

APPROVED  
January 21, 2026

*Melissa Bealon*  
Board Secretary Melissa Bealon

Item #G-1  
January 21, 2026

**MINUTES – BOARD MEETING**  
**November 12, 2025**

**Submitted for:** Action.

**Summary:** Minutes of the November 12, 2025, meeting of the Illinois Board of Higher Education held in person at Elgin Community College, Building E, E-121 Dining Room, 1700 Spartan Drive, Elgin, IL, 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 November 12, 2025, Board meeting.

STATE OF ILLINOIS  
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**MINUTES – BOARD MEETING**  
**November 12, 2025**

A meeting of the Illinois Board of Higher Education was held in person at Elgin Community College, Building E, E-121 Dining Room, 1700 Spartan Drive, Elgin, Illinois 60123, 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, Carter Blount, Andrea Evans, Nora Lee Heist, Vice Chair Herrero, Magnus Noble, and Eric Zarnikow.

Others present in person: Ms. Ginger Ostro, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Mr. David Kelm, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Dr. Nkechi Onwuameze, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Jose Garcia, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Valerie Lynch, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Rachel Bollinger, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Bill McCarty, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Tara Lawley, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Lori Ohnesorge, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Trish Aumann, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Leslie Daugherty, Illinois Board of Higher Education, and Melissa Bealon, Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Board members present virtually: Jennifer Garrison, Subhash Sharma, Garth Walker and Jamel Wright.

Pursuant to the Illinois Open Meetings Act, a quorum was present at the Elgin Community College location. 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 1:03p.m. Board Secretary Bealon took roll call. A quorum was present.

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

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

- **Opening Remarks by Chairman Kothari**

Good afternoon. Welcome to the November 2025 meeting of the Illinois Board of Higher Education. In keeping with our tradition of taking our meetings to colleges and universities across the state, we are gathered today at Elgin Community College in Elgin, Illinois. Thank you to President Heinrich and her team for a warm welcome.

The federal government's relentless assault on higher education continues. Last month, the Trump Administration invited higher education institutions to sign a compact that would offer preferential access to federal funds and benefits in return for alignment with egregious administration asks. Many institutions have already spoken out against the compact, and others must continue to speak out against it.

The compact threatens academic freedom and institutional autonomy – two key pillars of higher education in our country. Tying vague promises of federal funding to specific and punishable policy compliance undermines the principle that research grants should be awarded on merit, not ideological or political conditions. Suffice it to say, we believe deeply in institutional independence rather than draconian oversight.

As many of you know, the administration has effectively knee capped the SNAP program, which serves 42 million US residents and 1.1 million college students. Colleges and universities are ramping up efforts to respond by stocking more supplies in their campus food pantries to counteract this. I encourage all who are listening and can to support their local food pantries and neighbors who will need support through this period of federal malfeasance.

As we respond to what feels like perpetual federal callousness, I do want to thank our Governor's Office and Attorney General's Office for their constant defense of and assertion of right for Illinois residents.

Amid the chaos in higher education and our society overall being stirred by the federal government, higher education in Illinois is thriving.

Our colleagues at the Illinois Community College Board recently released the system's enrollment report, and it shows that enrollment at community colleges is up for the fourth straight year! Enrollment across the community college system increased 3.7 percent compared to the previous year, which puts enrollment at the community colleges 1.3 percent above pre-pandemic levels (Fall 2019).

Northern Illinois University and University of Illinois Chicago were two of only five finalists nationwide for the 2025 Excellence in Student Success Award from the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities for their demonstrated commitment to removing barriers and making a college education more accessible. This is major accomplishment for Illinois and the students at both Illinois public universities. Congratulations to everyone at NIU and UIC!

Thank you to the wonderful professionals at each of the institutions who work hard year-round to ensure that Illinois families have high-quality public higher education options.

Before we get into our meeting, I would like to thank several IBHE departing board members for their contributions and commitment. First, Kenneth "Buzz" Shaw has been a member of the IBHE board since 2019 and a dynamic leader in higher education for years before gifting this body with his wisdom and experience. In honor of Buzz's board retirement, I have kept my opening remarks to a mere 62 minutes.

Dr. Sylvia Jenkins, who joined our board in 2022, also departs our board as she was recently named Chair of the Illinois Community College Board; I look forward to our shared work together. Finally, as is routine for this board, we say so long and farewell to Daci Finke, one of our many student board members. Later in the agenda we'll have an opportunity to formally recognize our departing members.

With Dr. Jenkins' departure from our board, we welcome Mara Botman as the new shared board member of ICCB and IBHE. I have been lucky enough to know Mara for many years in the college access and success field, and I am thrilled to have her join us. Welcome Mara.

I'd also like to welcome our new traditional student member representative, Carter Blount. Carter is a junior at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign pursuing a Bachelor of science degree in recreation, sport, and tourism with a concentration in sports management. We're happy to have you on the Board. Carter and I had a chance to chat earlier this week, and his enthusiasm was palpable. We welcome the energy!

