

APPROVED
March 12, 2025

Melissa Bealon
Board Secretary Melissa Bealon

Item #F-3
March 12, 2025

MINUTES – BOARD MEETING
January 22, 2025

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: Minutes of the January 22, 2025, meeting of the Illinois Board of Higher Education held in person at Chicago State University, Gwendolyn Brooks Library, 4th Floor Atrium, 9501 South King Drive, Chicago, IL 60628, and online via Zoom as permitted by the Illinois Open Meetings Act (5 ILCS 120/7).

Action Requested: That the Illinois Board of Higher Education approve the minutes of the January 22, 2025, Board meeting.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

MINUTES – BOARD MEETING
January 22, 2025

A meeting of the Illinois Board of Higher Education was held in person at Chicago State University, Gwendolyn Brooks Library, 4th Floor Atrium, 9501 South King Drive, Chicago, IL 60628 and online via Zoom as permitted by the Illinois Open Meetings Act (5 ILCS 120/7). The meeting was recorded and an announcement to that effect was made by the Chair at the beginning of the meeting.

The following Board members were present in person: Pranav Kothari, Chair, Sharon Bush, Andrea Evans, Daci Finke, Sylvia Jenkins, Magnus Noble, Garth Walker, Eric Zarnikow.

Others present in person: Ms. Ginger Ostro, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Dr. Nkechi Onwuameze, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Mr. David A. Kelm, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Jose Garcia, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Valerie Lynch, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Jenna Rossi, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Rachel Bollinger, Illinois Board of Higher Education, and Ms. Melissa Bealon, Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Board members present virtually: Vice-Chair Herrero, Kenneth Shaw, Subhash Sharma, Jennifer Garrison, and Jamel Wright.

Pursuant to the Illinois Open Meetings Act, a quorum was present in the Lake Land and Chicago locations. Additionally, all action items were recorded with roll call votes. The audio of the meeting was recorded and may be requested on the IBHE website.

A. Call to Order/Roll Call

- **Call Meeting to Order, Pranav Kothari**

Chair Pranav Kothari called the meeting to order at approximately 1:05p.m. Board Secretary Bealon took roll call. A quorum was present.

- **Action to Permit Board Members Virtual Attendance**

Board Member Evans moved to permit Board Members Garrison, Sharma, Shaw, and Wright to attend virtually via video conference. Noble seconded the motion. A roll call was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Opening Remarks by Chairman Kothari

Welcome to the first meeting of the Illinois Board of Higher Education of this new year. We continue to bring our meetings to campuses across the state, and today we are happy to be at

Chicago State University. Thank you to President “Z” Scott and the rest of the CSU team for such a warm welcome and to the students we had the opportunity to meet during the campus tour earlier today.

As leadership at the federal level changes, students and families in Illinois can rest assured that the Board’s commitment to removing barriers for historically underserved students remains the same. We will continue to champion equity in the state’s higher education system because it is essential to IL’s economic growth, and it is the right thing to do. It’s important I emphasize that our work toward an equitable higher education system will continue unabated.

President Scott will speak in a few moments, but before she does, I want to acknowledge some of the wonderful work that she and her team at CSU are doing to ensure students have meaningful experiences and gain the skills to compete in the job market once they graduate – especially in critical STEM fields.

CSU recently partnered with the EPA, the Environmental Protection Agency, to promote careers in STEM. The CSU and EPA partnership will boost research efforts and will expose students from diverse backgrounds to the fields of environmental science, engineering, and sustainability.

CSU was also recently announced as a partner in establishing the National Quantum Algorithm Center at the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park along Lake Michigan in the Southeast side of Chicago. The park was announced in July of last year by Governor Pritzker as an opportunity for Illinois to be a world leader in quantum computing. This unique partnership will give students access to advanced quantum technology and research opportunities which will undoubtedly open doors to careers in one of technology’s most promising areas.

These are all timely partnerships as the State continues to attract new STEM jobs. Congratulations to all the folks at CSU and the students – the real winners when partnerships like these are scored.

With that said, it’s important that the State continues to provide our higher education institutions, like Chicago State, the financial resources to prepare students for impactful and successful careers.

Later in the meeting, the Board will vote on the Fiscal Year 2026 budget that will go to the Governor and General Assembly as our recommendation for investment in higher education.

The Board acknowledges that the State recently projected a 3.2-billion-dollar deficit for fiscal year 2026. While it’s best that the historic investments from the last several years under Governor Pritzker’s leadership continue, the Board’s budget recommendations for fiscal year 2026 are made under the context of the projected deficit.

We will shortly hear a presentation that outlines the budget recommendations in detail. While each of the Board’s recommendations are strategic, they are not enough to equitably and adequately fund our higher education system. The Board believes that more strategic investments are needed but understands the limitations brought by the state’s fiscal reality.

At the same time, it's important that we equip students and families with the resources they need to successfully submit the FAFSA later this year - so they don't miss out on financial aid that could make the difference on whether they go to college.

Major thanks to the folks at the Illinois Student Assistance Commission who worked hand in hand with students, school counselors, and community organizations during the last cycle's FAFSA debacle to get as many students as possible to file a FAFSA.

