adopted by Illinois.

· MAP is fully funded so that all eligible students receive a MAP grant equal to the cost of tuition.

· Racial equity gaps in student loan default rates and amount of debt held after graduation are eliminated.

INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS & SUPPORT

FOSTER BLACK STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUCCESS BY PROVIDING ROBUST INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTS

All Black students should be provided the supports and structures they need to thrive in Illinois higher education.

Illinois' higher education systems need to play an active role in supporting Black students to succeed in college by providing robust supports for academic, basic needs, and individual well-being success at each step in the student journey. Higher education institutions can foster Black students' academic success by doing the following:

DIRECTIVES
- Improve Black students' access to existing dual enrollment and dual credit programs, and expand dual programming offerings to high schools serving predominantly Black students.
- Strengthen bridge and cohort programs for Black first-generation students, Black students from low-income backgrounds, Black transfer students, and Black adult learners to promote seamless transitions and student success.
- Revise admissions criteria to eliminate structurally racist practices and increase targeted outreach to Black high school students.

Indicators of Success
· Racial equity gaps in dual credit enrollments are eliminated.

· Dual credit and dual enrollment programs are available in all communities serving Black students in Illinois.

· Racial equity gaps in retention, transfer, and completion rates are eliminated.

· All Black high school graduates are either employed or enrolled in higher education 12-16 months after graduation.

· College recruitment efforts include strong recruitment of Black students in communities across Illinois.

· Racial equity gaps in undergraduate enrollment are eliminated.

ENROLLMENT & PROGRAM CHOICE

SUPPORT BLACK STUDENTS TO ENROLL & PROGRESS

All Black students in Illinois should have access to the full range of programs of study offered, and receive robust advising and support to help them enroll in higher education and progress towards completion of their degree.

Black students make up a declining share of undergraduate enrollment in Illinois, and many of those who do enroll lack the guidance they need to progress towards completion. In order to support Black students to enroll and persist, Illinois institutions must:

DIRECTIVES
- Scale reform of developmental education to shorten time-to-degree and increase student success.
- Close equity gaps in access to advisors, and provide antiracist academic advising to students that is asset-based, proactive, and sustained to strengthen Black students' sense of purpose and self-efficacy.

Indicators of Success
· High stakes placement tests are no longer used to determine remediation needs, and all remediation is provided in the context of credit bearing courses.

· All students are provided multiple, rigorous math pathways that align to different fields of study and the well-paying careers of today and tomorrow.

· Student : advisor ratios are manageable across the state, ensuring strong, individualized advising for all Black students.

STUDENT WELL-BEING

PRIORITIZE BLACK STUDENTS' HOLISTIC WELL-BEING

All Black students in Illinois should be provided with a safe environment and access to holistic, culturally competent supports and mental health services on campus.

The quality of advising and supports provided to Black students has an enormous impact on their sense of belonging, which in turn is positively correlated with persistence and completion. To level the playing field for Black students and attend to the impacts of structural racism on their experiences and outcomes, Illinois institutions must:

DIRECTIVES
- Provide holistic student supports including trauma-informed, antiracist mental health services for Black students on campus that attend to the lived experiences of Black of students and their families.
- Examine campus policies and hiring practices and strengthen professional development for all campus employees to improve Black student safety, belonging, and inclusion on campus.

Indicators of Success
- Student support structures have been redesigned at scale to provide an advising experience for students that is sustained, integrated, proactive, and personalized.
- Black students have ready access to high quality, antiracist mental health services on campus.
- All faculty, staff, and student support professionals are trained in cultural competency.
- Campus climate and culture assessments are being administered frequently and are being used to inform campus policy changes aimed at strengthening Black students' safety and well-being.

CONNECTION TO CAREER
BUILD STRONG BRIDGES INTO THE WORKPLACE FOR BLACK STUDENTS AND GRADUATES

All Black students in Illinois should be able to get a good job in their field of choice after graduation, earn the same wages as non-Black peers, and have the same opportunities for advancement in careers and at the next level of education.

Even after Black students graduate from postsecondary education, equity gaps persist in job placement and in the workplace through inequitable hiring practices, unequal pay, and a lack of guidance and mentorship for Black students as they navigate career paths for the first time. To build strong bridges into the workplace for Black students and graduates, Illinois must:

DIRECTIVES
- Build a stronger bridge between college and careers for Black students by promoting early career exploration and improving career connections throughout their time in college and beyond.
- Hiring practices and other internal company policies should prioritize closing equity gaps in the workforce.

Indicators of Success
- Racial equity gaps in labor force participation and unemployment rates are eliminated.
- Black graduates are being employed at the same rate as their peers at each institution.
- Large numbers of paid internships and apprenticeships are being held by Black students across Illinois.
- Racial equity gaps in entry-level salaries are eliminated.

HIGH-LEVEL OVERVIEW OF ACTIONS BY SECTOR

Each of the solution areas identifies actions that should be taken by leaders across sectors to improve equity in access and outcomes for students. A high-level summary of action ideas is provided here.

High Schools: Boosting college attendance by providing early college experiences, asset-based advising, and financial literacy that result in greater academic preparedness, a sense of belonging, and greater financial access to a postsecondary education.
- **Connecting College to Careers:** Equip teachers and counselors to promote Black students' sense of belonging in college and academic purpose through early and often career exploration conversations.
- **Early College Exposure & Coursework:** Expand Black student access to dual enrollment and dual credit programs, and lower barriers to Black student participation in these opportunities.

- **Access to Financial Aid:** Provide robust financial literacy and financial planning counseling for Black students and families.

Colleges & Universities: Promoting persistence by providing equitable access to programs of study aligned to careers, holistic advising, and a culturally responsive and safe campus climate.
- **Increasing Equitable Access:** Implement test-blind or test-optional policies to address structural racism in admissions practices.
- **Redesigning Remediation at Scale:** Discontinue the use of high-stakes placement tests to determine remediation needs and provide all remediation in the context of credit-bearing courses or free of charge to students prior to matriculation.
- **Connecting College to Careers:** Ensure that Black students have access to early and ongoing career exploration and co-curricular, work-based learning opportunities embedded in programs of study.
- **Improving Campus Climate & Culture:** Provide anti-racist training and professional development for all employees grounded in an asset-based view of Black students, and regularly conduct and campus climate surveys to inform ongoing improvements.
- **Supporting Student Persistence:** Provide culturally responsive advising and holistic student supports that attends to the academic and non-academic needs of Black students.
- Reforming Administrative Policies: Eliminate administrative holds that prevent students from registering for courses or obtaining transcripts because of small dollar debt.

Policymakers: Strengthening access and improving outcomes by aligning resources, setting priorities, reforming policies, enabling robust data use, and supporting seamless transitions.

- **Ensuring Equitable Funding:** Reform the funding formula to ensure equitable resources for institutions serving large numbers of Black students, and provide robust funding of student aid
- **Interrogating Policies:** Conduct an equity audit of all education and workforce development policies with an eye toward impact on Black student postsecondary attainment
- **Promoting Effective Data Use:** Collect, share, and utilize robust data on the impacts of state programs on Black student retention and completion.
- **Supporting Student Transitions:** Pursue and refine evidence-based policies that lead to equitable dual-credit/dual-enrollment programs, scaled reform of remediation, and seamless applicability of transfer credits.

Community-Based Organizations: Advancing a culture of college-going and improving student persistence and completion through aligned efforts increase access to resources and culturally responsive student supports.
- **Promoting Culturally Responsive Financial Literacy & Planning:** Lead partnerships to provide more culturally competent financial literacy and financial planning education for Black students and families across the state beginning when students are in middle school.
- **Strengthening a Culture of College-Going:** Strengthen trust in and knowledge of the value of postsecondary attainment and available financial aid resources by partnering on efforts to embed college conversations in community venues and increase the number of Black students completing the FAFSA.
- **Increasing Access to Emergency Aid:** Participate partnerships to expand access to emergency aid for Black students and to develop effective systems to connect students in need to barrier-reduction grants.
- **Connecting College to Careers:** Partner with educational providers and employers to strengthen career exploration opportunities and career readiness programs for Black students.

Philanthropy: Improving outcomes by seeding innovation, investing in promising practices and data infrastructure, and fostering high-impact cross-sector partnerships.

- **Aligning Investments:** Fund organizations that are leading advocacy efforts aligned to the Equity Working Group's recommendations.
- **Promoting Effective Data Use:** Support cross-sector partnerships that track and regularly publish finely disaggregated data on progress toward equity goals
- **Supporting Infrastructure for Improvement:** Provide funding for institutions to build out high-quality systems of predictive analytics aimed at supporting Black student persistence and completion.
- **Scaling Evidence-Based Innovation:** Provide resources for institutions, systems, and cross-sector partnerships to scale evidence-based innovations in supporting the persistence and completion of Black students.
- **Connecting College to Careers:** Invest in large-scale efforts to connect Black students with career opportunities and create matching programs to expand hiring opportunities for Black students in well-paying fields.

Business Community & Employers: Promoting strong outcomes by increasing collaborations that connect college to careers and by ensuring hiring and retention practices are grounded in a commitment to equity.
- **Connecting College to Careers:** Expand high-quality work-based learning programs for Black students
- **Engaging Higher Education Institutions:** Expand employer presence and engagement with career centers at colleges and universities that serve large numbers of Black students.
- **Supporting Professional Development of Faculty & Staff:** Engage with college faculty and advisors to improve early and ongoing career exploration conversations with Black students
- **Improving Hiring and Employee Retention Practices:** Evaluate internal practices around internships, recruitment, salaries, promotions, and performance evaluation to prioritize equity.

The challenges facing Illinois' Black students, perpetuated by systemic racism, can only be addressed through the collaboration of these various sectors working together to remove barriers, address deeply inequitable policies and transform the system. Proposed solutions, promising practices, and a snapshot of the current state and road ahead are detailed in the full report. The members of the Equity Working Group for Black Student Access and Success in Illinois Higher Education are committed to the long-term work entailed in achieving equity in access and outcomes for Black students in our state. We invite you to join us in this work.

NOTE: This icon highlights recommendations that are based directly on student input, gathered from the Equity Working Group's student panel and focus groups

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EQUITY WORKING GROUP ACTION PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

STUDENTS ARE THE EXPERTS, AND SHOULD BE DEEPLY INVOLVED IN SUSTAINED EFFORTS TO EVALUATE AND REDESIGN THE SYSTEMS OF STUDENT SUPPORT.

DATA SHOULD BE COLLECTED, ANALYZED, AND SHARED OVER TIME TO ENSURE THAT EQUITY GOALS ARE BEING MET, BOTH WITHIN INSTITUTIONS AND AT THE STATE LEVEL.

IT IS NOT ENOUGH FOR A PROGRAM TO EXIST; INVESTMENTS MUST BE MADE TO INCREASE ACCESS FOR BLACK STUDENTS AND PROGRAMS SHOULD BE EVALUATED ON THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO CLOSING RACIAL EQUITY GAPS.