And speaking of our student board members, please join me in congratulating Magnus Noble who recently joined the National College Attainment Network as their Midwest Policy Fellow. My sources in our neighboring states already tell me Magnus has taken quickly to the role, and I can't wait to hear what insights he has to bring back to our work in Illinois.

While there is much to celebrate and much to find abhorrent, I recently heard a quote that stuck with me. This one is particularly hard for me to share given my college football allegiances. At a recent MHEC board meeting in Cleveland, Ohio's Lt. Gov., Jim Tressel spoke to the assembled Commissioners on the first morning of our meetings. He wrapped up his comments with a charge that I appreciated..." there is nothing more fun than a great challenge." While it is easy enough to despair in our challenges, I have reminded myself of this quote daily and it continues to give me energy. I can see why Coach Tressel's team went 9-1 vs. my team in The Game. So, I encourage all of us to dive into the challenges we face with as much joy and vigilance as we can muster.

With that, I'll now pass it to President Heinrich for her remarks.

### **Welcome from Elgin Community College President Peggy Heinrich**

President Peggy Heinrich welcomed the Board and expressed excitement in hosting the meeting on campus. She highlighted ECC's role in serving approximately 450,000 residents across 22 suburban communities and portions of five counties with annual enrollment of about 17,000 students and 130 degree and certificate programs. ECC reflects the diversity of its region, with 30% full-time and 70% part-time students; 37% are first-generation college students, and 52% are Latinx. ECC is a designated Hispanic-Serving Institution.

Current initiatives include Feed the Need, a food donation campaign supporting student-run pantries. ECC is in statewide contest with partner institutions to increase contributions. After coming in second last year, they are determined to take first place this year.

President Heinrich also shared updates on a new 150,000 sq. ft. Manufacturing and Technology Center, scheduled to open in Fall 2026, which will house advanced manufacturing, smart factory technologies, welding, HVAC, and energy management programs, designed in collaboration with regional employers.

The Center for Civic Engagement was highlighted for its efforts to increase student civic participation through events such as bipartisan candidate panels and voter registration drives. Student voting rates have risen from 16% in 2014 to 57% in 2020, surpassing national community college averages.

Finally, ECC expressed appreciation for transfer and partnership programs, including the Pledge Program with NIU and a guaranteed admission agreement with the University of Illinois' Grainger College of Engineering, providing affordable pathways for students to complete bachelor's degrees.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Ginger Ostro provided a brief report.

Executive Director Ginger Ostro thanked the Board, the Governor's Office, and the General Assembly for their continued investment in the Board of Higher Education.

The Director went on to share that several new team members joined the IBHE in recent weeks. Dr. Leslie Daugherty, Managing Director of Talent and Workforce Development. Most recently, she was the Senior Director of Design Programs at Education Design Lab and co-founded *Rural Together*, a collaborative virtual community of over 1,000 rural post-secondary practitioners advancing opportunities for students and employers in rural areas.

In her new role, Leslie will lead the Talent and Workforce Development Unit, aligning higher education programs with statewide economic and workforce priorities—including Private Business and Vocational Schools, and the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity with Linda Ruhe Marsh directing that program.

Lori Ohnesorge, Senior Associate Director of Healthcare Programs. In her new capacity, Lori will support the Talent and Workforce Development Unit, managing key healthcare-related programs and grants, including the Nursing Grants and the Behavioral Health Workforce Center, while fostering partnerships to expand Illinois' healthcare workforce pipeline.

Dr. Patricia "Trish" Aumann, Managing Director of Academic Strategy and Programs. Trish joins IBHE with extensive experience in academic affairs, accreditation, and program development, most recently serving as Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives at Richard J. Daley College, where she also served as Interim Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs. Her background includes leading institutional planning, assessment, and innovation initiatives that align academic programming with workforce and student success priorities. As Managing Director, Trish will oversee the Academic Strategy and Programs Unit, leading statewide academic planning, new program approvals, and strategic initiatives that enhance quality, innovation, and student success.

Dr. Nkechi Onwuameze, Director of Academic Strategy and Quality, Dr. Onwuameze has been promoted to Director of Academic Strategy and Quality, where she will continue to lead statewide academic quality assurance, program review, and continuous improvement efforts, ensuring that Illinois' higher education institutions deliver high-quality and impactful programs. Nkechi will continue her hard work and dedication as she transitions from her Interim leadership role into the Director position, great work Dr. Onwuameze!

Jill Gebke, Director of Student Success Strategy, Jill has been promoted to Director of Student Success Strategy after an accomplished career leading enrollment management and student success initiatives at various campuses and her role here at IBHE as Assistant

Director of Academic Affairs. She brings extensive experience in data-informed planning and student-centered innovation.

In her new role, Jill will lead the Student Success Strategy team, overseeing the implementation of institutional equity plans, communities of practice, student basic needs initiatives, Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act support, and other statewide efforts designed to improve student retention, completion, and holistic success.