ISAC has a wealth of resources available to everyone to help navigate the FAFSA during the upcoming cycle. There are also other resources that folks should take advantage of.

And I conclude my remarks by thanking former Student Board Member Sam Majka, whose tenure on the Board recently concluded, for his contributions to the Board and our higher education system. We'll formally acknowledge Sam with a resolution later in the meeting, but for now – thank you, Sam, for being an avid student advocate during your time on the Board.

Welcome and Overview

Zaldwaynaka “Z” Scott, President, Chicago State University, provided welcoming remarks and expressed immense gratitude for the opportunity to host the Board. Chicago State University has been steadfast in its mission to ensure that all students, particularly those who identify as first-generation low income and come from historically underserved communities, can thrive. They do so with an unwavering commitment to excellence, equity and innovation. Chicago State is a broad access institution with over 70 degree and certificate programs, enrolling a student body consisting of 88% of Illinois residents. We are unique among the state as a public institution serving the highest percentage of students who are Pell Grant eligible, adult learners, student parents, freshmen from underfunded EBF tier one high schools, and other important access attributes.

Chicago State is also invested in resources and support in this year opening an auxiliary location in the nearby Chatham neighborhood. This new shared space with a community-oriented nonprofit allows for an expansive offering of non-credit and credit bearing courses directly at another Southside neighborhood.

Additionally, President Scott noted the resources and support they bring to their students by expanding partnerships with institutions such as the City Colleges of Chicago and the University of Chicago. And through public-private collaborations such as our collaborations with the US Department of Health and Human Services and Astellas Pharmaceuticals. These achievements are a testament to the promising interests of our students, the expertise of the faculty and the dedication of the entire campus community.

Chicago State is aware of its capital needs. This was demonstrated to the Board through campus tours earlier today. Hopefully, the board will keep the capitol needs in mind as you think about the resources that are needed in higher education institutions.

We are now in transition. There is a transition of a new federal administration. We know that IBHE will remain steadfast in our state's commitment to equity. The Governor has said so, and you will say so in your budget deliberations today.

At CSU, we are ready and an engaged partner for excellence, equity and innovation. We thank you for your leadership and welcome you to Chicago State University.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Ginger Ostro provided a brief report.

Thank you very much. I'd like to highlight some of the work that is underway as we have been continuing the implementation of the strategic plan.

As we go forward, the team's been working together, and we will create a framework by which we can report the whole array of things that we are working on instead of me just being able to hit highlights in each briefing that I provide to you. So, something that will give you a big picture scan while we dive into some specifics. So, look for that to be forthcoming.

A couple of exciting things that have happened recently as of yesterday. We launched the one-click College Admit program, which is the first phase in our effort to create a direct admissions program. Under the program launched yesterday, any high school student who logs into their common app account enters their address and demonstrates they are an Illinois resident and their GPA, will be matched with any of the eight public universities for whom they will be automatically admitted or offered admission based on their GPA alone. They do not have to complete essays; they do not need additional information to be submitted. It is a streamlined process for them. We launched this yesterday with a webinar that had over 500 participants, high school counselors, community-based organizations, partners in our universities and community colleges. The students will be notified either by email or logging back into their Common App account after the cycle runs and they will be able to see their offers, click to get more information about those institutions and hopefully accept enrollment. It will be that easy. In this first phase, in addition to providing information directly through Common App, students will also get in that email information about their local community college because we want to make sure they know about their local community college option as well. As we evolve this program towards our full launch of direct admissions, which we hope will be for the fall of 2027, we will have the community colleges fully integrated into the program. So really excited about the work that is underway and that we launched yesterday. The big part of what you have been hearing about over the last year or so is now launched. Please encourage folks to go to Common App and anyone you know in high schools to take advantage of that.

The second area to highlight is the Early Childhood Consortium program and some of the work done through the scholarship. We have a report coming and anticipate they will be able to report about 4,500 people were provided scholarships in the last full year of the program, last academic year when we still had the federal funding, about \$76 million went out in scholarships. This year, which is the first year of State funding for the program, a much smaller amount of state funding could be dedicated, but we still had over 660 students receive scholarships this year for upskilling programs in early childhood. We are excited about that work, and you will see more coming forward in our budget recommendations shortly.

I'm also excited to share that we recently completed our work on the Quad City Assessment of Higher Education Needs that was in partnership with a group called WestEd. Findings were presented last October to the community and to our partner universities. President of Western is here, we welcome her and really excited about Western and other universities and community

college partnerships that helped identify the workforce needs there. How higher ed can be a good partner there and really to bring together the community around workforce development, economic development, and growing the community. We hope to be able to use that as a model for further analysis that we do in other areas.

Another part of our workforce strategy including the strategic plan was for us to build a supply and demand analysis to identify those areas where workforce demand and higher education graduates are not meshing. We are nearing completion of that analysis. We're very excited for the top ten occupations in the state. And at the same time, we are working on workforce trends and educational output across the economic development region. I look forward to our team being able to share more of that work with you in an upcoming meeting.