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES FACING ILLINOIS' BLACK STUDENTS REQUIRES THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT FUNDING PRIORITIES. THERE IS A NEED TO BOTH INNOVATE WITHIN CURRENT BUDGET CONSTRAINTS AND ALSO

ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

DIRECTIVE | Remove ability to pay as a barrier for Black students in persisting and completing college through barrier-reduction grants

The financial burden of college presents a challenge to many Black students, not only as they consider enrolling in higher education, but also as they seek to persist and ultimately earn their degrees. For many students, one financial emergency—a car accident, medical emergency, lost job, or even the price of textbooks—can make the difference between earning their degree or not. Many Black students in Illinois are particularly vulnerable to this type of financial barrier — 61% of Illinois Black families live in liquid asset poverty, meaning that their savings cannot cover three months of basic expenses, compared to only 28% of White families.[2] Barrier-reduction grants—small amounts of money intended to cover costs

that present a barrier to students' path to a degree—can make the difference between dropping out and remaining in school for many students. According to a 2014 community needs survey by All Chicago, a non-profit that provides emergency funds to students in Chicago, 25% of students surveyed who dropped out for financial reasons needed as little as $1,000 to remain in school.[3] Additionally, returning students often face challenges re-enrolling if prior account balances remain. Policies for returning students should be examined to support debt forgiveness when it poses a barrier for students to return to complete their education.

Higher education institutions, non-profit organizations, and other partners can help to

close these gaps in Illinois by providing small-dollar barrier-reduction funds. These grants can come in a variety of forms: retention grants, which target students who are near completion of their degree but are kept from graduating by small cost barriers; emergency funds, which target students at any point in their time at college who are experiencing a financial emergency or need additional money to pay rent or buy textbooks; and debt forgiveness for returning students who may have small, lingering account balances that prevent them from re-enrolling.[4] All types of grants are crucial for many Black students experiencing financial hardship.

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6   "Student Emergency Fund," *All Chicago*, 2020. https://allchicago.org/how-we-are-ending-homelessness/emergency-financial-assistance/student-emergency-fund/

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CURRENT STATE

PROMISING PRACTICES

- All Chicago Emergency Fund: All Chicago is unique in that it provides a model for the ways in which CBOs, postsecondary institutions, and funders can work together. In 2020, All Chicago had 13 partner organizations that work closely with students who help connect emergency funds with students in need. In the first half of 2020, All Chicago assisted 969 students and disbursed $462,536 with an average grant amount of $475.[5] 59% of grant recipients identified as Black/African American.[6]

- Georgia State University Panther Micro-Retention Grants: Georgia State uses robust data on students' academic progress, unmet financial need, and outstanding tuition balances to identify the students who could be retained with small-dollar grants. Students are offered micro grants on the condition that they agree to certain activities, such as meeting with a financial counselor to create a plan for how they will finance the rest of their education. In 2018, more than 2,000 students were retained through the Panther Retention Grant program.[7]

- City Colleges of Chicago's Chancellor's Retention Fund: Launched in Spring 2020, the fund removed outstanding debt from the Fall 2019 semester so that low-income students could remain enrolled in the spring.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Provide a wide array of accessible barrier-reduction grants that eliminate financial barriers that prevent Black students from persisting and completing college

This can be done by:

- Leveraging cross-sector partnerships and institutional funds for barrier-reduction grants to Black students in need;

- For programs that are created, tracking data on who receives or is denied by race, amount, retention, and graduation rates;

- Following best practices to make barrier-reduction grants as inclusive and effective as possible for Illinois' Black students.

SHORT TERM

Aid providers including 2- and 4-year institutions, philanthropy, and government agencies.

- Make institutional emergency aid more accessible for Black students and develop retention/completion grant programs to provide small barrier-reduction grants for Black students who are at risk of dropping out due to financial need

  · Set aside funds for grants of up to $500-1,000 per student to help students complete their degrees or persist in the face of financial emergency.

  · Students should be automatically identified for retention or completion grants, either by their advisors or by institutional data on tuition payments, financial aid, etc.

  – Retention/completion grants should target students who are close to completing their degree but have outstanding financial need.

  – Do not place GPA/academic eligibility criteria on retention/completion grants.

  – Follow best practices for grant distribution and follow-up with students when designing the grant system.

- Implement debt forgiveness programs for Black students who would like to return, but have small amounts of outstanding debt

  · Administrative holds for small dollar amounts that prevent students from registering for courses play too large a role in equity gaps in persistence and college completion for Black students. Debt forgiveness programs should be implemented and made accessible.

  – Use broad eligibility criteria to be able to accept as many interested returning students as possible.

  – Publicize the program widely in Black communities to encourage low-income Black students to return to higher education.

  – Release administrative holds and allow students to register in spite of balances.

Grant providers, including 2- and 4-year institutions, philanthropy, and government agencies.

- Collect institutional data on community need and grant distribution

  · All institutions should conduct an initial community needs survey to identify where need for emergency aid or general retention/completion grants exists on their campuses.

  · As grants are distributed, gather data on:

  – Type of expenses usually covered.

  – Average amount of grant requested.

  – Demographics of recipients (year in college, race, age, etc.)

  · Data should be shared with IBHE.

LONG TERM

Barrier Reduction Fund Grant Providers, Including Philanthropy

- Form partnerships to direct emergency funds to Black students most in need

  · A current model example is All Chicago's Emergency Fund, in which foundations and corporate partners should provide funds, to be distributed to students identified by education-based CBOs and 2- and 4- year institutions.

  · Where possible, CBOs and postsecondary institutions should facilitate the process by applying on behalf of students or expediting release of grant funds to students directly.

  – The COVID emergency grant process can serve as a model here—IBHE distributed funds to universities, and universities connected those funds with students.

  · Collect robust data on program effectiveness of grants and publish data through impact reports and accessible data dashboards on a regular basis.

2- and 4-year institutions and Philanthropy

- Institutions should develop a high-quality system of early alerts to connect students in need with barrier-reduction grant money

  · Institutional data on community need and grant distribution can be leveraged to develop early warning indicators that help universities plan interventions to keep students on track to graduate.

  · Follow the example of institutions such as Georgia State University, who use predictive analytics to schedule advisor interventions, communicate with students about financial supports, etc. when students are in danger of not being retained/not completing their degree.

  · Philanthropy can support such efforts by providing the funding necessary to build out these systems.

ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

DIRECTIVE | Increase need-based funding and program flexibility to help low-income Black students overcome cost barriers in their postsecondary education
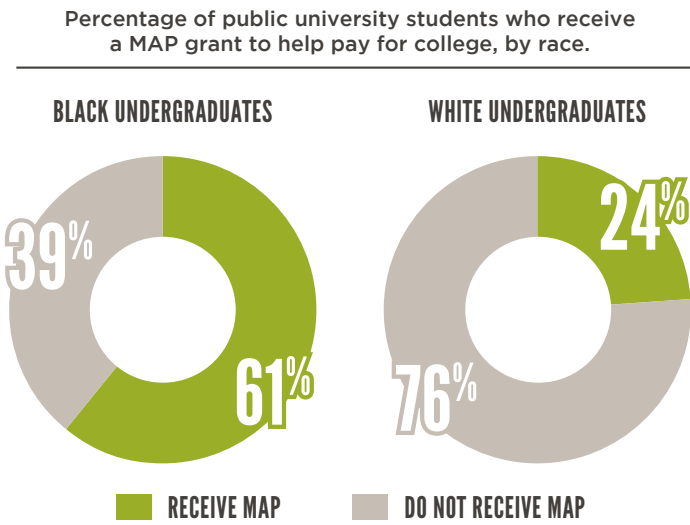
In the early 2000s, Illinois served as a model to other states for strong post-secondary financial aid due to the Monetary Award Program (MAP).[8] In 2001, there was enough MAP funding to serve every student who was eligible for the program, and grants covered 100% of a student's tuition and fees at public universities and community colleges. Over the past twenty years, however, as tuition and fees have increased dramatically, MAP funding has remained stagnant. As a result, the purchasing power of MAP has declined—in 2020, grants cover only 34% of tuition and fees at public universities and 36% at community colleges.[9]

In addition, many eligible MAP applicants do not receive any MAP funding due to fund depletion. Funds are distributed on a first-come-first-serve basis based on when a student files a FAFSA (MAP uses FAFSA to determine eligibility, rather than require a separate application). Between 2017 and 2019, the number of eligible students denied MAP grants ranged from 104,588 to 82,799, and in 2019, 71% of denied eligible students were community college students.[10] Unfortunately no data currently collected on those who do not receive MAP grants—neither their racial demographic, nor their ultimate outcomes. Collecting this data would be a strong step forward for the state to further understand where MAP is falling short in serving Illinois' Black students.

The only way to ensure effectiveness of the MAP program is to fund the program to match the level of student need. In fiscal year 2020, MAP received a $50 million increase in funding from the state, which increased the number of MAP recipients by 10,056 and the average award size by $260.[11] In fiscal year 2021, the Governor's Office proposed that MAP's budget be increased by an additional $50 million, but the budget was held steady at $451.3 million. It has been estimated that around an additional $900 million per year is required to fully fund MAP.[12]

Fully funding MAP will help Illinois better serve its Black students. According to ISAC, 59% of Black undergraduates in Illinois receive MAP funding.[13]

Percentage of public university students who receive a MAP grant to help pay for college, by race.

BLACK UNDERGRADUATES
39%
61%

WHITE UNDERGRADUATES
24%
76%

■ RECEIVE MAP   ■ DO NOT RECEIVE MAP

Source: ISAC Basic Program Data, February 2020; ISAC/IBHE Racial Data for MAP recipients, 2017.

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14 ISAC presentation at the IBHE Board Meeting, September 2020. https://www.ibhe.org/board/2020/September/Zarnikow-MAP_101.pdf

CURRENT STATE

LEGISLATION
- In FY20, state funding for MAP increased by $50 million. This funding was maintained for FY21. The Governor's Office originally proposed to further increase funding by $50 million as part of an effort to increase MAP funding by 50% over a four-year span, but due to COVID-19, MAP funding was kept level. MAP's current budget is $451.3 million.

PROMISING PRACTICES
- Summer Pell: In 2017, the U.S. Department of Education reinstated the year-round Pell grant program after having suspended it in 2011. To be eligible, students must already receive Pell during the academic year and be enrolled at least half time during the year. Students are eligible to receive up to 150% of their award through this method (ex. $1,500 in fall, $1,500 in spring, $1,500 in summer). Summer semester Pell usage counts towards the lifetime Pell limit of 12 semesters.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Increase MAP funding and flexibility to help low-income Black students overcome cost barriers in their post-secondary education

Until the MAP program is fully funded, there will be Black students who are denied aid due to lack of funds, or who are not supported to persist and complete because the available funding leaves an unfilled gap. While the state moves towards the goal of fully funding MAP, a few additional strategies can help to make MAP more effective and equitable for Black students.

This can be done by:
- Collecting, sharing, and utilizing robust data on MAP, both for the applicants who receive MAP and for those who do not;
- Creating a set-aside of 15% of MAP funding for community college students;
- Piloting a MAP Summer Grant program for one to two years to test extending grant terms from 9-months to 12-months;
- Committing to incremental budget increases for MAP every year until the program is fully funded.