Jeremy Kingery, Senior Associate Director of Student Access and Success. In this role, Jeremy will lead IBHE's efforts in student access and equity planning, supporting public colleges and universities in designing, implementing, and assessing strategies to close equity gaps and improve outcomes for all students.

Lauryn Lucas and Hannah Church, Student Success Specialists. As Student Success Specialists, Lauryn and Hannah will support the coordination of student success and equity initiatives, data collection, and engagement with public institutions to advance implementation of statewide student success strategies.

Director Ostro thanked the whole team, Rachel Bolinger, for her leadership in HR, noting that the agency has added 20-plus positions in the last 18 months.

Moving on, the next item to note is the new Student Success Strategies team. They will support the SUCCESS Initiative which is Supporting Universities & Colleges in Creating Equitable Student Success. This is the state's effort to enable institutions to implement their equity work and equity plans through a series of efforts that include:

8 podcasts for institutions participating in the SUCCESS program (e.g. The Power of Basic Needs Support and Effective Data Use for Holistic Advising)

3 Communities of Practice (mentioned at the last meeting). These launch in early December (Holistic Advising/First Year Experience; Meeting Student Basic Needs; Reducing DFW Rates)

23 campuses invited to participate in Targeted Technical Assistance to do deeper work in one of the areas of the Communities of Practice

The Statewide Data Dashboard was enacted in statute in 2025 and calls for IBHE, ICCB, and ISAC to work collaboratively to create a public dashboard with institution-specific and statewide data that includes institution mission, institution, faculty, staff, and student characteristics, student success metrics, such as enrollment, retention, completion, and affordability, among others. The dashboard is to be published each year by March 15, starting in 2027.

IBHE, ICCB, and ISAC have launched a partnership with the Siebel Center for Design at the University of Illinois to use human-centered practices to design the dashboard.

The Board had a sample of human centered design principles at the June meeting. To date, several sessions have been held with members of the media, advocacy organizations, legislators, and researchers, to ensure that the data presented is accessible and useful to these key audiences.

Continuing to conduct outreach to encourage juniors to Opt-In to allow us to match their GPA and offer college admission next fall and to encourage seniors to open a Common App account to be matched immediately.

Will launch in January another ad/outreach campaign to target community college transfer students to Opt-In.

Please let us know if you know of any groups that would be interested in a presentation of the program and can reach families to encourage them to Opt-In.

## **B. Resolution and Recognition – Action Item**

Chair Kothari recognized and celebrated the contributions of three departing or retiring board members: Daci Finke, Dr. Sylvia Jenkins, and Dr. Kenneth Shaw. Their leadership and commitment to advancing access and excellence in higher education have made a lasting impact. The Board expressed sincere appreciation for their service to the students, institutions, and communities served. The Chair then read each resolution.

After reading the resolutions, Chair Kothari asked each board member if they wanted to share any thoughts or reflection about their time on the Board. Finke thanked the Board and staff for their support, giving special recognition to fellow student member Magnus Noble. She wished Carter Blount, the new student member, well as he begins his board service.

Sylvia Jenkins thanked the Board for their kind words and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve. She noted the value of learning how the Board works together to support higher education in Illinois. Dr. Jenkins shared her gratitude for continuing service with the ICCB board and staff and emphasized the importance of collaboration to achieve shared goals. She acknowledged current challenges but expressed confidence that, as in past turbulent times, these can be overcome together.

Chair Kothari called for a combined motion. Consideration and Approval of Resolutions Honoring Retired Board Members.

Board Member Zarnikow moved to approve the motion. Herrero seconded. A voice vote was taken, and the motion was approved unanimously.

## **C. National College Attainment Network Initiatives Update**

Magnus Noble, IBHE Non-Traditional Student Board Member

Board Member Noble provided an overview of the National College Attainment Network (NCAN), a nonpartisan Washington, D.C. based association focused on advancing postsecondary access, affordability, and success. NCAN's membership includes organizations and agencies nationwide, including the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC.)

Noble shared details about his current role as NCAN's Midwest Policy Fellow, a half-time remote position supported by a Joyce Foundation grant aimed at improving college affordability. The fellowship focuses on Michigan, Minnesota, and Ohio, collaborating with state networks such as MCAN and DCAN (Michigan), Achieve Twin Cities and College Possible (Minnesota), and College Now Greater Cleveland and I Know I Can (Ohio).

His work centers on supporting these organizations in advocating for state-level policies and funding initiatives to increase affordability and improve completion rates, with periodic travel for engagement. Since starting, he has met with key partners, developed

shared objectives, and attended major conferences in Michigan to gain insight into advocacy priorities.

Looking ahead, efforts will focus on formalizing goals with each state network and exploring opportunities with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC). Noble noted that Illinois continues to be viewed as a leader in higher education policy at the regional and national levels.