Also wanted to highlight recent reports that staff released. The first one is on academic program efficiency and effectiveness. We have also submitted a report and our Annual Report on transfer required under the Illinois Articulation Initiative Act. It is a joint report with ICCB and the IAI. I encourage you to look at those reports. We are not going to go through in detail here, but those are recent reports that we published. Lots of good analysis and information there on work underway across the state.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to hit some of the highlights of the great work being done.

B. Resolution and Recognition - Action Item

Consideration and Approval of Resolution Honoring Retiring Board Member

We would like to take a moment to honor the remarkable contributions of Mr. Sam Majka, who served with distinction as a student board member. Sam has been an invaluable asset to our board, bringing a unique perspective, and I know we have every dedication to every meeting and initiative. Throughout his tenure Sam demonstrated exceptional leadership, insightful decision making, and genuine commitment to the betterment of our student community. His efforts not only enriched our decisions, but led to meaningful changes that would benefit students for years to come. I specifically want to highlight his ongoing focus on mental health of students on our campuses and his deep deep advocacy for that. At this time, I'd like to read a resolution of recognition for Sam.

WHEREAS Sam Majka served on the Illinois Board of Higher Education for one year as a student representative from the Student Advisory Committee; and

WHEREAS Mr. Majka has been an active and involved member of his campus community; and

WHEREAS Mr. Majka has been a proponent of equity and student success; and

WHEREAS Mr. Majka has been a champion on campus and on the Student Advisory Committee of mental health initiatives; and

WHEREAS Mr. Majka has been an advocate for resolving student homelessness and housing challenges on college campuses; and

WHEREAS Mr. Majka has improved higher education in the state through his contributions; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Illinois Board of Higher Education thanks Sam Majka for his dedication and service to the Board and State of Illinois; and

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be presented to Sam Majka.

Approved by the Illinois Board of Higher Education this 22nd day of January 2025

Chair Kothari requested a motion to approve the resolution in honor of standing. Board Member Noble moved to approve the resolution. Finke seconded the motion. A roll call was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

As we present this resolution in his honor, we express our deepest gratitude for his service and wish him all the best in his future endeavors. Thank you, Sam, for your outstanding contributions today.

Mr. Majka made a brief statement.

Good afternoon. First, I would like to say that it has been my pleasure to do so much important work with you all. As a student the kind of work that this agency accomplishes directly affects me and my fellow students. I sincerely appreciate the dedication and professionalism that IBHE staff and board members bring to the table. It was an honor to advocate for student issues and cast my vote as a public university student on important higher education items. In my time as a traditional student board member, I have learned how important the student perspective is in formulating and executing higher education policy. I hope students in Illinois will continue to recognize the importance of participating in these processes and making lasting changes. I wish all of you only the best of luck, and I look forward to continuing to advocate for students on IBHE Student Advisory Committee.

C. Advisory Council Updates

- Community College Presidents' Council

Dr. Keith Cornille, President, Heartland Community College and Chair of the Community College Presidents' Council

Chairman and members of the board, we appreciate this opportunity to share with you this afternoon on behalf of the community college presidents. I wanted to take a few moments to share with the board a few data points about what's going on with colleges, our enrollments and things of that nature and some program success that we've had. As well as the presidents' priorities and our legislative agenda as we move forward. Finally we will touch base a little bit on funding. Not necessarily getting money but talking about our funding formula and some of the things we are

doing in that space. As many of you know our students each have their own very unique stories at community colleges. We have students that come to us young people unsure if they have the ability to complete a college degree. We have students who come to us not knowing how they may afford college whether it's even a possibility. We have those individuals, single parents searching for a better life themselves and their family that come to the community colleges to try to get a job, get a better job and move themselves to a career. We have those under skilled workers who come to the community colleges looking to expand their knowledge to advance in a job. And we have those individuals that are immigrants coming to this country for a better life learning languages and skills.

Just as a refresher for you, the average age of a community college student in Illinois is twenty-seven years old. Nearly one half of the students that we serve being twenty-five years of age or older. Seven out of ten community college students attend part-time. Many of these individuals are place bound. And they count on their local community college for their education and transforming their lives and their families and their community. And all seek the path through a prosperous future by getting a job, advancing through education and getting a better job and then moving on to a career.

As we look at the higher ed landscape in Illinois across all sectors in academic year 2023, community colleges enrolled 42 percent of the nearly 975,000 students that are part of the higher education space here in Illinois. And of that total, more than one half of the students in that population in the community colleges were defined as a non-white student. During that same time period, Illinois community colleges served 44.5 percent of African American students in the higher education space and 54.2 percent of Latino or Hispanic students. And those numbers continue to grow. Just this past fall, Latino and African American enrollments increased by 11 percent in community college.

I am pleased to share that the Illinois community college system recently reported that the fall 2024 enrollment had a 7.4 percent increase in headcount. That is the third consecutive fall or year where we have had increases in enrollment. And when comparing ourselves nationally, Illinois community colleges as a whole are outpacing the national community college growth rate which is only 4.7 percent. During this past fall, we have seen headcount enrollment grow in our career and technical education instructional spaces by 8.5 percent while we have also seen an uptick in transfer program enrollments of 1.2 percent.

