



**ECACE**

EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCESS  
CONSORTIUM FOR EQUITY

**AUGUST 16, 2022**



Illinois  
State Board of  
Education



Governor's Office of  
Early Childhood Development

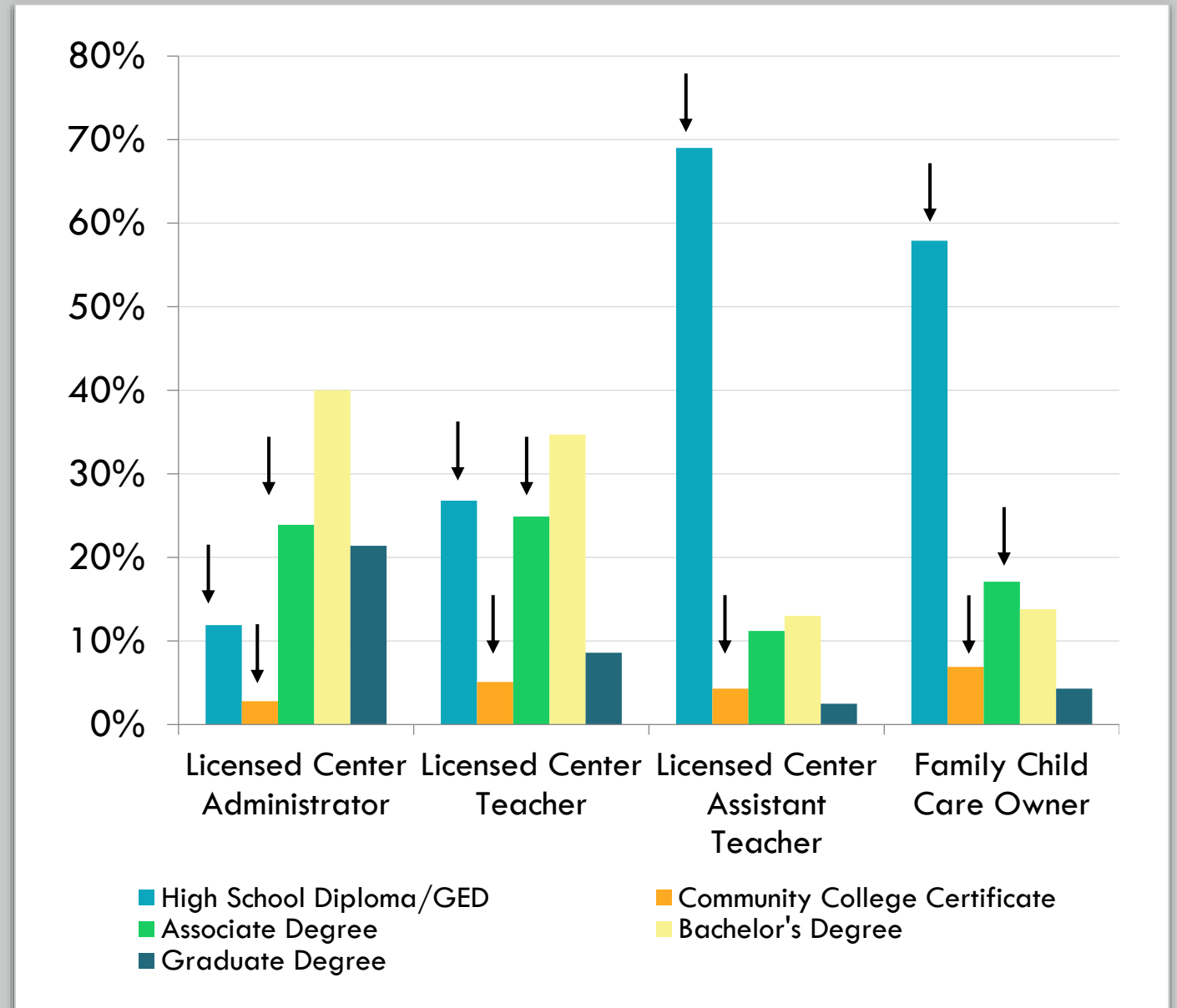


## Upskilling the Early Childhood Workforce

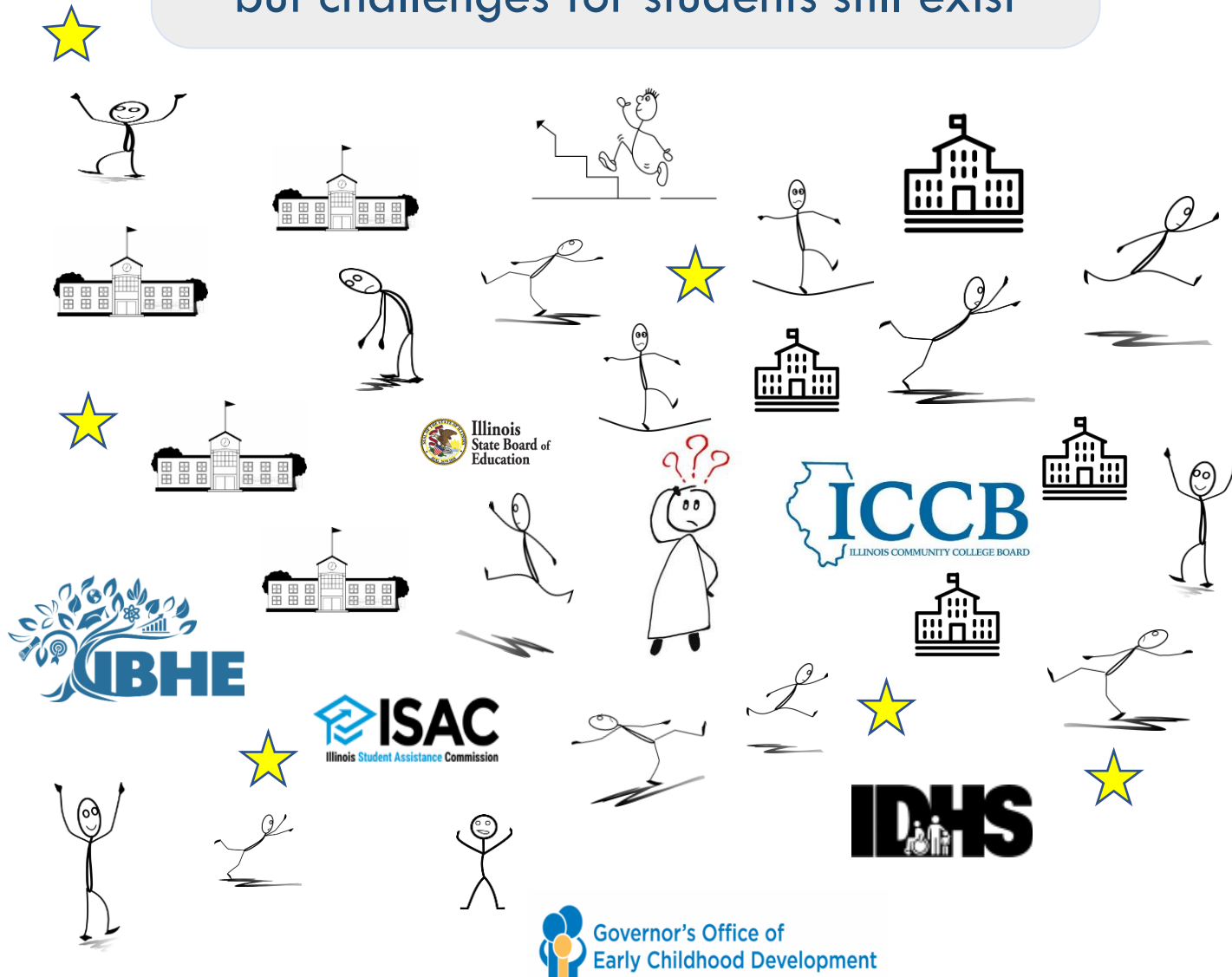
Who is the early childhood workforce?