#### **D. Advisory Council Updates**

##### **Community College Presidents' Council**

Dr. Avis Proctor, President, William Rainey Harper College and Chair of the Community College Presidents' Council

Dr. Proctor thanked Chair Kothari and the Board for the opportunity and acknowledging the headwinds that we're all facing, while noting that we're going to figure it out together.

Dr. Proctor continued, noting in August, the academic year was kicked off celebrating the Illinois Community College Board's 60th anniversary. Governor Pritzker participated in the celebration and provided remarks recognizing that Illinois has the third-largest system in size and among the fastest-growing in the nation, outpacing the national average.

The Illinois Community College System recently shared that the Fall 2025 enrollments have grown 3.7 percent in headcount from 2024 surpassing pre-pandemic levels and 3.0 percent in Full- Time Equivalent (FTE) from the previous year. This year's growth pushes enrollment 1.3 percent above pre-pandemic levels (Fall 2019), demonstrating the system's continued recovery and the enduring demand for accessible, affordable higher education across Illinois.

Some notable facts within the data are:

- **Broad participation:** 38 of 45 community colleges reported higher enrollment compared to last year.
- **Program trends:** Career and Technical Education (CTE) enrollment increased 9.5%, Transfer programs rose 2.3%, while Adult Education and ESL programs decreased 6.9%.
- **Dual Credit:** Enrollment for high school students earning college credit jumped 9.3%.
- **Online learning:** One in three students (35.7%) took at least one online course this fall.
- **Full-time students:** 84,392 students (30.7% of total enrollment) attended full-time, a 1.8% increase over last year.
  - We're grateful for our ICCB's Board Chair, Dr. Sylvia Jenkins's recognition of the innovative strategies employed on our campuses. She's quoted as saying:
    - "This sustained growth underscores the innovation happening on our campuses...colleges are adapting to student needs — expanding flexible learning options, strengthening transfer pathways, and deepening partnerships with local employers to align education with opportunity."
- We're also appreciative of Governor Pritzker's continued support. In his words:
  - "Year after year, Illinois is seeing increases in community college enrollment, reflecting my commitment to make Illinois the best state in the nation to receive an education. Accessible, high-quality education transforms lives. Whether it's an affordable pathway to a four-year institution or an opportunity for specialized workforce development, higher enrollment in our

state's community colleges means more Illinoisans are realizing their full potential."

21 Illinois Community Colleges nationally recognized in the Top 200 colleges eligible for the 2027 \$1M prize from the Aspen Institute College Excellence program

- Carl Sandburg College
- College of Lake County
- Danville Area Community College
- Elgin Community College
- Harper College
- Highland Community College
- Illinois Eastern Community Colleges
- Illinois Valley Community College
- John A Logan College
- John Wood Community College
- Kishwaukee College
- Lake Land College
- Lincoln Land Community College
- McHenry County College
- Oakton College
- Rend Lake College
- Rock Valley College
- Sauk Valley Community College
- Shawnee Community College
- Spoon River College
- Triton College

#### ICCCP Commitment to Strategic Engagement and Collaboration with K-12 and University Leadership

We're committed to improving engagement and collaboration efforts with our K-12 and University colleagues. Prior to the beginning of the academic year, we contacted leaders to discuss shared priorities to advance student access and success.

On October 6<sup>th</sup>, the executive committees for the universities and the Council of Community College Presidents met at the centrally located Heartland Community College to discuss a jointly developed agenda focused on four main topics: the common application, enhancing the transfer pipeline, a university proposal on the Associate of Arts in General Studies and Community College Baccalaureates (CCBs). President Mahony and I gave an update to Deputy Governor Martin Torres and First Assistant Deputy Governor for Education Emily Goldman on November 4<sup>th</sup> on our plans for continued strategic engagement to foster success for those within higher education, to deliver student-centered approaches to expand opportunities and economic development for our state and to ensure IL higher education offers "a path to a better future, for individuals, communities, and the entire state of Illinois" as emphasized in the IBHE *A Thriving Illinois* strategic plan. We're currently planning for our next meeting on a centrally located university campus.

On superintendent engagement, the Council of Community College Presidents welcomed Dr. Dustin Foutch (District #71), Aaron Lock (District #1) and Dr. Glenn Wood (District #202) to our presidents' retreat on October 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> to discuss dual credit best practices and ways to strengthen awareness of programs and related career paths and transfer opportunities. I am also working with Dr. Scott Doerr of the Illinois Association of School Administrators to finalize plans for our executive committees to meet on December 8<sup>th</sup>.