And maybe even more promising is what we see in our adult education. And those are the spaces where we do GED instruction and English as a second language enrollments increased by over 17 percent. That's an inroad and a pathway for many individuals into college and higher education that they would have never had otherwise.

As you all know, our community colleges sit at the nexus of education in the state working with our K-12 partners on fostering a robust dual credit program and with our university colleagues on the matriculation of individuals who earn a bachelor's degree and hopefully beyond. Our dual credit programs allow academically prepared high school students simultaneously enrolled simultaneously earned credits that are earned towards a high school diploma and a college degree at the same time. Headcount enrollments have increased by nearly 20 percent just this past fall as compared to the fall of 2023. More than 50,000 high school students are enrolled in programs that are offered by the community colleges. Looking at the data, Illinois remains the national leader in the number of students enrolling in four-year institutions after attending a community college. Much of this can be attributed to the strong statewide articulation mandate of the IAH that facilitates

transfer courses between community colleges and Illinois four-year institutions. The Illinois community colleges continue to be committed to enhancing our communities and our students by moving individuals to a job, of upskilling, to get a better job and moving them to a career. Recently funded initiatives targeting programs in high demand fields for workforce needs have assisted in attracting and advancing students in order to address those employment and workforce needs throughout the entire state. Just this past year we implemented the RevUp initiative which is designed as a pipeline for electric vehicle technology and advanced manufacturing programs that support manufacturing electric vehicle infrastructure. That program has provided 19 million dollars to thirty different community colleges for capacity building, development, and implementation of programs that lead to short-term stackable credentials to associate and transfer programs for individuals.

The PATH program has demonstrated great success for creating, supporting, and expanding opportunities for individuals moving into the health field. The goal was to have 15,000 individuals complete a certificate for a degree in one of seven priority programs. In each of the first two years, we have far exceeded those goals. In the first year we surpassed that number by more than 2,500 completers and in the second year by nearly 2,400. Of those completers, 85 percent were employed within six months of finishing their programs. So, we are getting them in, we are getting through, and we are getting them to work.

The Workforce Equity Initiative has also been an overwhelming success. The program is designed to serve traditionally underserved populations, moving individuals to employment or continuation of their education who earn a family sustaining wage. In fiscal year 2024, the program had nearly 3,200 individuals enrolled with 71 percent completion rate and 86 percent of those that completed were employed or continued their education within six months of finishing the program. Those that went on to employment had an average starting salary of more than 23 dollars an hour. It's this type of program that makes a difference in individuals' lives and advances them and their families and our communities.

Though as you all know, there are numerous factors that impact the success of students outside the classroom as well. Community colleges continue to invest in wraparound support services to assist individuals in overcoming such barriers. Programs such as our career coaching and navigators, the mental health counseling, housing assist liaisons at colleges, emergency grants at all community colleges and by offering food pantries and food drive programs we help students overcome food insecurity and other barriers to live their lives. All these endeavors are aligned with IBHE's strategic plan that is committed to our higher education ecosystem that reinforces equity, sustainability and growth. Supporting the vision of a thriving community in all parts of our state.

Last year we shared with you that the Illinois Community College Presidents Council established instead of legislative guiding principles to help drive our decision making and movement where we are going, and we continue to live by and work with those core principles with regard to our legislative agenda and our work. Those principles are centered on funding community college operations at an equitable rate, funding and distributing of capital construction projects, furthering equity, and inclusion in higher education, and protecting local control at the community college.

Additionally, the presidents have a legislative agenda focusing on our efforts related to dual credit by refining and strengthening the current Dual Credit Quality Act language to promote equity by increasing opportunities for all high school students to participate in dual credit courses and programs with a focus on supporting economically disadvantaged and historically marginalized students while ensuring a high-quality academic experience. This includes language

enhancements to the act that will further define the process and the consistency for determining and ensuring instructor qualifications in those programs.

We also are committed to transfer and articulation. As we remain committed to furthering an agenda that advances our students in pursuit of a four-year degree. By enhancing, strengthening, and furthering our efforts in the area of transfer and articulation, creating a state system that fosters articulation agreements that have accountabilities, are meaningful, and reduce barriers for students. Related to that end, the presidents are exploring and formulating a plan to develop a common course numbering system across all of the community colleges building from the current IAI system throughout community colleges in the state. The Presidents Council also looks forward to continually working with and look forward to having further discussions with our university colleagues to discuss when we further strengthen our partnerships around transfer and articulation.

Workforce is another major focus area. And we are committed to furthering workforce degrees. With a large number of our students being returning adult students facing a barrier of being place bound, we will continue to pursue new solutions that will enable our efforts for the development of a more talented and skilled workforce for Illinois that specifically addresses the goals and outcomes of the IBHE strategic plan and the governor's economic agenda.