- Those working with young children birth to five.
- In certain early childhood settings, such as child care, family child care, preschools, and Head Start programs.
- In positions such as directors, teachers, assistant teachers, and others.

Data indicates about 28,000 ready to upskill towards the next degree.



Good work by individual entities and bright spots of innovation, but challenges for students still exist



## Historical Challenges

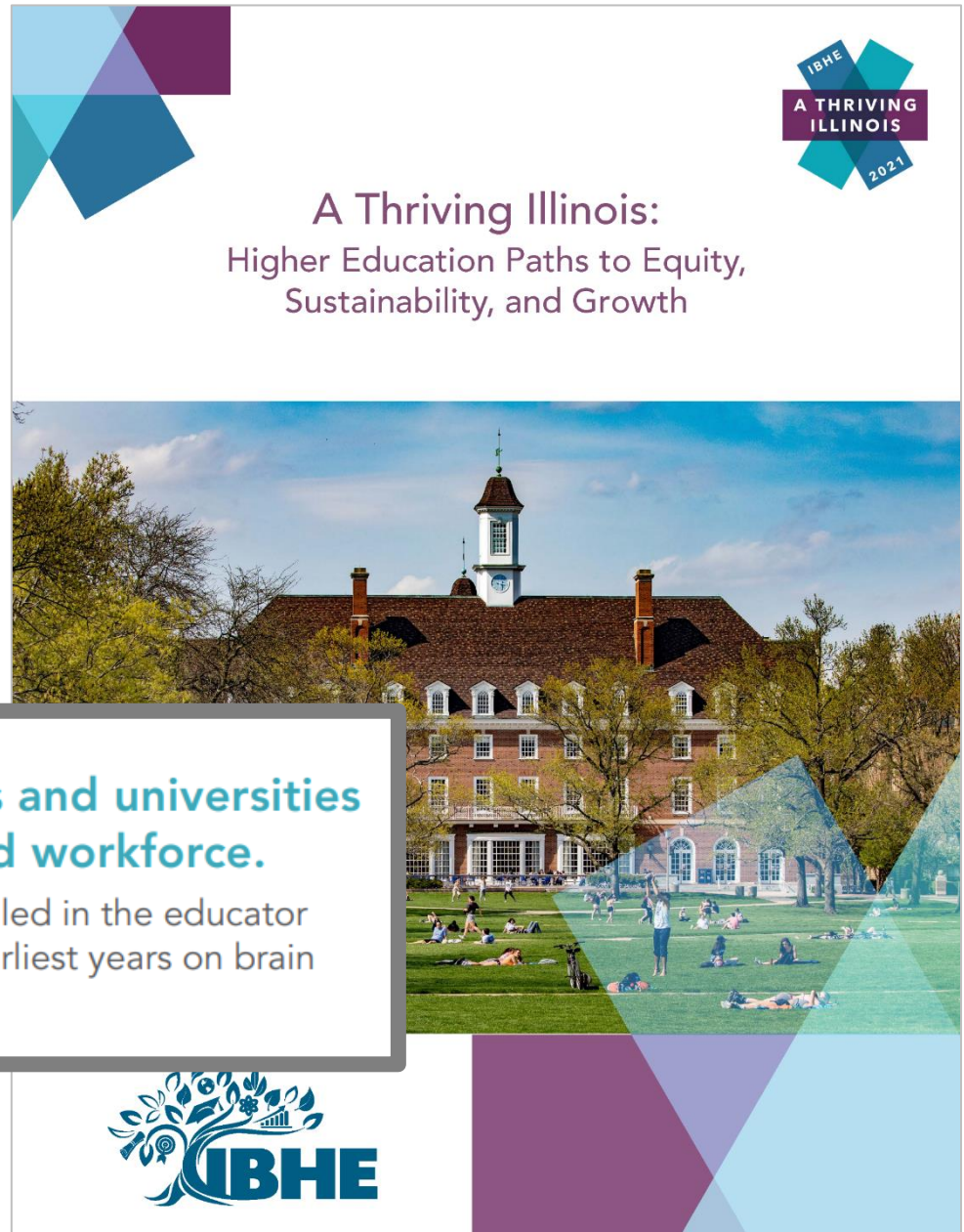
- Bumpy and curvy pathways
- Course loss, extended time to completion, replicated coursework
- Courses at times, formats, locations that the EC workforce can't access
- Insufficient funding and supports to access and complete degrees and credentials
- Challenges navigating the complex higher education systems