## Legislative Agenda

In 2024, the Council of Community College Presidents developed a set of legislative guiding principles that have been and will continue to be at the core of our legislative agenda, those principles are:

- Funding for community college operations
- Funding and distribution for capital construction projects
- Equity in higher education
- And, protecting local control

Additionally, our current draft agenda includes focusing our efforts on:

- the transfer pipeline via streamlined student-centered transfer processes to reduce transfer barriers, saving students time and money via transparent course equivalencies and simplified student course selection across institutions
- Supporting the Governor's aim to expand access to select bachelor degrees using an evidence-based development process through ICCB and IBHE that demonstrates workforce need, employer support, and regional labor market data
- Authority for local control on minor capital project improvements, expanding purchasing authority via a statewide community college purchasing consortium that includes working with BEP vendors to reduce purchasing expenses, clarifying FOIA and related guidance to empower colleges to responsibly address the burden of automatic or AI-generated requests.
- And finally, Securing Funding for a Transformative workforce ecosystem that includes proactively working on statewide Manufacturing Workforce Development and readying ourselves for the long-awaited opportunities tied to the recent legislative authorization for awarding Workforce Pell for qualifying short-term programs.

## Presidents' Conversation

The Presidents continue to have conversations on a number of other subject areas including:

- Competency Based Education (CBE)
  - This year, we're working to incorporate CBE in a cross-college collaborative effort in manufacturing
  - The Council of Presidents also has a standing committee to address this topic
- We've participated in the launch of the IL SUCCESS program: "SUCCESS—Supporting Universities and Colleges Creating Equitable Student Success—is a collaborative initiative led by the Governor's Office, IBHE, ICCB, the Office of Community College Research & Leadership at UIUC, and the Office for Academic Programs, Student Success, and Effectiveness at UIC, that aims to provide support to colleges and universities as they implement, refine, and advance institutional practices guided by [our] Equity Plans" we submitted in May 2024.
- Several of our colleges participated in the November 3-4, 2025, Chicago Quantum Summit and are exploring ways to support our state and national efforts through collaboration with our university partners and industry and partnerships.

Thank you for the opportunity to share about the mission-driven and student-centered work of our community colleges. Thank you for your support in us collectively transforming lives across the state of Illinois and remaining competitive on a national and global basis.

Chair Kothari opened the floor for questions and then after several questions, thanked Dr. Proctor for the presentation.

## Public University Presidents

Dr. Daniel F. Mahony, President, Southern Illinois University Carbondale

President Mahony thanked the Board for the opportunity to present on behalf of the university presidents and chancellors. He expressed the collective appreciation of all the public universities for the ongoing investments into higher education that have been made by Governor Pritzker, the General Assembly, and the IBHE Board and leadership.

### Campus Leadership Updates since President Scott's presentation to IBHE

The university president's community experienced a loss in April with the passing of Governors State President Dr. Cheryl Green who had served in her role since July 2020. The GSU Board of Trustees undertook a national search that brought Dr. Joyce Ester to Illinois where she was President of Normandale Community College. A former President of Kennedy-King College, Dr. Esther is a native of Phoenix, Illinois and earned her bachelor's degree in Sociology at Northern Illinois University. She holds both master's and doctorate degrees in Education from the University of California, Santa Barbara. We are pleased to welcome Dr. Ester home and will formally celebrate that occasion with her installation as the 7<sup>th</sup> President of GSU.

Dr. Kristi Mindrup was formally installed as the 13th and first alumna to serve as president of Western Illinois University in what was a great community celebration.

After the departure of UIUC Chancellor, Dr. Robert Jones, the University of Illinois undertook a national search which brought Dr. Charles Lee Isbell Jr., the provost at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, to become the 11th chancellor of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Hailing from Atlanta, Dr. Isbell earned a bachelor's degree in information and computer science from Georgia Tech and completed his master's and Ph.D. in electrical engineering and computer science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

### Enrollment Highlights

#### CSU

Chicago State saw a 12% jump in overall enrollment - the highest since 2020 -- with first-year enrollment up 74% from Fall 2024.

New transfer student enrollment increased by 38% from Fall 2024, with a 50% rise of transfer students from City Colleges of Chicago since Fall 2024.

Retention increased 3% points to 70% from Fall 2024.

#### EIU

EIU welcomed its largest first-year domestic cohort in three years, with overall first-year domestic enrollment increasing by 4% compared to Fall 2024.

Transfer enrollment also increased, with a 4% overall rise in new transfers. EIU saw particular success with students from its dedicated network of Community College partners, where transfer enrollment grew by 5%.

The percentage of incoming first-generation college students at EIU is at its highest-ever point since the University began tracking that data, due in part to EIU's standing as a [First-Gen Forward institution](#).

## GSU

At GSU, new freshman enrollment increased by 21.2% and is the second largest for first year students. Additionally, the number of undergraduate students who enrolled full-time increased by 7.6%

Meanwhile, the IPEDS Fall 2024 cohort retention rate increased by 2% (61.09%) for Fall 2025

In addition, Doctoral enrollment increased for the third straight year – in this fall by 13%

## ISU

Illinois State set an enrollment record for the fourth year in a row and increased its student headcount to almost 22,000 students.

The Mennonite College of Nursing saw a 5% increase in students this fall. The College of Education saw a 4% jump.

ISU saw an increase in the rate of minority students, from 32.9% last fall to 34.9% this year.