Presidents also continue to have conversations on a number of other subject areas that we feel are challenges and opportunities for us. Challenges such as the political uncertainties at the federal level and on the state level, the challenges that are presented with unfunded mandates, the concerns with deferred maintenance and aging infrastructure maintaining and advancing of dual credit in the midst of its growth, and keeping up with and being responsive to the speed and the changes of business and industry that we serve as well as opportunities that present themselves among us with our partners in the universities and the K-12 space.

We look forward to having a unified vision and approach that is allowing us to be more responsive to students, employers, and our communities. And we realize that as a partnership between universities and K-12s that can make those things happen. We look forward to the opportunity of leveraging new technologies such as AI to enhance responsiveness and help students achieve their goals and to promote emerging career pathways. We look forward to the opportunity and increasing quality equitability in dual credit programs and being innovative and forward thinking as it relates to the future of higher education by exploring how we offer instruction to be responsive to industry needs with possible options like competency-based education.

And finally, just like the conversation that took place by the university funding commission, the community colleges continue to discuss a funding model to address equity and adequacy. Earlier this academic year, the Illinois Community College Board formed its own adequacy and equity in community colleges funding work group. Currently, the community college system has three different formulas by which we are funded, base operating, equalization, and performance phase funding that determine what funding we receive. We have started conversations, and the group has a goal of delivering recommendations to ICCB this spring for their consideration in order to address the best path forward. Our draft recommendation proposals at this time consider things like conducting comprehensive analysis particularly around areas such as true cost of construction analyzing the alternatives for credit power formula for instruction, and funding infrastructure and deferred maintenance. This is just a mention of a few. We are also establishing or looking at establishing a base funding amount that provides each district with a foundational level of operational support

needed to operate a campus, whether it's a large campus or a small campus. Our recommendations also consider providing funding that meets equity needs for students and providing flexibility for instruction to take place with those needs. We are also looking at evaluating and enhancing the existing legalization formula. And, finally, we are committed to looking at building consistency around the dual credit formulas by analyzing those funding structures.

The Illinois Community College System is here for every student, every community in the state of Illinois. Helping individuals to get a job, advance to a better job and move themselves into a career that enriches their lives and positions their families and strengthens our communities.

We thank you very much again for the opportunity to share our thoughts on where we are going.

- Public University Presidents

Zaldwaynaka “Z” Scott, J.D., President, Chicago State University and Convener, Public University Presidents

As the convener of the public university presidents, I want to first express my collective appreciation for the investments into higher education by the governor, the General Assembly, IBHE and the Board. The continued prioritization of Illinois public universities strengthens our capacity to drive economic growth and equitable opportunities to all students across the state. This afternoon I will share highlights and accomplishments over the past year from our public universities.

Over the last year we have welcomed new presidents into our public higher education community. In October, Dr. Katrina Bell Jordan was inaugurated at Northeastern Illinois University as the eighth president bringing a deep commitment to providing accessible high quality public education to Chicago's north side and beyond. In December, Dr. Christine Mindrup was named the thirteenth president of Western Illinois University. WIU's board citing her as a bold, transparent, strategic and thoughtful leader. We welcome our colleagues and support their leadership and their respective institutions for continued success.

So moving to the fall 2024 enrollment, Illinois public universities continue to fulfill our mission of providing access and opportunity. The University of Illinois system achieved a total system-wide enrollment of nearly 98,000 students across its three campuses after having conferred just over 27,000 degrees last academic year. Northeastern Illinois University achieved a 4.2 percent enrollment increase including 14.4 rise in new transfer students over the previous fall. Chicago State University experienced a 14 percent increase in its Freshman Rise Academy Program. This is the university's premier program that offers full tuition, books, fees and technology to incoming freshmen. Additionally, Chicago State's overall retention rate was up 6 percent for undergraduates year over year. Illinois State University enrolled its largest ever first-time in college class of over 4,200 students as its most racially diverse class ever, contributing to a 2.7 percent increase in total enrollment. Northern Illinois University's total enrollment now stands at 15,415 students with transfer students accounting for 42 percent of new full-time undergraduate enrollment. Finally, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville saw an increase of 6 percent in transfer student enrollment while SIUC saw an increase of 2 percent attributable to their Saluki Step Ahead Program which allows graduates of 45 partner community colleges to earn their SIU degree without having to leave home.

These fall 2024 enrollment achievements underscore the important role of state investment in our 12 public universities.

Affordability remains a cornerstone of our efforts to attract and retain students. In collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education, NEIU served as a FAFSA beta testing site for the new FAFSA for before its official release to all students. One of only three beta testing sites in all of Illinois. CSU's RISE Academy for freshmen and software academy for tuition and fee programs are designed to ensure the financial barriers do not prevent access to high quality education. At NIU one-third of students graduate without student loan debt and eight out of ten students received merit-based aid with over twenty-two million dollars in merit aid awarded last year to undergraduate students. Throughout the U of I system all three campuses now offer a Promise Program for free tuition for eligible students. At both UIUC and UIC programs named the Illinois Commitment and UIC Aspire respectively. However, tuition and fees for Illinois residents with a family income of 75,000 dollars or less UIS launched a pilot program for first-time freshman covering the cost of any full-time remaining tuition and fees after state and other awards applied.