# The 2021 Illinois Higher Education Strategic Plan

The plan includes strategies to close equity gaps, support working adults, and advance the education and credentialing of the early childhood workforce.

## 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.



# Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity Act

Established the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) to:

- Support the needs of the EC incumbent Workforce and allow them to upskill.
- Advance equity.
- Streamline, coordinate, and improve accessibility of degree and credential pathways.
- Provide programs of study with flexibility in the times, locations, and format courses are offered.

[P.A. 102-0174](#); signed into law 7/28/21



## Gov. Pritzker: \$200M investment to strengthen early childhood workforce

An additional \$30 million will provide coaches, mentors, and navigators the tools needed to help child care workers pursue their degrees.

Supported through federal child care stimulus funding through IDHS

# Better Together

**#1 Guiding Principle:  
Center Student Success**

**IBHE**  
**ICCB**  
ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD  
**Illinois State Board of Education**  
**IDHS**  
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
**Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development**

Cross Sector Advisory



**ECACE**  
EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCESS  
CONSORTIUM FOR EQUITY

**1 Consortium**

**62 Institutions**



**Benefits**

- EC Workforce
- Employers
- Children & Families
- Higher Ed
- Broader Workforce

## Workforce Supports

Scholarships & COA **ISAC**  
ILLINOIS STUDENT ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

Navigators, Mentors

Financial Holds



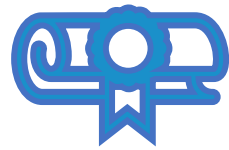
# Consortium Functions (some)

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- Determine needs in partnership with employers.
- Develop standardized methods for awarding credit for prior learning.
- Leverage Gateways competencies and competency-based instructional modules and assessment tools to support more flexible and personalized paths to completion
- Increasing access to courses by providing course offerings across the Consortium when they are not available at the student's home institution.
  - Students enrolled and paying fees to their “home institution”.

# Awarding Credit for a National Credential: Child Development Associate (CDA)





# Credit for the CDA

The Consortium is charged with **determining how to assign college credit for the Child Development Associate (CDA)** (current and future)

- CDA: An assessment of competencies through a portfolio, standardized test, and observation + 120 clock hours of training +480 hours of experience
- Working group comprised of 2- and 4-year institutions, community providers, system support staff, and advocates convened by IBHE and ICCB
- Researched other states, discussed program options, grappled with sticky issues



Julissa Cruz  
Carole Robertson Center for Learning

*This work will make a significant impact on the lives of employers, employees, and the children and families we serve.*



# Decisions

- Full recommendations created by a working group were approved by the Consortium in June, including a framework and models for awarding credit.
  - 6 credit hours, early childhood or related, no contingencies
  - Preschool no later than Jan 31, 2023
  - Infant/Toddler no later than Jan 31, 2024
- Modules might include
  - Programs designed to align to the Gateways/CDA competencies
  - Best fit w/current coursework



# University Partners' Work to Meet AAS Transfer Charge



## Full Transfer of Associate of Applied Science Degree

- Building a pathway from the AAS – a historically “terminal” degree – to a Bachelor’s degree.
- Students with an AAS from a Gateways Entitled Institution and GPA of at least 2.0/4.0:
  - Come in with junior-level status.
  - Take no more credit hours than students who began at the institution as freshmen.