## NEIU

NEIU saw a one percent increase in total student enrollment, experiencing a 3.9% increase in credit hour enrollment over the previous year.

NEIU also saw a 1.6% increase in graduate students and a 6.3% increase in new transfer students who largely came from Wilbur Wright, Oakton, Harold Washington, Truman, College of Lake County, and Triton Colleges.

NEIU also reported an increase in first-year retention, climbing eight percent from 2024.

## NIU

NIU welcomed over 2,400 new freshmen this fall - a 22 percent increase and the second-largest freshman class since 2014.

Total fall enrollment rose marking a 4.3 percent gain from 2024.

NIU's combined reenrollment rate for new freshmen, transfer students, and continuing undergraduates reached its highest level in more than 25 years.

## SIU Carbondale

SIUC experienced steady enrollment in 2025 after last year's record enrollment growth.

SIUC saw increases among several demographics, including new students from the Southern Illinois region (6%), new students from states bordering Illinois (16%) and online students (23% growth overall, 161% in graduate programs).

The success of the university's enrollment stability was also greatly enhanced by the strategic efforts of Academic Affairs, yielding a 5% growth in retaining continuing students.

## SIU Edwardsville

At SIUE Fall 2025 undergraduate degree-seeking enrollment increased by 5.7% with the university's overall enrollment increasing by 7.7%.

First-time, first-year student enrollment experienced a 19% increase and the second largest total since 2016.

New transfer student enrollment continued to rise to a six-year high - a 20% increase compared to fall 2024. Academic programs in the Schools of Nursing, Engineering and Business experienced the largest growth in enrollment.

## University of Illinois System

Systemwide enrollment across the University of Illinois is now over 101,000, which is 24 percent more students than enrolled a decade ago, and living up to its land-grant mission, about 80 percent of their undergraduate enrollment is from Illinois.

Demand for first-time freshman seats is at an all-time high as the university had more than 120,000 applications across the system, 15,000 more than the previous year.

This success translates to graduating more students than ever – over 27,041 last year.

And importantly, about 75 percent of those graduates choose to stay in Illinois, driving our state's economic impact in a powerful way.

## WIU

At WIU, re-enrollment numbers increased in 2025.

WIU is proud to partner with ReUp and the State of Illinois to target students who have stopped out, before completing their degree.

Due to the partnership, WIU was able to welcome back 197 students in pursuit of degree completion.

These enrollment highlights demonstrate several reasons to be proud of the work ongoing at our public universities:

All the university Presidents and Chancellors are full-time, no interims, on the job allowing for the stability to plan and execute goals for the future.

There is a strong commitment to affordability using every available resource to bring down what a family pays for their student to attend school.

We are committed to transferability and are always working to find better and easier ways for our community college students to transfer to one of our campuses.

We are committed to be national and world leaders focused on leadership in research, discovery, engagement, and economic development.

We are committed to supporting our communities and the state as economic engines, community partners, and workforce generators.

Last, and most importantly, we are committed to student success as we embrace the challenge of ensuring all our students are ready to tackle the world.

### Changes in the National Higher Education Landscape

That said, the national higher education landscape is undergoing rapid transformation—driven by demographic shifts, financial pressures, and evolving challenges from our federal partners. Illinois' public universities, regardless of size or resources, are being impacted in many ways. CSU has preliminarily pulled together data. Well over \$130 million in lost grants. A large number were lost due to word searches using the word diversity that had nothing to do with racial diversity or diversity of human beings but because the word diversity was in the grant it was lost, impacting research, healthcare and community support.

### Shifting Demographics and Enrollment Patterns

The enrollment “demographic cliff,” of declining numbers of high school graduates has already begun. In Illinois we expect to be one of the state’s that’s the hardest hit with an estimated decline of high school graduates predicted to go as high as 30% by 2041 in some areas, and dramatically impacting downstate and regional institutions.

### Changes in Perception of the Value of Higher Education

While we have seen some mixed signals, across the country, confidence in higher education has dropped across political and demographic groups with many questioning whether college is worth the cost.

### Changes at the federal level

If you follow higher education news, the changes we have seen in the last ten months are well known. It cannot be said enough, however, that these policy changes are having significant impacts at our institutions and the work we do, including:

Cancellations to grants, research, and programming impacting vital research, healthcare, and community support.

The loss of opportunities for student financial aid makes college possible.

The inability of international students to be able to come to the US to study and for faculty and researchers to obtain visas to study and work here.

### The Work Ahead

All these changes have long-term consequences for higher education. As we tackle this work, we must be strong in our resolve and creative in our efforts. And we must rely on strong partners like the IL Board of Higher Education as well as the Governor and General Assembly. We will do this by doing what we do best, researching the challenges, providing the data, and telling our stories of success. It's vital for each institution to fully communicate its own story so the individual impacts of these changes and challenges are understood. It's also important that we tell that story collectively. In the coming weeks, you're going to be hearing more through avenues like the Chicago State University Illinois Center on Education Equity which is right now compiling and reviewing data to determine impact of many of these federal initiatives on our state's most vulnerable students and communities. We look forward to sharing that information soon.