SHORT TERM
State, 2- and 4-year institutions, ISAC, and high schools
- Collect, share, and utilize robust data on MAP, both for the applicants who receive MAP and for those who do not
  - Mandate the collection and sharing of data between state bodies and institutions regarding the demographics of students who do or do not receive MAP, including race, type of institution attended, age, geographic location in the state, etc.
  - Mandate the collection and sharing of data between state bodies and institutions regarding the outcomes of students who do or do not receive MAP, including whether they enroll in post-secondary education and whether they complete.
  - Create a report card, data map, or dashboard that tracks this data and makes it available to legislators, policy advocates, institutions, and others in order to drive further equity-based reforms to MAP.

State and ISAC
- Improve access to MAP funding for community college students
  - First-come-first-serve will no longer be necessary when MAP is fully funded; until then, establish a set-aside within the MAP budget for community college students to ensure that they are not disproportionately harmed by the first-come-first-serve disbursement model.

- A model for implementation could be the set-aside of $75 million for community college students that was proposed by the Governor's Office in February 2020. This amount reflects the estimated amount needed for MAP and Pell to cover full tuition and fees for nearly all MAP-eligible community college students.[14]

State, Philanthropy, and Employers
- Pilot a MAP Summer Grant program for one to two years to test the impact of extending grant terms from 9-months to 12-months
  - All students who are eligible for MAP can apply to use MAP funds over the summer.
  - Funding will be provided by foundations, philanthropic giving, corporate partners, etc. and will be set-aside for summer use.
  - The administration of the program will be consistent with existing MAP functions under ISAC.
  - Data should be collected to track academic progress, demographics (age, gender, race) and overall usage of the program.

LONG TERM
State policy, IBHE, and ISAC
- Commit to incremental budget increases for MAP every year until the program is fully funded
- Adopt an act that commits Illinois to fully funding MAP grants, binding the state to providing incremental increases for the program every year.
- While the Governor's previously proposed increases of $50 million per year may be out of reach due to the pandemic, the State should commit to a steady increase that tracks with the state's economic recovery.

Annual tuition and fees for full-time students; highest MAP awards for students with Zero Expected Family Contribution.

■ Public University Tuition and Fees
■ Community Colleges Tuition and Fees
■ Max MAP amount for Community College
■ Max MAP amount for Public Universities

-52%

-66%

48% Share of tuition and fees covered by MAP for Zero EFC families in 2010.

34% Share of tuition and fees covered by MAP for Zero EFC families in 2020.

Source: ISAC Basic Program Data, February 2020; ISAC/IBHE Racial Data for MAP recipients, 2017.

ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

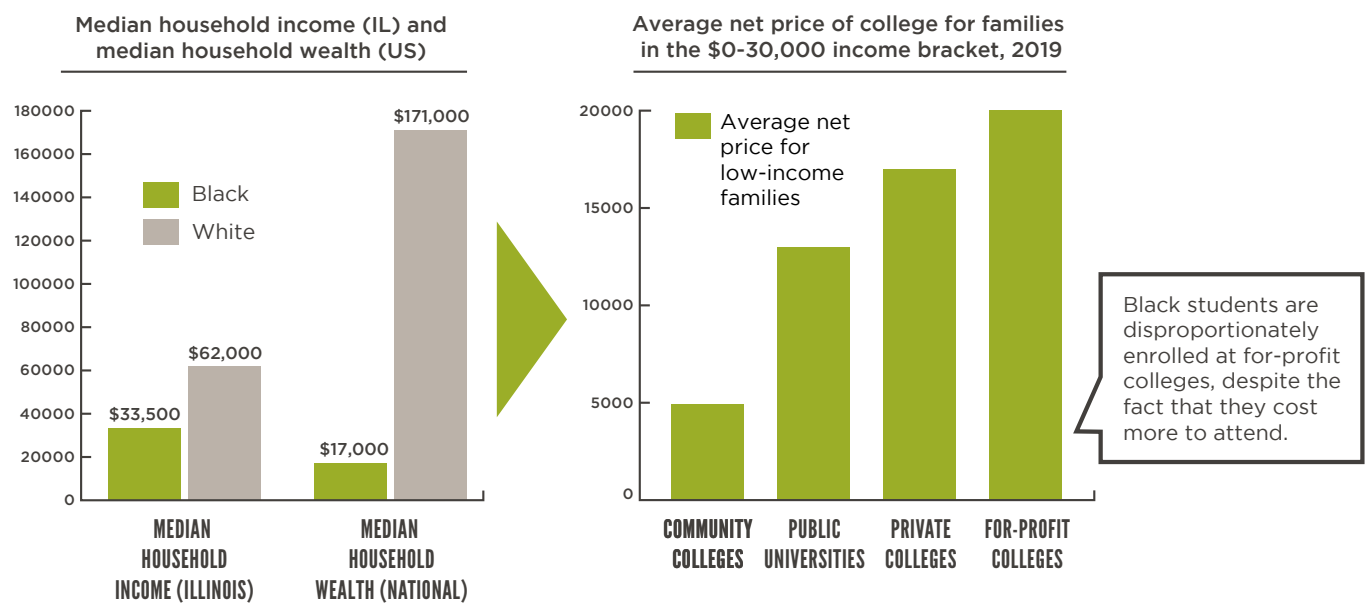**DIRECTIVE |** Make college more accessible by strengthening early connections to college-affirming experiences, including asset-based high school counseling and culturally-responsive financial literacy and financial planning support for Black students and their families

Efforts need to be made across sectors to provide Black students with access to a much wider array of college-affirming experiences. Asset-based high school counseling that promotes Black students' sense of self-efficacy is a critical piece of the access puzzle, but there are also important roles to be played by faith leaders and other community-based organizations in helping Black students see themselves as college goers.

In addition, to increase the likelihood that Black students can fully utilize financial aid Illinois must expand and improve financial literacy programs, increase awareness of existing financial aid offerings, foster deeper conversations with students and parents about financial planning for college, and break down common financial barriers which impede access to and completion of college for Black students. It is important to note, however, that financial literacy alone will not overcome wealth gaps or gaps between financial aid and the full cost of attending college.

Median household income (IL) and median household wealth (US)

Average net price of college for families in the $0-30,000 income bracket, 2019

Legend:
- Black
- White

- $33,500 (Black, Median Household Income Illinois)
- $62,000 (White, Median Household Income Illinois)
- $17,000 (Black, Median Household Wealth National)
- $171,000 (White, Median Household Wealth National)

Average net price for low-income families:
- COMMUNITY COLLEGES
- PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES
- PRIVATE COLLEGES
- FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES

Black students are disproportionately enrolled at for-profit colleges, despite the fact that they cost more to attend.

Source: "Priced Out: Black Students," Partnership for College Completion, 2019; Prosperity Now Racial Wealth Gap Data, 2016; The College Scorecard and data on FAFSA-filers household income from ISAC; ISAC Table 2.3d, Average Income by Dependency Status FY 2019; U.S. Department of Education College Scorecard, "Average Net Price by Income Level $0-30,000."

CURRENT STATE

LEGISLATION

- IL Public Act 101-0180 requires high school students to file a FAFSA, or sign a waiver to opt out, in order to graduate beginning in the 2020-21 school year.
- School Code Section 27-12.1 on Consumer Education requires that grade 9-12 curriculum include a financial literacy component and establishes a Financial Literacy Fund in the State treasury to fund awards for schools meeting financial literacy goals. There is no specified length of financial literacy instruction required for students in Illinois, and in the proposed curriculum released by the Illinois State Board of Education in 2009, college funding plays only a small role.
- The Student Investment Account Act was signed into law in August 2019. It gives the Treasurer the power to allocate an annual investment of 5 percent (approximately $800 million based on current estimates) from the State Investments portfolio for low-interest student loans, refinancing of outstanding student loans, and other innovative college financing approaches.[15]
- The Student Loan Bill of Rights, passed by the Illinois legislature in 2017, sets certain state requirements for student loan services. The act prohibits practices that can be misleading for borrowers and requires companies servicing student loans to inform borrowers about all affordable financing plans. Additionally, the act lays out the criteria that must be met to receive a license to service student loans in the state of Illinois and prohibits those without licenses to operate as a student loan servicer.

PROMISING PRACTICES

- ISACorps is a program from the Illinois Student Assistance Commission that hires recent college graduates to run outreach programs in communities around Illinois. It includes workshops for financial aid and college applications, one-on-one mentoring for students and families, career-planning services, along with other college informational sessions.
- ISAC's FAFSA Completion Initiative allows principals to see which students have filed a FAFSA so that they can target their efforts to try to get as high a completion rate as possible.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Make existing financial aid more accessible to Black families by improving financial literacy education and breaking down common barriers to accessing financial aid

This can be done by:

- Improving and expanding existing financial aid awareness efforts, particularly as Illinois's FAFSA requirement for high school graduation is rolled out;
- Strengthening state policies to support responsible lending;
- Launching cross-sector partnerships to foster more robust conversations around financial literacy education that begins in middle and high school with students and families across the state;
- Building trust in communities surrounding financial aid and FAFSA, in part by identifying local leaders who can lead financial literacy training efforts;
- Creating more scholarship funds specifically targeted at low-income Black students who may struggle to fill the gap between tuition and financial aid.

SHORT TERM

Two- and four-year institutions, high schools, and ISAC

- Increase culturally relevant financial aid outreach, targeting Black schools and families
  - Embed culturally relevant financial aid information into all outreach, from high school visits to college fairs and more.
    – Make sure that financial literacy and college planning conversations are more robust and account for the specific challenges facing many Black communities, including lack of trust in FAFSA and avoiding predatory loans that often target people of color.
    – Provide professional development to those leading financial literacy efforts to equip them to better engage Black parents in deeper conversations about financial planning for postsecondary education.
    – Ensure equitable access to culturally competent financial literacy training for Black students and their families by scaling up the ISACorps model, which brings graduates back to the high schools that they attended to counsel students on acquiring financial aid and navigating the admissions process, and implement similar local programs where applicable.

State, Philanthropy, and high schools

- Continue to invest in ISACorps and other proven financial literacy programs
  - Evaluate ISACorps' and other financial literacy programs' current effectiveness, including both the success of their financial literacy programs in student outcomes and their success in reaching the state's Black students.
  - Increase funding so that ISACorps can hire more corps members and reach more schools that serve predominantly Black students.
  - Ensure cultural competency and implicit bias is prioritized as part of ISACorps training.

- Ensure that ISACorps members are demographically representative of the state as a whole, and of the high schools they are serving.

State and ISAC

- Strengthen state policies to support responsible lending
  - Conduct an audit of lending practices to identify responsible lending practices as well as predatory practices.
  - Evaluate state progress on implementing provisions of the Student Loan Bill of Rights that went into effect in December 2018.
  - Strengthen Student Investment Account practices to:
    – Provide more low-interest loans for Black students and families who cannot access credit;
    – Refinance student loans to help graduates with outstanding debt;
    – Provide other equity-based financing options to low-income Black students and families who struggle to pay for college.
  - Allocate additional resources to the Attorney General's office to aggressively combat predatory lending practices and to ensure the robust implementation of Illinois' Student Loan Bill of Rights.

- Track racial data on FAFSA completion
  - As part of the FAFSA completion initiative, track FAFSA completion by race and track incidences of additional barriers to Black student FAFSA completion, such as income verification processes.

LONG TERM

State and high schools

- Ensure robust, culturally competent financial aid counseling for Black students in Illinois
  - To support the implementation of Illinois's FAFSA requirement for high school graduation, provide state guidelines for the optimal high school financial aid counselor-to-student ratio and for counselors' maximum caseloads, to be managed and implemented by ISBE with a focus on the equitable distribution of resources to underserved communities.
  - Mandate cultural competency and implicit bias training for all financial aid counselors.