Academic collaboration is at the heart of our success as a higher education sector. Through strategic partnerships Illinois public universities are building bridges that expand educational opportunities and create seamless pathways for our state's students. Illinois State and Heartland Community College have partnered on a new business administration online degree. The program is designed for traditional students as well as working adults twenty-five years old and older. This degree program fills a gap from when Lincoln College closed a few years ago with the first cohort arriving at ISU in fall 2025. Governor's State continues to advance its dual degree program, a unique partnership between Governor State and seventeen Chicagoland community colleges that provides transfer students with a seamless pathway to associate and bachelor's degrees. Of the dual degree students that had transferred to GSU in the last five years, 82 percent have graduated. GSU is also in the process of incorporating CTE dual credits and community college degrees for accelerated bachelor's degrees through its transfer program. Over the last year Chicago State entered a master articulation agreement with the City Colleges of Chicago and an MOU focus on stem pathway with the University of Chicago. NIU has partnered with Rockford Public Schools offering full tuition scholarships and other student success services through the NIU Rockford Promise Program. This holistic program was recognized as one of four winners of the Annual Innovation Awards Program EduVentures Summit in 2024. NIU is also creating innovative pathways to degree attainment by offering degree programs in high-demand fields such as engineering and education directly on community college campuses. By working closely with our K-12 schools, community colleges and workforce training programs, our public universities are ensuring that every student has the opportunity to successfully transition from one stage of their educational journey to the next in each of our twelve universities.

Our universities also drive discovery and innovation that will shape the future of Illinois. At ISU, a research team is working with community partners to improve local air quality. They have several projects coordinated with the Ecology Action Center. And, in one example, they are using EPA funds to set up portable monitors to study air quality across Normal. Additionally, researchers from ISU's Mennonite Community College of Nursing and schools of nursing are working with community partners to improve narcotic overdose responses in rural Illinois. Chicago State continues to serve as a climate science super site with three instruments measuring microclimates in partnership with Argonne National Laboratory. The university has also increased the number of underrepresented high school students educated in quantum sensing as CSU continues to advance its quantum science research with national partners. At UIUC, they have achieved over 750 billion

dollars separately funded research and its home to pioneering biotech initiatives such as CABBI and iBioFoundry. UIC achieved over 550 billion dollars in separately funded research hosting an innovative center and incubation lab supporting industry and startups. UIS achieved over 11 million dollars in separately funded research last year. NEIU has also partnered with Crocus on climate and urban science research as well as hosting the heart program, a biomedical resource preparation program designed to prepare our diverse students for graduate programs in bioscience. NIU has expanded scholarships and mentoring for high achieving low-income STEM students through a new 2-million-dollar NSF grant aiming to serve 68 students over five years starting this month. The North Public Universities are hubs of cutting-edge research and with the continued support of state and federal funding we're returning bold ideas into tangible solutions that benefit our students and our community.

Finally, we know that our impact extends far beyond the classroom. Illinois public universities are deeply embedded in our community, addressing local challenges and creating opportunities for economic growth and advancing social well-being. NIU is on track to achieve the federal Hispanic Serving Institution Designation by fall 2026 and was recently selected to participate in the Valar Institute, which aims to enhance research capabilities at HIS. GSU, SIUC, and SIUE were all awarded the Higher Education Excellence and Diversity Award from insight into diversity for outstanding commitment to diversity and equity. Each of the U of I campuses has been recognized for their impact nationally and within Illinois. UIUC is the ninth ranked public university in the country enrolling students from all 50 states and over 100 countries. UIC ranked number one in Illinois for best value in social mobility, with 40 percent of its freshman class identifying as first-generation students. UIS ranked as the number one public regional University of Illinois where 83 percent of graduates were employed after graduation. Finally, NEIU launched the Peace Corps Preparation Certificate in the fall. The first in the Chicago area, designed to equip students for international development, field work, and leadership. Through all these initiatives and community engagement and national recognition we are fulfilling our mission to serve as engines of change and partners in progress. With strong state support and strategic leadership, Illinois public universities remain a pillar of economic impact and equitable opportunity.

As convener of our state's public university presidents, I'd like to thank the IBHE Board for the opportunity to share highlights of our collective progress and vision for the future. Together we will continue to advance Illinois as a leader in public higher education.

D. Public Comment

Chair Kothari asked Secretary Bealon if any member of the public in person or online had requested time to address the Board. Secretary Bealon indicated that eleven people requested time to address the Board.