Beyond telling our story, we need sustained investment and policy alignment to ensure Illinois remains a national leader in higher education access, innovation, and student success. The Illinois public universities look forward to working with this board to ensure the message is told how important it is for the state to invest in its universities.

We equally look forward to working with you and our state's leaders to chart a course that builds on the Thriving Illinois Strategic Plan. One that will allow us to weather all the ongoing and future challenges together.

Chair Kothari opened the floor for questions. After several questions, Chair Kothari thanked Dr. Mahony for the presentation.

#### **E. BHW Strategic Plan Update**

Behavioral Health Workforce Center

Kari Wolf, MD, CEO

Cynthia Baker, Ed.D., LCSW, MSW, Executive Director

Lori Williams, Chief Operating Officer

In 2018 a bipartisan group of IL legislators sponsored a resolution declaring that Illinois is suffering from a behavioral healthcare workforce emergency. As a result, in 2019 a task force created to study the problem recommended the creation of a behavioral health workforce center. In 2022 The Center was funded. Southern Illinois University is the primary hub; University of Illinois Chicago is the secondary hub.

The BHW reported that Illinois continues to face a significant behavioral health workforce shortage, with only 22% of mental health needs being met. The pandemic intensified provider loss, resulting in closed waitlists and greater reliance on emergency services.

BHW's mission is to expand, train and retain the behavioral health workforce to improve care across all regions of the state. Priority areas over the next several years include:

- Increasing workforce diversity and overall provider capacity
- Strengthening behavioral health career pathways
- Expanding clinical training and education opportunities
- Reducing administrative and policy barriers
- Improving reimbursement and support structures
- Enhancing statewide data tracking and use

Six strategic goals focused on improving curriculum and training, supporting students and underrepresented groups, promoting data-driven policy decisions, increasing pre-career engagement, easing financial barriers for trainees, and strengthening retention and cultural responsiveness within the existing workforce.

At the conclusion of the presentation Chair Kothari opened the floor to questions. After several questions, Chair Kothari thanked Ms. Wolf for the presentation.

The full presentation can be found on the IBHE website.

## **F. HOPE Chicago: Lessons on Student Success**

Dr. Aaron Kuecker, CEO

Michele Howard, Chief Program Officer

Dr. Kuecker and Ms. Howard thanked the Board for the opportunity to share the work being done as a grantee of IBHE and a partner of the state.

HOPE Chicago partners with 5 five Chicago neighborhood high schools with open enrollment on the south and west side to provide debt-free college access and wraparound supports for every graduate of those high schools, and one of their parents or guardians.

**HOPE Chicago Partnership Impact:** More than 2,600 Hope Scholars and 330+ Hope Parent Scholars have enrolled in Illinois postsecondary pathways since 2022, with 145 degrees/credentials earned as of November 2025.

**Two-Generation Model:** The initiative supports both students and parents, emphasizing whole-school engagement, wraparound services, and completion without debt to improve long-term financial stability.

**Strong Enrollment & Persistence Outcomes:** 98% of HOPE Scholars enroll in Illinois colleges. Black and Latinx students show notable gains in 1-year persistence, outperforming both CPS and national benchmarks.

**Adult Learner Progress:** Over 330 parents have enrolled in 2-year, 4-year, or workforce pathways, with 70 completions to date.

**Key Barriers Identified:** Non-tuition costs (room & board, transportation, materials) significantly hinder progress. More than 50% of stipend funds are used to cover basic needs such as food and transportation.

**Transition & Support Needs:** 1,360 “red flags” reported since January 2025 indicate that the first-term transition period is critical and requires strong advising, mental health support, and emergency financial aid.

**Family Engagement:** Increased family involvement correlates with improved student success; 72 parents in Cohort 4 have already begun postsecondary programs.

**Systems-Level Gains:** Significant improvements observed in college enrollment rankings across HOPE Chicago partner high schools between 2019-2025. Postsecondary enrollment increased from 51% to 83%, indicating substantial transformation in participating in school environments.

Chair Kothari opened the floor for questions. Following many questions, Chair Kothari thanked Dr. Kuecker and Ms. Howard for the presentation and the work being done.

The full presentation can be found on the IBHE website.