Most 4-years launching redesigned or expanded programs this fall.



Main campus situated on 410 acres in Romeoville, 35 miles southwest of Chicago.

6,359 undergraduate and graduate students. Eighth largest private, not-for-profit in Illinois.

Best Value Schools ranked Lewis #14 on their Top 50 schools in the nation that have a nontraditional student body of 25% or higher.



In 2012, the Lewis University Early Childhood program was “born” into a university context that was already innovating to serve “nontraditional” students through specific programming and supports.

By 2018, the ECE program was beginning to see evidence to support the idea that the AAS to BA pathway was not only doable but PREFERRED.

## BA, Early Childhood Education

Early Childhood (birth-2nd)  
Special Education (birth-2nd)  
ESL (PreK-12th)

Optional: Bilingual Education (Pre-K - 2nd)

Optional: Degree without ISBE PEL



## 2 Options for taking classes:

**100% online**

**accelerated (8-week)**

**blended online & in-person**

**traditional (16-week)**

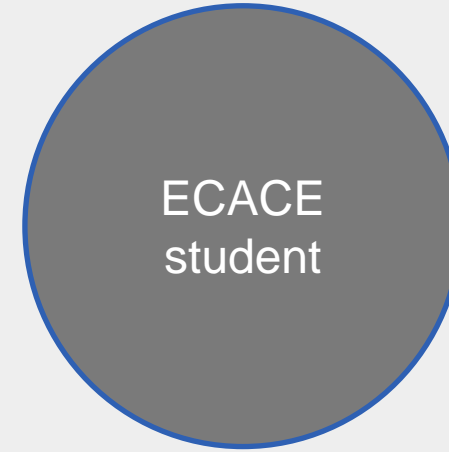
- One, fully-integrated degree plan with multiple options for completion.
- AAS degrees are fully transferable.
- Free to apply.
- 2.0 GPA required.
- Non-PEL General Education requirements are waived once credit hours are met.



# ECACE Funded Support



ECACE  
Faculty



ECACE  
Mentor

ECE Program Director/PI

ECACE Project Manager

Materials to support learning/implementation

# Student Feedback



*I am now allowing myself to express my thoughts in a more natural way to create connections. (I started seeing this already and I feel like my children feel a bigger connection with me).*

*I loved the projects that we had because they are real life experiences.*

*(Instructor) helped us to create projects that would be more beneficial for us in the environments we were in and not having to go out and do more work.*

*The assignments were very relevant and meaningful to my current work as a preschool teacher. I learned a lot through experience and applying to the children in my classroom.*



# College of Education

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

# UIUC Early Childhood Professional Education – Our Goals



Move students from associate degree completion, including AAS, to bachelor's degree completion

Commitment over the next three years – 64 students (80% increase in enrollment)

Offer a convenient program for working, adult students

Provide holistic student supports to maintain success, persistence and completion

Create an online community of learners



# UIUC Early Childhood Professional Education – Our Program

## Designed for the Working Adult

- Mixture of Online Synchronous and Asynchronous Courses
- 8 and 16-week formats
- Cohorts
- One evening a week
- Possibility to complete clinical fieldwork at their place of work
- Licensure and Non-Licensure option
- Formal and informal learning supports
- Opportunities for community building/peer support



# UIUC Early Childhood Professional Education – Supports for Success

Support from initial inquiry/application through enrollment and registration to graduation

## Dedicated Student Success Specialist

- Ongoing Holistic Check-Ins
- Resource Collection
- Scheduled Study Times
- Workshops
- Content Test Support

## Designed for the Workforce

- Recognition of Existing Knowledge
- Application to current work/life experiences
- Combined some general education content with professional coursework/methods



## ECACE Scholarship

**What does it Cover:** Includes tuition & fees\*, and funding for up to the full cost of attendance, after federal grants and MAP for undergraduate studies