- Kerry Ferris, NIU Associate Professor, Funding
- Terry Stroh, Regional Director, Northern King County Regional Vocational System, Dual Credit
- Brandon Bisbey, Tenured Faculty Member, NEIU Chapter of the University Professionals of IL, funding
- Nancy Matthews, Professor Emeritus, NEIU, funding
- Jelani Saadiq, Advance Illinois, institutional funding and financial aid programs

- Francesca Morgan, Professor, NEIU, funding equity
- Rosario Hernandez, Latino Policy Forum, scholarship funding
- Neoma Nagahawatte, Illinois Action for Children, ECACE
- Jiaming Lou, NEIUPI, Student, financial aid, MAP
- Zacharias Simmons, NEIU, student, funding
- Olivia Kronk, NEIUPI, funding

E. Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Recommendations Presentation

Director Ostro provided an overview of the budget recommendations. The budget recommendations are aligned with the three goals of the strategic plan, equity, sustainability and growth. Overall, we're recommending a 109-million-dollar additional investment in higher ed or a four percent increase relative to fiscal year 2025.

We're recommending the retirement system be funded at the full certified contribution level and the Rebuild Illinois capital investments be reappropriated and we continue to invest and move projects forward s we saw today on CSU's campus how important those capital investments are and making sure our students have a learning environment they need to be successful.

We're recommending a two percent increase in operating funding for public universities, about a 25 million dollar increase and a two percent increase for community colleges and adult education. For the public universities as we have in each of the last four budget recommendations, we are proposing an allocation based on a distribution of the concentration or the percentage of Pell students as well as the number of Pell students at each of our public universities. We know the work of adequate and equitable funding is still underway, but this board has made recommendations to take a step towards equity each year by making this recommendation to use Pell as a first step in addressing full equitable funding.

The One Click College Admit program will lead us all to a full direct admissions program by which every high school student and every community college student in the state will automatically receive an offer to one of our public institutions where they qualify without having to formally submit an application. This will match data based on information that state has and working with our partners at the high school level and in the community college level to make sure that we tell students we welcome you to our higher ed institutions, our community colleges, our public universities. We want you here and all you need to know is how you've done in high school or at your community college. We welcome you with just a few simple pieces of information and not a long application. This budget takes two steps toward achieving that. The budget request provides funding for both the increase in applications that we've seen through Common App as well as covering the cost of community colleges to join the App process. The third element of the request is a million dollars to cover the operating cost of the App, data matching, outreach to students, notifications to students to make the work of getting to college less burdensome so we can spend more time ensuring students enroll in the right school and they have the supports they need to be successful.

Work that we have ongoing to address basic student needs, housing, food insecurity, transportation, mental health on campus, maintaining funding but adding an additional 3.5 million

dollars for a new Center for Basic Needs as the Illinois Community College Board that will ensure that community colleges have access to grants to support student basic needs as well.

Funding recommendation for the PATH program of four million dollar increase to bring funding level back up to 19 million dollars.

Funding recommendation for the ECACE is an increase of 15 million dollars to bring the funding level to 20 million dollars.

Funding recommendation for IMSA is an increase of one million dollars.

Funding recommendation for agency is an increase of four million dollars.

F. Action Items

1. Consideration and Approval of Fiscal Year 2026 Higher Education Budget Recommendations: Operations, Grants, and Capital Improvements (Ginger Ostro)

Board Member Sharma moved to approve the programs. Bush seconded the motion. A roll call was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

2. Consideration and Approval of New Units of Instruction, Public Service, and Research at Public Universities (Dr. Nkechi Onwuameze)

Eastern Illinois University

Eastern Illinois University (EIU or the University) requests authorization to offer a Bachelor of Science (BS) in Computer Engineering in the Prairie Region. EIU is seeking to create the proposed program to provide additional pathways for students to pursue a high-demand career field which complements existing programs in electrical engineering and computer science. The proposed BS in Computer Engineering will utilize the established resources of the University while providing students an option to earn an engineering degree in a small, personalized setting. The proposed program requires 120 credit hours comprised of 88-89 hours of engineering major courses, a senior seminar course, and 30 hours of general education courses. The program will prepare students to apply mathematical and scientific principles to the design, development, and operational evaluation of computer hardware and software systems. Graduates will be equipped to analyze specific problems of computer applications. The program will be housed in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and utilize existing laboratory stations and resources. The University has proposed an equity plan that involves closing gaps in enrollment, persistence and completion of degrees in the computer science field. Embedded strategies exist within the proposed program's curricular and academic support framework to promote student success. Programs and offices across campus are designed to reduce barriers and intentionally connect students with resources and experiences necessary to thrive at EIU. These programs are designed to facilitate successful student engagement and retention through mentoring, community building, advising, supplemental instruction and academic support. EIU offers high-impact practices to support student retention and success. There are policies in place to ensure

faculty members possess the training, credentials, and qualifications to provide instruction in the proposed program

Board Member Noble moved to approve the program. Jenkins seconded the motion. A roll call was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Moving on to the next item, Dr. Onwuameze presented the staff recommendations for independent institution approvals, including the following:

3. Consideration and Approval of New Operating and/or Degree-Granting Authority for Independent Institutions (Dr. Nkechi Onwuameze)