State and 2- and 4-year institutions

- Conduct comprehensive internal audits of institutional and scholarships to ensure that disbursement is equitable
  - Evaluate the effectiveness of current scholarship practices, including but not limited to eligibility for merit-based aid and scholarships, the amount of need-based aid being distributed, etc. in achieving equity goals.
  - Consider amending eligibility criteria for scholarships to be more inclusive and to incorporate an equity lens.
  - Use the information gathered from institutional aid and scholarship audits to equitably redistribute funds, if needed, prioritizing low-income, Black students most in need of the institution's financial support.

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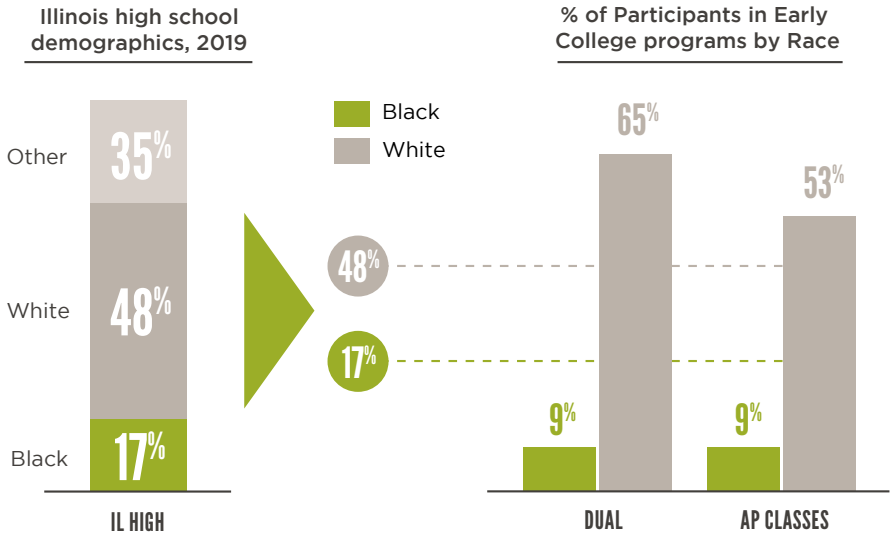
INSTITUTIONAL
PREPAREDNESS AND SUPPORT

DIRECTIVE | Improve Black students' access to existing dual enrollment and credit programs, and expand dual programming offerings to high schools serving predominantly Black students

Dual credit programs that allow students to earn college credit while still in high school can help close attainment gaps and strengthen students' sense of academic purpose and belonging in college. Indeed, the Illinois Community College Board has described dual credit as a "'win-win' arrangement for all parties"—students can get ahead on accumulating credits towards a degree and gain confidence in their academic abilities; parents and students can benefit from reduced college costs; and "the enhanced high school and college faculty dialogue can contribute to a better alignment between secondary and postsecondary education."[16]

Recognizing these benefits, Illinois has invested in significantly expanding dual credit programs over the past two decades. In 2001, Illinois had 11,809 enrollments in dual credit programs. Last year, in 2019, dual credit enrollments were over 10x what they had been in 2001, with 124,614 enrollments across the state.[17]

However, increased numbers of dual credit programs have not resulted in equal access to these programs. In fact, Black students are almost half as likely (47% less likely) to be enrolled in early college programs as would be expected based on their overall enrollment

in Illinois high schools. Largely because of inappropriate eligibility requirements that raise artificial barriers (e.g., the use of high-stakes placement tests that lack validity) to the location and marketing of dual enrollment programs, Black students are underrepresented in these important opportunities.

Illinois high school demographics, 2019 — IL HIGH: Other 35%, White 48%, Black 17%

% of Participants in Early College programs by Race — DUAL: Black 9%, White 65%; AP CLASSES: Black 9%, White 53%; 48%, 17%

Black / White

Source: ISBE Illinois State Report Card 2019, IBHE "Assessing Equity in Illinois Higher Education," 2020.

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17 "Dual Credit in the Illinois Community College System: Fiscal Year 2019," Illinois Community College Board, March 2020.

18 "Expanding Equity in Dual Credit."

19 "Expanding Equity in Dual Credit."

CURRENT STATE

LEGISLATION
- The Dual Credit Quality Act (110 ILCS 27), passed in 2009 and significantly amended in 2018, outlines the following policies for dual credit programs in IL:
  - Requires local community colleges to agree to offer dual credit courses if a school district requests them;
  - Prohibits school districts from offering dual credit courses from out-of-state institutions without first asking an Illinois college if the same courses are offered there;
  - Establishes a "Model Partnership Agreement," which outlines the parameters of school-college partnerships, should the stakeholders be unable to reach an agreement;
  - Outlines the qualifications required for dual credit instructors.

PROMISING PRACTICES
- Rockford Public School District 205 and Rock Valley College have partnered to provide targeted reading interventions to students who do not meet eligibility criteria, allowing them to remain in the dual credit program.[18]
- Eastern Illinois University has demonstrated that online dual enrollment can expand the university's reach and allows students to bypass barriers such as distance from a community college campus or shortage of qualified teachers.[19]

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Improve Black students' access to dual enrollment and credit programs that are now widely available through community colleges and universities, ensuring that Black students in Illinois have equitable access to dual credit programs that can decrease their time-to-degree, lower college costs, increase student sense of purpose and self-efficacy, and improve chances of completion.

This can be done by:
- Further expanding access to dual enrollment programs and increasing recruitment at majority-Black high schools;
- Redesigning dual credit programs' eligibility requirements to be more inclusive for Black students;
- Leveraging new legislation to accelerate teacher certification and the establishment of new partnerships through the "Model Partnership Agreement";
- Bringing in more Black students through targeted recruitment efforts.

SHORT TERM
Two- and four-year institutions and high schools
- Build new partnerships between colleges, universities, and local high schools that center equity:
  - 2 and 4-year colleges and universities in regions that currently lack dual credit and enrollment programs—especially in districts that serve higher numbers of Black students—should make expanding dual credit and enrollment programs a priority.
    – ICCB data indicates that the Chicago region presents a significant opportunity for growth and increased access—Chicago schools serve higher numbers of Black and Latinx students than the majority of other districts in Illinois and have significantly lower numbers of dual credit and dual enrollments compared to other regions of the state.
  - New partnerships should follow the new Model Partnership Agreement laid out in the Dual Credit Quality Act to make dual credit accessible to all.
    – The MPA lowers costs for students by encouraging best practices for low-cost dual credit:
      › Establishes the responsible party for course costs, textbooks, etc.
      › Requires multiple measures for placement in dual credit;
      › Prioritizes courses that are most likely to transfer or that are embedded in career pathway course sequences;
      › Lays out clear guidelines for districts and colleges to follow when deciding which instructors are qualified to teach dual credit courses.
- Make existing dual enrollment and credit programs more inclusive by eliminating common barriers to access:
  - Reform eligibility criteria to eliminate the use of high-stakes placement tests and instead use GPA to determine eligibility for dual enrollment opportunities.
- Leverage digital infrastructure from the COVID-19 pandemic to give students opportunities to access dual enrollment and credit, even if their high school does not offer a course on-site
  - The pandemic has proven that schools have the digital infrastructure to be able to offer in-person classes at a distance.

- **State, IBHE, ISBE, 2- and 4-year institutions, and high schools**
- Set improvement targets for achieving racial equity in dual credit and dual enrollment programs and track progress
  - These goals should aim to make dual credit enrollment more reflective of overall high school enrollment in the state. Black students currently make up 9.5% of dual credit enrollments, despite representing 17% of the overall high school population.
  - ISBE and IBHE should create action plans for closing equity gaps around dual credit to help the state reach the equity targets described above.
- Require reporting on racial representation, student eligibility requirements, and student success metrics from all dual credit and dual enrollment partnerships
  - This data will help the state to identify tactics that are increasing Black representation, as well as those that are keeping students out of dual credit programs.

LONG TERM
State, 2- and 4-year institutions, and high schools
- Explore ways to increase the number of teachers qualified to teach dual credit courses, especially in Black communities that currently lack dual credit programs
  - Increase support for existing educational pathways for teacher certification.
  - Consider new, additional paths to teacher certification.
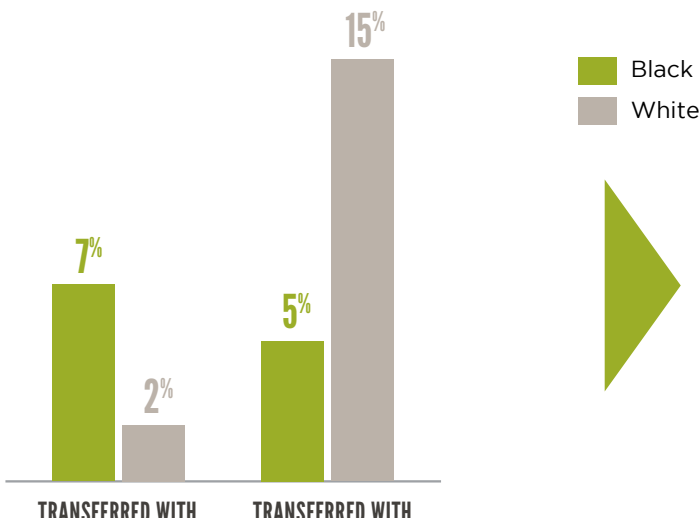
INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND SUPPORT

DIRECTIVE | Strengthen bridge and cohort programs for Black first-generation students, Black students from low-income backgrounds, Black transfer students, and Black adult learners to promote seamless transitions and student success

Rather than placing the burden on Black students to navigate systems that were not designed to support their success, colleges and universities must commit themselves to taking responsibility for reforming inequitable systems. By every measure, Black students are retained and graduated at lower numbers than t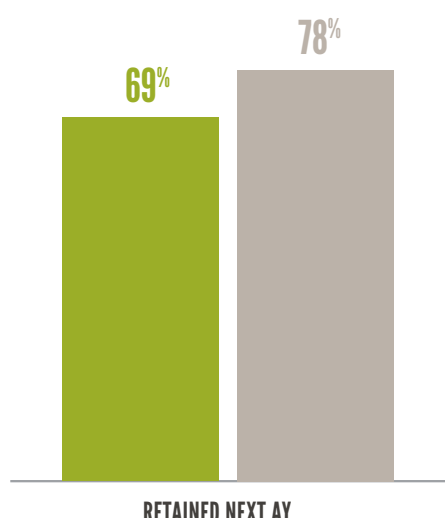heir White peers. This is especially the case for Black students who are first-generation college goers and from low-income backgrounds. Efforts aimed at creating seamless and well-supported transitions for students, including bridge programs and transfer improvement efforts, are improving outcomes for Black students. Bridge and cohort programs that provide integrated supports should be expanded and targeted to honor the strengths and meet the needs of persistently underserved student populations, including returning adults. Additionally, institutions must reform policy and practice to ensure that Black baccalaureate-seeking community-college students are able to transfer seamlessly, have all their transfer credits applied toward their degree, and receive tailored advising to finance and achieve their goals.

Black students are less likely than White students to transfer having already received an Associate's degree..