### **Status For SY2022 – Soft launch year**

- 500 scholarships

### **Fall 2022 – Summer 2023 Scholarship:** Opened in June

- Over 1200 applications

### **Eligibility:**

- Incumbent Early Childhood Workforce
- Work or have worked in early childhood setting (e.g., child care, preschool) in a position such as a teacher, assistant, director

Administered by ISAC, Funded by IDHS via Federal Child Care Stimulus Funding



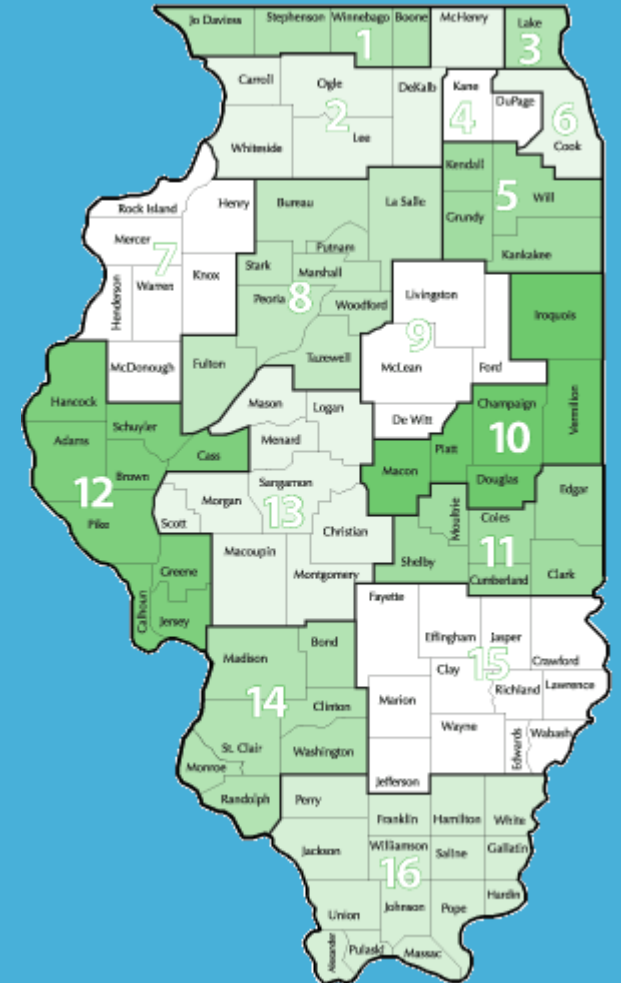
\*Tuition capped at highest tuition at a public institution.

# Navigators

32 (of 36) regionally-based navigators at 16 CCRRs

- Backgrounds in higher education, early childhood, working in community organizations, former ISAC Corps
- Provide personalized assistance to students to access higher education and a warm handoff to institutions
- Example supports:
  - Completing scholarship and FAFSA applications
  - Finding and applying to an institution
  - Attaining transcripts

To Access a Navigator: [www.tinyurl.com/4b4em9zw](http://www.tinyurl.com/4b4em9zw)







## Colleges & Universities Deeply Engaged In Consortium Work

- Mentors for a warm handoff from navigators and to support students to enroll, persist, complete
- Program/curriculum redesign, online course development
- Supports for student success (e.g., tutoring, content test support)
- Funding for the release of financial holds

# Questions/Discussion



# Benefit to Employers, and Employees

## EMPLOYERS

CDA provides:

- A **pathway** to upskill quickly

CDA for course credit will provide:

- A **pipeline** to support staff members who want to develop in the field – it's not a job, it's a career!

## EMPLOYEES

CDA provides:

- A well-established credential that showcases their work in the field

CDA for course credit will provide:

- A **formalized and clear** way to grow within the professional with a formal acknowledgement that their experience matters



## Win-Win-Win

We have essential needs in the field that this work will fulfil.

- Increase number of educators in the field
- Increase retention in existing teacher-roles
- Increase educator skills and knowledge over time through continued education
- Increased opportunity for pay as an employee

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**Better ECE infrastructure of Illinois children and their families**