The Chicago School

The Chicago School (the University) is seeking authorization to offer a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) in the Chicago Region. The 184-credit hour program will be housed in The Chicago School's new Illinois College of Osteopathic Medicine (IllinoisCOM), a proposed medical school that aims to train osteopathic physicians to provide individualized care rooted in the connection between mental and physical well-being. The DO program incorporates a wellness and holistic approach to the practice of medicine addressing both physical and mental health. The proposed program will complement and expand on the expertise and mission of The Chicago School in preparing students 132 for careers in osteopathic medicine at healthcare organizations across the country and thus address the physician shortage looming in the years ahead. Exam support services and resources will be provided to aid students in successfully passing the Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination (COMLEX-USA), a three-level national standardized licensure examination that assesses osteopathic medical knowledge, knowledge fluency, clinical skills, and other competencies essential for practice as an osteopathic generalist physician. The program will be accredited by the Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation (COCA) upon meeting eligibility requirements. The Chicago School has developed campuswide initiatives to systemically close persisting equity and opportunity gaps in student outcomes and faculty hiring. There are policies in place to ensure faculty possess the training, credentials, and qualifications to provide instruction in the proposed program.

Board Member Noble moved to approve the new program of instruction. Finke seconded the motion. A roll call was taken. The motion passed.

Moving to the last item, Dr. Onwuameze presented the staff recommendations for Community Colleges which includes the following:

4. Consideration and Approval of New Units of Instruction at Public Community Colleges (Dr. Nkechi Onwuameze)

Carl Sandburg College is seeking approval for a 61-credit hour Automotive Technology Associate of Applied Science (AAS) program. The proposed program offers a comprehensive curriculum enabling students to master diagnosing and repairing automotive systems with a strong emphasis on safety and ethical practices. The curriculum requires 15 credit hours of general education coursework and 46 credit hours of career

and technical education coursework. Career and technical coursework includes instruction in introductory automotive technology, career skills for industry, math for automotive technology, precision measuring instruments, introductory and advanced levels of automotive electricity, suspension and alignments, batteries: starting and charging, braking systems, introductory and advanced levels of engine repair and rebuilding, drivetrain systems, engine management, automotive heating and air conditioning, hybrid and electric vehicles, automotive transmissions, auto service management, dealership service practices, and a work-based learning experience in automotive maintenance or technology. The program will prepare graduates for optional National Center for Safe Supportive Schools (NC3) microcredentials including the Snap-On 596F Multimeter certification. The proposed degree will provide an educational ladder opportunity for students and graduates of the College's existing Automotive Technology Certificate program. The College has sufficient library, technology, staff, and financial resources in place to support the proposed program.

Harper College is seeking approval for a 67-credit hour Associate in Fine Arts (AFA) in Music Production. The proposed AFA in Music Production degree offers courses required for transfer to a four-year college or university for students majoring in music specifically intended for baccalaureate programs related to music production or music business. The proposed degree mirrors the existing AFA in Music Performance degree program offered at the College. The proposed AFA degree is closely aligned with lower division coursework at universities offering bachelor's degree programs in music production and music business, offering students a seamless articulation process when transferring to a four-year institution. Students must complete 31 credit hours of general education coursework, 14 credit hours of music production coursework, 18 credit hours in music mechanics coursework, and four credit hours in applied music. Assessment of student learning will be achieved through evaluation of a student portfolio prior to program completion or transfer by Harper College faculty. All facilities and equipment are currently in place to support the program including music recording studio classrooms, music rehearsal rooms, music study classrooms, music technology computer labs, performance classrooms, practice rooms, and professional-level performance venues. The program will require two full-time and up to 30 part-time faculty to implement the program. All faculty meet the requirements for teaching baccalaureate or transfer courses including a master's degree in music and at least nine years of work or teaching experience.

Board Member Evans moved to approve the staff recommendation. Noble seconded the motion. A roll call was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

G. Consent Agenda Action Items

1. Consideration and Approval of Board Meeting Minutes – November 13, 2024

Board Member Jenkins moved to approve the items on the Consent Agenda. Finke seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion was approved unanimously.

H. Informational Items – Fiscal Year 2025 Grant Update Reports

1. Nursing School Grants Awarded Fiscal Year 2025
2. Nurse Educator Fellowships Awarded Fiscal Year 2025
3. Fiscal Year 2025 Grants and Programs Updates

I. Executive Session

A motion was made by board member Zarnikow and seconded by Sharma to move into Executive Session. A roll call was taken, and the motion was approved.

The Board moved into Executive Session for discussion of matters involving 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) and 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11). No final action was taken during the closed session.

The board returned from Executive Session.

J. Action Items

1. Consideration and approval of personnel matters.

Chair Kothari asked for a motion to approve Item J1. A motion was made by Board member Noble, seconded by Sharma. A roll call was made, and the motion was approved.

2. Consideration and approval of executive session minutes – November 13, 2024.

A motion was made to approve Item J2 by Board member Noble, seconded by Bush. A roll call was made, and the motion was approved.

Other Business

The next Board meeting will be held Wednesday, March 12, 2025, at Prairie State College in Chicago Heights. Additional details about the meeting and agenda will be posted on the IBHE website.

K. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion of Board Member Zarnikow and seconded by Board Member Noble, a voice vote was taken, and by unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at approximately 4:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Melissa Bealon, Secretary to the Board.