7% 2%

TRANSFERRED WITH

5% 15%

TRANSFERRED WITH

- Black
- White

...and they are less likely to be retained after transferring then White students

69% 78%

RETAINED NEXT AY

Source: IBHE "Assessing Equity in Illinois Higher Education," 2020. College Complete America, Data Dashboard, Transfer, https://completecollege.org/data-dashboard/.

CURRENT STATE

LEGISLATION
- The Bridge Program for Underrepresented Students Act (110 ILCS 170), provides a framework for public universities to receive state appropriations to support bridge programs. This act needs additional state funding behind it to be fully effective.[18]

PROMISING PRACTICES
- Chicago State University's Rise Academy program provides a full tuition scholarship, a concentrated summer academy for incoming students and ongoing academic support through individualized advising, academic skills workshops each semester, and a cohort community that helps them feel at home on campus.[19]

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Provide a range of bridge and cohort programs for Black first-generation students, Black students from low-income backgrounds, Black transfer students, and Black adult learners to ease the transition into college.

This can be done by:

- Committing additional resources to the development of existing bridge programs;
- Developing new bridge programs, especially for target groups that may not be currently represented in existing bridge programs (transfer students, returning adults);
- Strengthening partnerships between two-year and four-year institutions to improve seamless transitions and equitable outcomes for Black transfer students;
- Committing to long-term data collection and analysis on the outcomes for students involved in bridge and cohort programs.

SHORT TERM
Two- and four-year institutions
- Commit additional resources to the development of currently existing bridge programs
  · Invest additional resources to expand existing programs and to ensure programs inclusive of best practices such as peer mentoring and asset-based academic skills workshops.
- Develop new bridge and cohort programs, especially for target groups that may not be currently represented in existing bridge programs
  · Focus on extending institutional support combined with cohort-based peer support to Black transfer students, returning students, and adult students.
- Collect and share data on outcomes for Black transfer students
  · Benchmark data using the National Student Clearinghouse "Tracking Transfer" metrics and share data on transfer outcomes for Black students by program.

LONG TERM
Two- and four-year institutions and State
- Commit to long-term data collection and analysis on the outcomes for students involved in bridge and cohort programs
  · In order to assess effectiveness and improve bridge and cohort programs long-term, gather institutional data and survey responses from program participants in order to guide future additions and changes to the programs.
  · Analyze qualitative data on student experiences, along with quantitative institutional data such as graduation rate, retention rate, etc. for program participants.

- Strengthen partnerships between community colleges and four-year institutions to improve seamless transitions and equitable outcomes for Black transfer students
  · Within these partnerships, lay out a clear process for transfer and applicability of credits, and collaborate to improve the transfer-affirming culture at the community college and an equity-minded transfer-receptive culture at the four-year institution.
  · Provide proactive support, tailored advising, and culturally competent outreach that focuses on supporting Black students in navigating the transfer process and creating a full financial plan for completion.
  · Assess systems currently in place, such as iTransfer, and ensure advising staff is trained to support students to use such systems.
- Launch a sustained effort to engage Black students and alumni to identify additional barriers in the transition to higher education and in seamless transfer of credit
  · Engage Black students and alumni through focus groups, student panels, or other collaborative efforts to understand the lived experience of Black students as they navigate systems and institutions.
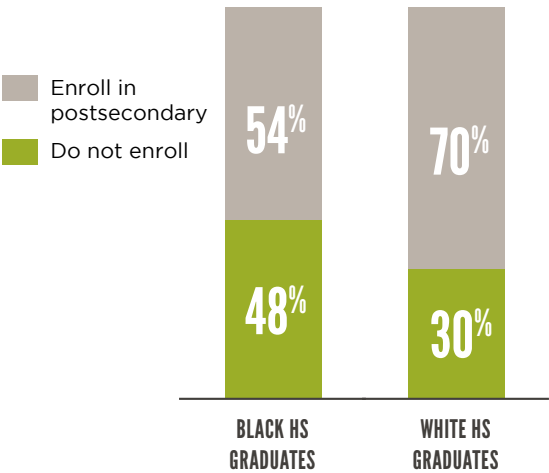
INSTITUTIONAL
PREPAREDNESS AND SUPPORT

DIRECTIVE | Revise admissions criteria to eliminate structurally racist practices and increase targeted outreach to Black high school students

Inequitable admissions practices such as standardized test requirements create an additional obstacle for many Black students to find a college and enroll. Recent data from the College Board shows that standardized tests continue to produce disparate outcomes by race—in 2019, for example, 80% of White stud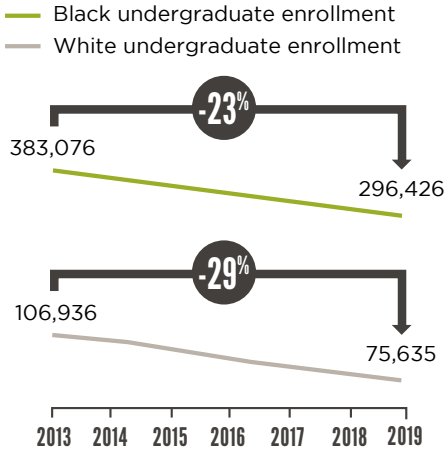ents met benchmarks in Reading/Writing, compared with 46% of Black students nationwide.[20] By revising admissions practices to become test-optional and instead using more holistic methods of evaluating students, institutions can begin to eliminate obstacles to Black student enrollment.

High-quality college counseling and university informational sessions at the high school level can also make a significant impact on Black students' sense of academic purpose and belonging in college. By increasing culturally competent outreach efforts to high schools that serve predominantly Black students and providing every Black student with focused college counseling, Illinois educators and other stakeholders can reduce equity gaps between Black and White students in college admissions and enrollment.

12-month college enrollment rates for IL high school graduates, 2018
100% = 135, 420 IL HS graduates

Enroll in postsecondary
Do not enroll

	BLACK HS GRADUATES	WHITE HS GRADUATES
Enroll in postsecondary	54%	70%
Do not enroll	48%	30%

Overall undergraduate enrollment trends for Black and White students in IL, 2013-2018

— Black undergraduate enrollment
— White undergraduate enrollment

383,076 **-23%** 296,426

106,936 **-29%** 75,635

2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019

Nearly half of all Black high school graduates do not enroll in post-secondary in the 12 months following graduation.

While overall under-graduate enrollment in IL has declined disproportionately for Black students (29%).

Source: Data on college enrollment rates for high school graduates comes from a data match between ISBE, IBHE, and NSC on 2017 and 2018 IL high school graduates. Data on enrollment trends comes from IPEDS 2013-2018 Fall Enrollment Trends Data.

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CURRENT STATE
PROMISING PRACTICES
- As of August 2020, 35 4-year institutions in Illinois (public and private) have switched to some form of test-optional or test-blind admissions.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR
GOAL: Make the admissions process more inclusive and accessible by revising admissions criteria and increasing culturally competent outreach to Black high school students and their families.

This can be done by:
- Making admissions test-blind or test-optional;
- Increasing college outreach to Black communities through summer programs, college informational sessions, and culturally competent recruitment officers;
- Ensuring that every student has culturally competent college advising in high school.

SHORT TERM
2- and 4-year institutions and State
- Revise admissions criteria to be more inclusive, including implementing test-optional practices
  · Remove the requirement for standardized test scores for college admission.
  · Use high school GPA, recommendation letters, essays, projects, and other criteria to inform admissions decisions.
  · Waive application fees that may be an obstacle for low-income Black students.

2- and 4-year institutions and high schools
- Strengthen recruitment practices to better support Black students through training and targeted, personalized support
  · Train college recruitment officers for implicit bias and cultural competency.
  · Emphasize personalized attention for Black students in recruitment efforts, strengthening the bridge to college enrollment for students who don't have models of college-going behavior in their families or communities.
  · Emphasize personalized attention for parents as well to establish trust among families in the admissions and financial aid process.
- Increase targeted, culturally competent outreach to Black high school students and communities
  · Prioritize recruitment at high schools that serve predominantly Black students.
  · Allocate resources to expand culturally competent recruitment efforts to more Black students across the state.
  · Run informational sessions for parents to help them understand the college admissions process and to support their children in applying.

LONG TERM
State and high schools
- Run statewide awareness programs to build Black students' sense of academic purpose and belonging in college.
  · Leverage the existing ISACorps network to increase college awareness programs for Black students across the state.
  · Mandate cultural competency training for all college counselors and college recruitment officers.
  · Run programs for parents and families as well as for students.

ENROLLMENT AND PROGRAM CHOICE

DIRECTIVE | Scale reform of developmental education to shorten time-to-degree and increase student success

Developmental education, formerly known as remediation, was intended to be a supportive experience for students, preparing them to succeed in college-level courses. However, over a decade of evidence from around the country shows definitively that traditional structures of remediation have not achieved the goal of supporting student success. Instead, these policies and practices have served as an invidious sorting mechanism. Statewide, less than 20% of students placed in traditional remediation ultimately graduate.[21] For Black students, who are disproportionately placed in developmental courses at both public universities and community colleges, that low rate of success is cut in half. According to a 2014 cohort study, 71% of Black community college students are placed into remedial courses through the use of high-stakes placement tests that national research suggests lack validity and reliability.[22] As a result and less than 9% of them will go on to graduate.[23] Unfair placement policies and non-credit-bearing or "prerequisite" developmental course sequences present the largest obstacle to student retention and completion.

Lowering barriers to Black student success requires scaled reform of placement policies and the structure of remediation. A significant amount of work has already gone into developmental education reform in Illinois, culminating in the Senate Joint Resolution 41 Report published in July 2020, which includes a detailed plan on how to scale current reform efforts and track progress. First, institutions should move away from the use of high stakes placement tests and instead use multiple, evidence-based criteria to significantly increase the number of students accessing credit-bearing gateway math and English. Additionally, Illinois should transition away from traditional models that do not grant credit for completing developmental coursework, and should instead use corequisite support models which provide remediation in the context of credit-bearing gateway courses.

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CURRENT STATE

LEGISLATION:

• Senate Joint Resolution 41: Adopted in the spring of 2019, the Senate Joint Resolution convened a task force for reviewing and scaling effective developmental education practices in the state of Illinois. The advisory council published its report about developmental education reform in June 2020. The report laid out a list of reform recommendations, as well as a plan and a timeline for the implementation of these reforms at institutions across the state. In June 2021, IBHE and ICCB will file an additional report on reform implementation and provide data on outcomes for students enrolled in the various developmental education models.

• In January 2021, the Illinois General Assembly passed HB2170, also known as the Education Omnibus Bill. Article 100 of the bill creates the Developmental Education Reform Act, which attempts to build on the State's ongoing work on the topic. This act requires that all Illinois community colleges adopt multiple measures for placement in developmental education, including a student's cumulative GPA. It also requires that institutions submit by May 1, 2022 an institutional plan for scaling developmental education reforms to improve student placement and success. Beginning in 2023, IBHE and ICCB will be responsible for sharing and collecting data to report back to the General Assembly on the status of these reforms.

PROMISING PRACTICES:

• Evidence from around the country suggests that default placement in college-level math and English with corequisite support should be the norm for the vast majority of students.[24]

• Many institutions around Illinois have already begun to adopt multiple measures, as proposed by ICCB. As of fall 2019, 17 community colleges had fully implemented multiple measures, and 12 others had partially implemented and had plans to fully implement by fall 2021.[25] Some community colleges, including Illinois Central College, have eliminated placement testing for developmental education altogether.

• As part of a comprehensive approach to reforming remediation, college algebra should no longer be used as the default math for all programs. Instead, students should be provided with access to multiple math pathways, such as data science and statistics, that integrate rigorous math appropriate to different disciplines and to the well-paying careers of today and tomorrow. [26]

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Scale reform of developmental education to shorten time-to-degree and increase student success.

This can be done by:

• Using multiple placement criteria including GPA or guided self-placement, rather than high-stakes placement tests, to increase Black student access to credit-bearing courses;

• Providing remediation in the context of credit-bearing courses through corequisite support models, rather than using traditional perquisite course sequences.

• Providing multiple math pathways for non-STEM students aligned to programs of study and careers.

SHORT TERM

2- and 4-year institutions and State

• Use multiple placement criteria to increase Black student access to credit-bearing courses

· Offer students a variety of ways to demonstrate college readiness.

– Cumulative high school GPA, including self-reported GPA, is the most reliable and accurate placement measure. A recent University of Chicago Consortium study found that GPA outweighs ACT scores as a predictor of college success.[27]
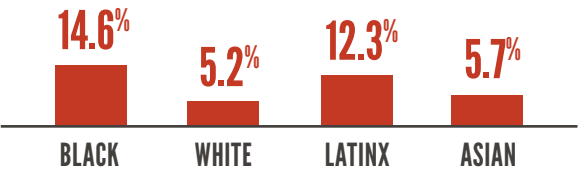
– Placement tests are not valid or reliable predictors of college readiness and should not be used as a measure of student preparation for college-level work.

LONG TERM

2- and 4-year institutions and State

• Scale more effective models of developmental education

· Placement tests should be eliminated as a single measure of student readiness and should be used only as a mechanism for students who want to test out of a corequisite

· All remediation should be provided in the context of credit-bearing courses or, for students at the lowest levels of preparation, provided free of charge in a compressed model prior to matriculation.

· Multiple math pathways aligned to fields of study should be provided to all students and those courses should be accepted and applied in transfer.

Students placed into Dev Ed by race
All Public Universities, Fall Semester 2018-2019

BLACK	WHITE	LATINX	ASIAN
14.6%	5.2%	12.3%	5.7%

Students placed into Dev Ed by race
All community colleges, Fall Semester 2018-2019

BLACK	WHITE	LATINX	ASIAN
65.3%	39.8%	57.7%	39.4%

ENROLLMENT AND PROGRAM CHOICE

DIRECTIVE | Provide asset-based, antiracist advising to students that is proactive and sustained to strengthen Black students' sense of purpose and self-efficacy

"One of the main things that's important is having people with actual support roles like advisors […] who are culturally competent in engaging with students of color."

—ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT PANELIST

Advising is one of the most powerful tools an institution has to support its students. Student advising should be intentional, sustained, and proactive. Advisors not only help students choose a program of study and build an academic plan. They also ensure that students are progressing towards the completion of their degrees, and intervene when they are experiencing academic or financial hardship. The important role that advisors play in students' experiences was highlighted during the Working Group's November 12 Student Panel. One student commented that his advisor is a crucial part of the support system that keeps him progressing towards his degree because his advisor always checks in to see how he is progressing academically and otherwise. Another student explained that one of his friends had to leave school because of a family emergency, and never ended up returning because he didn't have sufficient support from the institution. "He started to register for classes, but he didn't have anyone to follow up with him. Nobody was checking in when he needed them most."

Institutions must provide personalized advising to all Black students, providing advisors with the appropriate tools and cultural competency training so that they are well-equipped to address concerns specific to the Black student experience at that institution. To guarantee that every student receives quality advising, institutions must ensure advisors' caseloads are manageable. Finally, in order to respond to students' individual needs, institutions should develop early alert systems, policies, and processes that schedule interventions for students who are either struggling academically or are struggling to make payments.

CURRENT STATE

LEGISLATION
- iTransfer is an online platform created as part of the Illinois Articulation Initiative, a statewide transfer agreement that is transferable among more than 100 participating colleges and universities and Illinois. It provides information on how credits transfer between Illinois colleges and universities.

PROMISING PRACTICES
- City University of New York (CUNY) ASAP is a wrap-around program for low-income students, providing personalized academic and career advising in order to help students choose the courses that they need to progress towards their career goals. In a 2017 cohort study, ASAP students "not only earned their associate degrees at a higher rate, they also earned their associate degrees more quickly than other students." [28]
- Northern Illinois University launched a program called NIU Navigate, which uses predictive analytics to alert staff of students who have veered off the path to graduation so that they can schedule advisor interventions. Georgia State has a similar program called "GPS Advising", which generated more than 55,000 individual meetings between advisors and students in 2019-2020.[29]

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Provide robust, culturally competent advising for Black students as they progress towards their degree of choice

This can be done by:
- Providing advisors with the tools and training necessary:
  · Training all college advisors in cultural competency and implicit bias;
  · Making advisors' caseloads manageable;
  · Using predictive analytics to proactively schedule advisor meetings where needed;

- Having advisors make academic, financial, and wellness plans with Black student advisees;
- Developing equitable institutional policies that will help Black students from non-traditional paths (i.e. transfer students) progress along their path to degree.

SHORT TERM
State and two- and four-year institutions
- Ensure all advisors are trained in cultural competency and implicit bias
  · Change state requirements around counselor training to include implicit bias and cultural competency.
  · Institutions should incorporate implicit bias and cultural competency into their internal trainings for advisors, and should include these skills in evaluations of advisors.
- Have advisors make academic, financial, and wellness plans with Black student advisees
  · Ensure that advisors help students plan not only for their academic paths through college, but also for how they will manage their finances and their health while in school and post-graduation.
  · Inform students of the various support/mentorship resources that they can leverage during their time in college and give them a roadmap displaying the possible "touch-points" so that they can plan how they will leverage these resources.
- Make advisors' caseloads manageable and optimize them to reflect student need
  · Institutions should set a maximum number of students that advisors can serve to give advisors enough time for each advisee.
  · Advisors' time should be allocated equitably —for example, if an advisor serves predominantly Black, first-generation students, the limit on the number of students they serve should be lower to acknowledge that some students might need additional support.
- Reframe advisor role so that their primary focus is ensuring students can graduate and are successful at the institution
  · Emphasize the need for proactive support, rather than reactive response to a student coming in for assistance.

- Develop educational and advising policies that will help Black transfer and returning students to progress on their path to a degree
  · For returning students, institutions should provide college credit for technical qualifications/competencies that are not traditionally recognized as progress towards a degree.
  · Ensure advising for transfer students encompasses the pathway at both the 2- and 4-year institutions.
    – Ensure that the maximum number of credits will transfer, or at least count for elective credit towards a degree.
    – Provide robust training for advisors in the Illinois Articulation Agreement and iTransfer policies, so that they can best advise potential transfer students and ensure that their students are aware of their credit transfer options.

LONG TERM
Two- and four-year institutions
- Build out systems of predictive analytics using institutional student data to create early alert systems
  · Track student success over a variety of metrics and program certain alerts to occur when students need additional support (e.g., alerts could be linked to low grades, withdrawals from classes, late tuition payments, etc.).
  · As a first step, conduct an institutional review of data collection policies to determine what data is currently being collected, what data needs to be collected, and how data can be leveraged.
  · Commit to collecting data on racial equity where it is not already being collected.
  · collected, what data needs to be collected, and how data can be leveraged.
  · Commit to collecting data on racial equity where it is not already being collected.

Form more transfer agreements between 2- and 4-year institutions
  · Track the number of new partnerships over time.
  · Partnerships should be made using the existing iTransfer system.

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PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Improve safety and inclusion for Black students by strengthening campus policies directly affecting student interactions with each other and with the institution

SHORT TERM

2- and 4-year institutions

- Regularly examine school use of campus and/or local police
  - Include Black student groups and faculty / staff in review and decision-making process.

- Examine student codes of conduct
  - Create a plan to review and regularly revise student code of conduct, prioritizing the inclusion of Black student and alumni voices.

- Use campus climate and culture assessments and micro-surveys to better understand campus climate and to guide policy changes
  - Following the best practices recommendations from the University of Southern California Center for Race and Equity and others, conduct an initial, robust assessment of campus culture and climate to identify institution-specific issues and opportunities for growth.
  - Use micro-surveys throughout the year to check in on finances, mental health, capacity, and outcomes.
    – Micro-surveys should be given to students, faculty, and staff to gain a holistic view of campus climate.
  - Use the results of climate assessments and surveys to direct institutional reforms and policy changes.

LONG TERM

State and local policymakers:

- Determine standards for Illinois institutions' student codes of conduct that center Black students
  - Given a history of inequitable framing and application of student codes of conduct, set principles for revisions to codes of conduct for 2- and 4-year institutions that will encourage inclusive policies and anti-racist application of codes of conduct.

2- and 4-year institutions

- Implement changes in state-wide standards to codes of conduct
- Conduct surveys on campus culture and climate annually to track institutional progress
  - Follow best practices[30] to assess campus climate and culture through the use of regular campus climate and culture assessments and even more frequent micro-surveys.
  - Use the results of this assessment to direct institutional reforms, budget processes, and policy changes over time.

GOAL: Sponsor and support the development of on-campus communities/ spaces for Black students to create and maintain community and belonging, and ensure Black students have access to all campus spaces

SHORT TERM

2- and 4-year institutions

- Allocate new, and protect current, resources to create and support on-campus Black communities, such as living / learning communities, Black student unions, intercultural centers, Black student peer mentoring communities
  - Prioritize resiliency in budget adjustments for Black student communities.
  - Ensure recruitment and admissions staff are trained to highlight existing programs and to provide information on Black student community-building opportunities during recruiting and admissions events.

- Remove barriers for potential and current Black students to learn about opportunities on campus and to engage with all student spaces on campus
  - Remove the cost barrier to participating in certain on-campus communities by eliminating any additional fees required to take advantage of such opportunities.

Philanthropy and Employers

- Fund on-campus Black communities such as living / learning communities, Black student unions, intercultural centers, Black student peer mentoring communities
  - Philanthropic funds can be used to fill the gaps to provide ongoing support for Black student communities so that they are resilient to difficult institutional budget periods.

LONG TERM

2- and 4-year institutions and Philanthropy

- Collect data and track on retention, persistence, and completion rates for Black students who are supported by their institution to participate in a Black student community
  - Track how institution and philanthropic support for on-campus communities affects equity gaps for Black students.

GOAL: Increase the number and support of Black faculty on campus

SHORT TERM

IBHE, ICCB

- Increase awareness of and participation in Diversifying Faculty Initiative (DFI), and assess the need for other statewide hiring initiatives
- Gather data on the employment outcomes

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STUDENT WELL-BEING

DIRECTIVE | Provide holistic student supports including trauma informed, antiracist mental health services for Black students on campus and in the workplace that attend to the lived experiences of Black students and their families

CURRENT STATE

LEGISLATION
- Illinois 110 ILCS 58/ Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act, passed in July 2020, requires public universities and colleges to raise awareness of mental health resources on campus, provide mental health training for faculty and staff, and form local partnerships with mental health providers to be able to connect students with resources. However, more funding is required for institutions to be able to fully implement the bill.

- Schools have estimated that implementation will require $17 to $20 million additional funds per year for three years.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

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

This can be done by:
- Funding the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act;
- Requiring mental health providers to be licensed therapists;
- Requiring mental health providers to be trained in cultural competency and implicit bias;
- Ensuring that mental health supports continue beyond college, into the workplace.

SHORT TERM

State
- Fund the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act
  · The Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act is a great step towards providing more comprehensive mental health supports on campus, but it needs to receive more funding in order to work.

State, and 2-and-4 year institutions
- Require mental health support providers to be licensed therapists and trained in cultural competencies and implicit bias
  · Hire licensed therapists, along with counselors, to provide mental health services on campus, with a focus on hiring Black service providers.
  · Provide cultural competency and implicit bias training for all mental health employees on campus.
  · When mental health services are being provided by an off-campus local provider, require that they be certified in cultural competencies and implicit bias.
- Require all faculty and staff to be trained in culturally competent mental health awareness
  · Require all staff to complete basic mental health trainings that incorporate cultural competency elements.

Employers
- Expand offerings of trauma-informed and mental health benefits and support in the workplace
  · Ensure increased outreach and communication is informed by anti-racist and implicit bias training.

Black youth—especially those who grew up in low-income families—are at higher risk for depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues as a result of discrimination, poverty and trauma that they experience.[31] Racial tensions on campus and beyond can create further stress and anxiety for many students. Additionally, Black students are less likely to seek help for mental health issues due to stigma.[32] Student panelists emphasized the importance of mental health supports for Black college students. One panelist, who has had a therapist since middle school, and was able to continue seeing her therapist remotely upon going to college, described the experiences of two of her friends who left school for mental health issues. There were no licensed therapists on campus, only counselors, and none of them were trained to work with Black students. "My friends didn't have the support system that I have, and they struggled to find people who would speak up for them." It is crucial that Illinois postsecondary institutions provide Black students with easily accessible, licensed therapists who are trained to work with Black students in particular.

In July 2020, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act to begin to address these issues. The bill was aimed at raising awareness about mental health on college campuses, training faculty and staff to identify and address mental health issues, and connecting students to mental health resources. However, institutions estimate that it would take $17 to $20 million in additional funding over the next three years to fully implement the law, funding which has yet to be provided.[33] Additionally, the bill does not mention the issue of cultural competency, which many Black students have highlighted as crucially important to an effective mental health infrastructure for Illinois' Black students.

In order to support Black students' well-being and mental health on Illinois campuses, institutions must increase holistic student supports, decrease stigma surrounding mental health issues among Blacks students, and connect students with high-quality, culturally competent supports and services on or near campus.

"[Mental health] is not focused on enough, and underserved communities have a lot of trauma stemming from lack of resources. Mental health is often seen as taboo."

—NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY STUDENT PANELIST

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STUDENT WELL-BEING

DIRECTIVE | Examine campus policies and hiring practices, and strengthen professional development for all campus employees to improve Black student safety, belonging, and inclusion on campus.
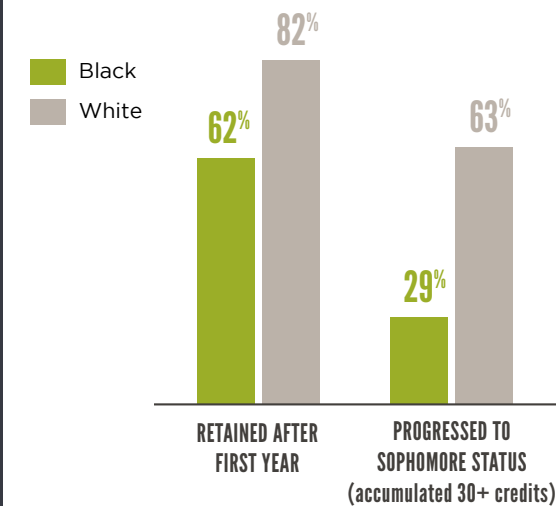
CURRENT STATE

LEGISLATION

- In 2004 the Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois Program (DFI) was established by Public Act 093-0862 of the Illinois General Assembly. The goal of the program is to "increase the number of minority full-time tenure track faculty and staff at Illinois' two- and four-year, public and private colleges and universities."[36] The program provides up to $12,000 for new students and $15,000 for continuing students to use for their graduate studies over a four-year period. Furthermore, institutions that receive DFI fellows are required to provide these students with ample professional development opportunities, such as mentors, workshops, part-time jobs on campus, and assistance in finding post-graduation employment.

- In 2018, the Illinois General Assembly passed House Resolution 1098, which created the Black History Curriculum Task Force to conduct an audit of high school districts' history curriculum and ensure that they sufficiently incorporate African American history. In 2020, the Black Caucus began to push for additional legislation mandating the inclusion of African American history in Illinois social studies curriculum.

- In January 2021, the Illinois General Assembly passed HB2170, also known as the Education Omnibus Bill. Article 120 of the bill amends the Higher Education Student Assistance Act to add additional provisions around the Minority Teacher Scholarship. One of the changes is to create a set-aside of at least 35% of the funds appropriated for scholarships for qualified Black male applicants, beginning in fiscal year 2023.

PROMISING PRACTICES

- Diversity professionals and research centers across the country have aligned on promising practices that universities can use to improve their campus climate. The first step for institutional action is a comprehensive campus climate and culture assessment, which many institutions across the country have already begun to conduct, including Northern Illinois University and Illinois State University.[37]

New Full-Time Students Fall 2017-2018

Legend: Black (green), White (grey)

- Retained after first year: Black 62%, White 82%
- Progressed to Sophomore Status (accumulated 30+ credits): Black 29%, White 63%

Source: IBHE IHEIS 2017 and 2018 Fall Enrollment Collection, IBHE "Assessing Equity in Illinois Higher Education," 2020.

> Black students are less likely than White students to be retained after their first year.
>
> The gap between Black and White students for credit accumulation is even more stark—only 29% of Black students accumulate 30+ credits in their first year of collegecompared with 63% of White students.

To close equity gaps in Black student enrollment retention, persistence, and completion, institutions must become more supportive and safe for Black students.

In July 2020, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act to begin to address these issues. The bill was aimed at raising awareness about mental health on college campuses, training faculty and staff to identify and address mental health issues, and connecting students to mental health resources. However, institutions estimate that it would take $17 to $20 million in additional funding over the next three years to fully implement the law, funding which has yet to be provided. Additionally, the bill does not mention the issue of cultural competency, which many Black students have highlighted as crucially important to an effective mental health infrastructure for Illinois' Black students.

Equity gaps exist for Black students at every step of the path to and through higher education. While cost and academic support issues, which are addressed elsewhere in this plan, contribute significantly to lower enrollment, retention, and completion rates for Black students, marginalization and discrimination on campus also have an impact on Black students' success in higher education. According to a 2015 study conducted by Rankin & Associates, 30% of student respondents seriously considered leaving their institution due to a challenging or unwelcoming climate.[34] Along with other structural changes to policies around cost and academic supports, we must also consider policies that contribute to Black student safety and inclusion on campus, such as financial support of Black on-campus communities, implicit bias training for all on-campus staff, and a more inclusive curriculum that includes Black authors and perspectives.

Another way to do this is to consider the diversity of faculty. A diverse faculty is important both for creating a climate of belonging (signaling to a Black student that they belong when they see someone in a position of power that looks like them) and also for creating career opportunities for Black academics. According to IPEDS data, in 2018, only 6% of faculty at Illinois public institutions was Black, while 71% of faculty was White.[35]

REFERENCES

34 Rankin & Associates, 2015; Rankin, et al., 2010, https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/uw-s3-cdn/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2018/07/24025042/Dr.-Sue-Rankin-Presentation-Climate-Matters.pdf

35 IPEDS "All full time instructional staff, by race," 2018.

36 DFI website, https://www.ibhe.org/dfi.html

37 NEIYou Campus Climate webpage, https://www.neiu.edu/about/campus-climate; Charles H.F. Davis, et al. "Illinois State University, Campus Climate Assessment Final Report," *University of Pennsylvania Center for Race & Equity*, April 2016. https://illinoisstate.edu/downloads/ISU-CampusClimateAssessmentReport.pdf

CONNECTION TO CAREER

DIRECTIVE | Build a stronger bridge between college and career for Black students by improving career supports throughout their time in college and beyond
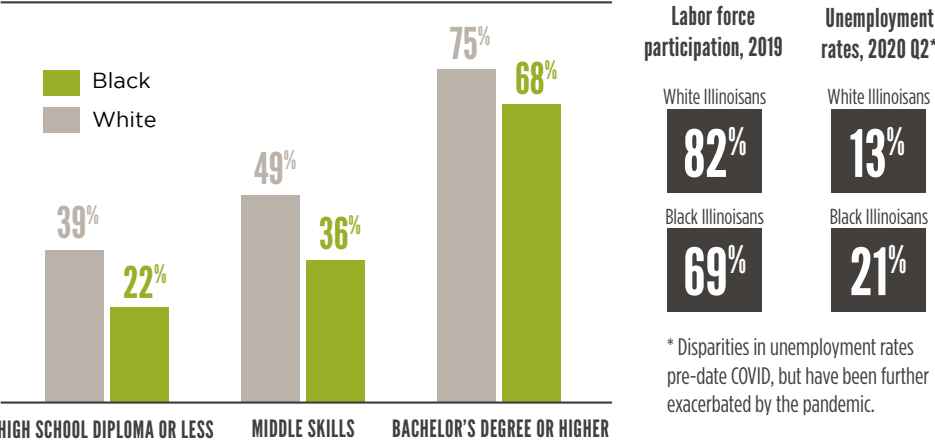
College education is a key driver of social mobility and economic stability for individuals and families. However, for many Black students who graduate from higher education in Illinois, the return on their investment is lower than for their White peers. According to a study by Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce, the percent of Black workers holding "good jobs" (those that pay at least $35K per year, or $45K for workers age 45 and older) after receiving a bachelor's degree or higher is only 68%, compared with 75% of White workers.[38] In Illinois, equity gaps in labor force participation and unemployment rates persist—in the second quarter of 2020, White Illinoisans experienced 13% unemployment, while the rate of unemployment among Black Illinoisans was 21%.[39]

In order to increase the return on investment for Illinois Black students and ensure that higher education remains a driver of economic opportunity for all, Illinois must build stronger connections between the classroom and the workplace throughout and beyond students' time in college. Postsecondary institutions and policymakers must place more emphasis on labor-market outcomes for students and invest resources

in improving these outcomes through increased support for career exploration and development embedded throughout the student learning journey. In addition to increasing support for career centers, Illinois institutions must embed high-quality, work-based learning experiences within program curriculum. Additionally, Illinois should build cross-sector partnerships between postsecondary institutions, philanthropy, CBOs, and employers to connect Black students to high-paying career pathways.

Percent of workers holding good jobs* at each level of educational attainment, nationwide, 2017

Black
White

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR LESS — 39% / 22%
MIDDLE SKILLS — 49% / 36%
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER — 75% / 68%

Labor force participation, 2019
White Illinoisans **82%**
Black Illinoisans **69%**

Unemployment rates, 2020 Q2*
White Illinoisans **13%**
Black Illinoisans **21%**

* Disparities in unemployment rates pre-date COVID, but have been further exacerbated by the pandemic.

* "Good jobs are" are defined by Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce as "those that pay at least $35k per year, at least $45k for workers age 45 or older, and $65k in median earnings in 2016."

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, 1992-2017; EPI analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) data and Current Population Survey (CPS) data.

REFERENCES

38 Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, 1992-2017.

39 EPI analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) data and Current Population Survey (CPS) data.

CURRENT STATE

PROMISING PRACTICES
- Braven is a non-profit organization whose goal is to prepare underrepresented young people—first-generation college students, students from low-income backgrounds, and students of color—for their transition into the workforce. Braven partners with universities (including National Louis University in Illinois) and corporate partners such as Salesforce, Prudential, Charles Schwab, and more to provide robust career mentoring and skill-building tools to students.
- Career Launch Chicago is a partnership between Chicago Public Schools, City Colleges of Chicago, and various employers in the Chicago region to provide apprenticeship opportunities to students. The goal of the program is to provide students with paid on-the-job training and mentorship to advance their careers.
- The just-launched 1954 Project at The CAFÉ will leverage a donor collaborative to invest in initiatives that will increase the number of Black educators and leaders throughout the education landscape, create more effective and culturally affirming teaching and learning models, and strengthen pathways from education to career in order to drive economic mobility in the Black community.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Increase exposure to career pathways and build connections to career for Black students on campus and beyond

This can be done by:
- Increasing collaboration between faculty and workforce/industry partners;
- Increasing access for Black students to interact with employers on campus;
- Ensuring that Black students have access to early and ongoing career exploration and co-curricular, work-based learning opportunities embedded in programs of study.
- Investing additional resources into career centers to help them increase their impact;
- Ensure that Black students and graduates have equal access to opportunities, jobs, salaries, and career development;
- Building cross-sector partnerships to connect Black students to career pathways;
- Connecting Black students with mentors who will help guide them through their path in college and transition into the workforce.

SHORT TERM

2- and 4-year institutions, high schools, employers and philanthropy
- Allocate resources to high-impact practices and partnerships that drive career success
  · Ensure that career centers have the staff, resources, and training that they need to be able to prep Black students for:
    – Job interviews,
    – Writing resumes and cover letters,
    – Career mapping,
    › Employers and philanthropy should incentivize pathways that are high-need (teaching, nursing, etc.), which lead to family-sustaining wages/ income.
    – Identifying networking opportunities,
    – Negotiating salaries/offers.
  · Attend to career advancement across Black students' learning journeys by embedding early career exploration and work-based learning opportunities in programs of study, and by continuing to support alumni through career development after they graduate.
  · Provide opportunities for employers to contribute funding and volunteer time to career centers.
  · Invest resources in other high-impact institutional practices that drive career success.

2- and 4-year institutions and employers
- Increase collaboration between university faculty and workforce/industry partners
- Have faculty collaborate with workforce/ industry partners to develop curriculum guides that reflect current needs and opportunities in the workforce, to be incorporated into curricula and communicated to students.
- Support faculty professional development to embed high-impact practices such as active, experiential, and collaborative learning opportunities connected to careers.
- Build partnerships to give Black students more opportunities to interact with employers on campus
  · Bring employers to campus for informational sessions and career readiness sessions aimed at preparing and recruiting Black students.
  · Where possible, form strategic partnerships with employers that allow students to interact with a specific company or sector as part of a class that prepares them for jobs in that field.
  · Where relevant, provide students with opportunities to participate in paid apprenticeship opportunities with employers they interact with on campus.

LONG TERM

2- and 4-year institutions, philanthropy, CBOs, high schools, and employers
- Build cross-sector partnerships to connect Black students to careers
  · Following existing cross-sector models of workforce development initiatives, CBOs and 2- and 4-year institutions can help connect students to post-graduation employment, helping to bridge the gap between colleges and employers.
    – Employers should commit to hiring and developing students from these partnerships.
  · Cross-sector partnerships should be built in specific cities, towns, or regions to connect Black high school and college students to paid internship or apprenticeship opportunities in the region to advance their careers.
  · Philanthropy should invest in large-scale efforts to create bridge programs for Black students from college to career.
- Connect Black students with mentors who will help guide them through their path in college and into the workforce
  · Recruit committed volunteer mentors from current and recently retired professionals, as well as representatives from faith organizations and community organizations, prioritizing Black professionals and Black-led organizations where possible.
  · Leverage and use as a model the existing mentorship program structures of CBOs focused on educational and workforce mentorship.
  · Provide general support and mentorship to help students persist through college and find gainful employment by:
    – Directing student mentees to resources such as advising, additional financial aid, etc. when needed.
    – Answering students' questions about the workforce and advising them in pursuit of their career development goals.
    – Connecting students to individuals in their chosen career field for informational chats.

CONNECTION TO CAREER

DIRECTIVE | Hiring practices and other internal company policies should prioritize closing equity gaps in the workforce
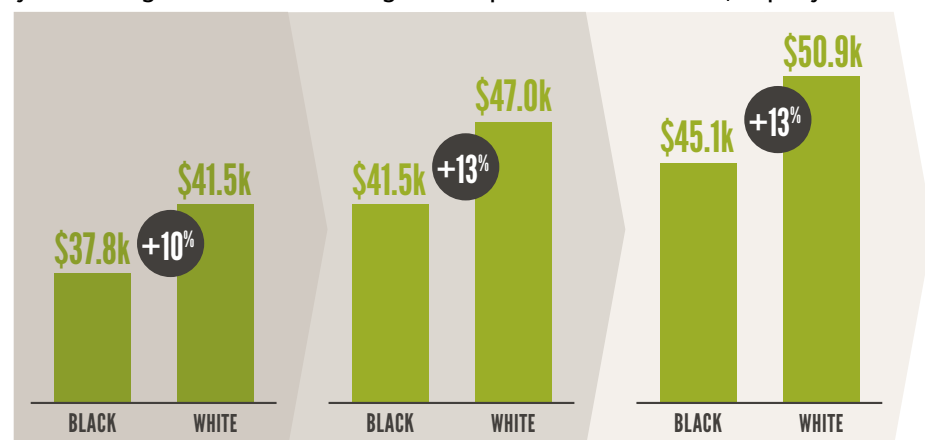
Even among those employed, Black graduates in Illinois consistently earn less than their White peers. According to data from Illinois' College2Career tool, White graduates are paid 10% more than Black graduates in their first year after graduation, and this gap only grows over time.[40] Furthermore, Black representation at the highest levels of management in Illinois remains low.

Employers can begin to combat these trends by seriously evaluating internal practices around internships, recruitment, salaries, promotions, and performance evaluation to prioritize equity. The State and other partners should hold employers accountable for prioritizing equitable practices through tax incentives, annual publications that highlight the companies providing the most paid internship opportunities, and similar means.

White graduates are paid 10% more than Black graduates in year 1 after graduation...

$37.8k BLACK +10%
$41.5k WHITE

By Year 2, Black graduates are paid whatthat year's new Whitegrads are paid...

$41.5k BLACK +13%
$47.0k WHITE

... and after three years, the gap has widened to White students making an extra ~$6k per year.

$45.1k BLACK +13%
$50.9k WHITE

Source: Bachelor's Degree Completers from all MAP-eligible schools from AY 2013-14 and AY 2014-15 in the Illinois College2Career tool.

"As a student, if I'm choosing between money and advancing my career [with an internship], I often have to choose the money."

—UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO STUDENT PANELIST

REFERENCES

40 Bachelor's Degree Completers from all MAP-eligible schools from AY 2013-14 and AY 2014-15 in the Illinois College2Career tool.

41 For an example of existing programs, see the Summer Work Experience in Law (SWEL) program in Ohio.

CURRENT STATE

PROMISING PRACTICES

- OneTen is a nationwide initiative that calls upon employers to commit to hiring, upskilling, and promoting Black Americans. OneTen works with employers to develop inclusive company cultures that help them to retain Black employees and help them grow professionally.
- The One Million Degrees program connects each of their scholars with a volunteer coach, who is typically a professional in the scholar's field of study. Coaches provide personal guidance to students as they progress through their time in college and search for post-graduation employment. One Million Degrees also requires students to participate in career-related activities and professional development workshops that help them to connect with employers as they pursue their degree.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Hiring practices and other internal company policies should prioritize closing equity gaps in the workforce and providing opportunity for Black graduates

This can be done by:

- Revising hiring practices to center equity;
- Evaluating internal policies around entry-level hiring, offers, salary ranges, etc. to address the gap in entry-level salaries of Black and White hires;
- Providing employees with the resources they need to excel and be retained;
- Providing large numbers of paid internships and apprenticeships for Black students;
- Holding employers accountable for equitable practices through tax incentives and publications.

SHORT TERM

Employers, IBHE, and State

- Evaluate internal policies to identify equity gaps and revise practices to center equity for Black Illinoisans
  - Perform a comprehensive review of policies around hiring, offers, salary ranges, pay transparency, promotions, advancement, etc.
    – Commit to revising policies where they are shown to produce inequitable outcomes.
  - Revise hiring practices to center equity.
    – Widen the network for recruiting new hires.
    – Do not require or give preferential treatment to referrals.

– Widen the hiring pool to include a wide range of universities and colleges, not just elite universities.
– Employ blind hiring practices, taking names and addresses off of applications.
- Company CEOs should hold recruitment and hiring officers accountable for upholding the company's equity goals.
- Ensure that equitable hiring practices are put in place for all positions, including management-track positions.

- Provide large numbers of paid internships and apprenticeships for Black students
- The Illinois State legislature should set ambitious goals for companies of various sizes to provide high numbers of paid internships and apprenticeships.
- Evaluate current internship programs for equity & implement policy to ensure equity moving forward.
- Target paid internships and apprenticeships towards Black students and towards institutions that serve predominantly Black students.
  – IBHE should highlight exemplary employer partners who provide large numbers of paid internships and apprenticeships that are highly accessible for Black students.
- Create matching programs between philanthropy and corporations to facilitate additional hiring opportunities for Black students, following the model of similar programs that exist for Black law students.[41]

2- and 4-year institutions and Employers

- Provide career-field-specific scholarships for Black students pursuing specific career paths
- These scholarships can be provided by employers to further invest in developing a diverse talent workforce.

State

- Provide tax incentives for employers to follow equitable hiring and internal practices
- Provide a tax incentive for employers who hire and develop large numbers of Black graduates.
- Provide an additional tax incentive for companies who retain Black employees over time.

LONG TERM

Employers and Philanthropy

- Publicly track progress on equity goals and highlight state- or region-wide successes by companies that provide high numbers of paid internships and hiring opportunities

for Black graduates
- Companies should internally track the internship and hiring opportunities that they provide to recent graduates, by race.
  – Partners in philanthropy, media companies, Chambers of Commerce, state departments, or other sectors (such as Crain's Business Chicago, World Business Chicago, the Workforce Funders Alliance, the Illinois Chamber of Commerce, or others) should compile and share data, highlighting exemplary companies at varying levels of business size.
  – A compiled list should be published annually of the top companies providing opportunity for Black students, in order to provide additional incentive and accountability for employers.

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