## **G. Public Comment**

Chair Kothari confirmed with Secretary Bealon that several members of the public submitted requests in advance, in accordance with IBHE's public participation procedures. The speakers addressed the Board on the following topics:

Carla Rogers, District Office Administrator, Senator Maddie Hunter, Stellar Career College  
Jennifer Juarez, Latino Policy Forum, 2% funding for 4-year institutions  
Agata Soltys, Grad student, NEIU, Adequate & Equitable University Funding Act  
Kyle Southern, Executive Director, Partnership for College Completion, funding IL universities  
Keith Nyquist, Vice-President University Professionals of IL, endorsement of Adequate & Equitable Funding Act  
Ian Monik, Senio, NIU, college expense, affordability  
Christopher Merchant, Associate Professor of Psychology, NEIU, adequate & equitable funding  
Jelani Saadiq, Advance Illinois, funding and funding formula  
Kimberly Britt, student, CSU, equitable funding formula  
Larissa Ramirez, student, NEIU, funding formula  
Dr. Nina Dulabaum, EIU, funding  
Marquee Neander, NEIU, Adequate & Equitable Funding Act

## **H. Action Items**

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

#### Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

- Master of Science in Marketing Analytics and Insights in the Southwestern Region

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE or the University) is seeking authorization to offer the Master of Science in Marketing Analytics and Insights (MSMAI) in the Southwestern region. The 31-credit hour program, housed in the School of Business, is designed to prepare students from diverse backgrounds for careers in marketing analytics, research, and insights. The curriculum combines a balance of theoretical studies and project-based learning with emphasis on the role of analytics and its applications to marketing decision-making within organizations. The program is expected to be offered in a fully online format. Graduates will be well prepared to practice marketing research and make substantial contributions to the profession of marketing analytics and insights. The University 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 and staff possess the training, credentials, and qualifications to provide instruction in the proposed program. The University has sufficient library, technology, and financial resources to support the program.

#### University of Illinois Chicago

- Bachelor of Science in Inclusive and Special Education in the Chicago Region

The University of Illinois Chicago (UIC or University) requests authorization to offer a Bachelor of Science (BS) in Inclusive and Special Education in the Chicago region. The proposed

121-credit hour program, housed in the Department of Special Education, is designed to provide graduates with a Professional Educator License (PEL) and a Learning Behavior Specialist 1 (LBS1) endorsement in special education through the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), which allows individuals to be employed in an Illinois public school. The program builds upon the established Master of Education in Special Education and the advanced endorsement program for a Learning Behavior Specialist 2. The proposed program will focus on the intersection of inclusion and special education in preparing future special education teachers to work closely with general education teacher colleagues to develop and implement individualized education programs (IEPs) that prepare students with disabilities for success in the general education classroom, increase their academic and social opportunities, and better prepare them for postsecondary success. Graduates of the program would have a combined knowledge of general education practices, special education practices, content knowledge, and culturally responsive, inclusive, and collaborative practices. This focus on issues around inclusion of students with disabilities makes the program unique to Illinois and one of the few programs of its kind in the nation. Graduates will acquire the knowledge and skills needed to support students with disabilities from any category of disability across various educational settings.

The BS in Inclusive and Special Education is purposely designed to use a range of modalities, including courses delivered in-person modality, entirely online, or through a hybrid format, promoting student acquisition of core competencies. The cohort-based program includes intensive fieldwork which will require students to enroll full time. The curriculum is comprised of 47 to 49 credit hours of general education and foundational inclusive and special education courses; 30 credit hours of inclusive and special education courses; 24 credit hours in a professional course sequence, including a teaching internship and student teaching; and 18 to 20 credit hours of electives which may be used to complete requirements for an additional endorsement area in early childhood education, bilingual education, elementary education, middle school education, or a high school content area.

According to ISBE's 2020 Supply and Demand report, special education positions have the highest number of openings and the highest vacancy rate. The Chicago Public School system had 40 percent of these open positions. The proposed program will directly address this issue by preparing special education teachers to serve students with disabilities and their families from under-resourced and diverse communities. UIC 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. The University has sufficient library, technology, and financial resources to support the program.

#### University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

- Bachelor of Liberal Studies in Liberal Studies in the Prairie Region

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC or the University) requests authorization to offer a Bachelor of Liberal Studies in Liberal Studies (BLS) in the Prairie region. The program will be housed in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS). The 120-credit hour online program is designed to meet the needs of a wide range of learners, including those seeking a degree for career advancement, career change, or personal development and enrichment. The proposed BLS program is part of a larger effort from the College of LAS to expand its online, flexible learning opportunities. The interdisciplinary nature of the program allows students to explore various subject areas available across campus, while still having the opportunity to build strong foundational knowledge in the liberal arts. Students will work with an advisor from the College of LAS to select concentrations and coursework based on their academic interests

and career goals. Graduates of the program will be equipped with critical thinking and communication skills that are highly valued by employers in various sectors. BLS graduates may also pursue management and administrative occupations which are common for professionals with a liberal arts degree. The University 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 and staff possess the training, credentials, and qualifications to provide instruction in the proposed program. The University has sufficient library, technology, and financial resources to support the program.

- Master of Science in Child Health in the Prairie Region

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC or the University) requests authorization to offer the Master of Science (MS) in Child Health in the Prairie region. The program will be housed in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS). The 34-credit hour program is specifically designed for students with a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Development and Family Studies from UIUC who wish to pursue careers as Child Life Specialists or related positions. Child Life Specialists are healthcare professionals who help children and families navigate medical intervention in ways that reduce the effects of stress and trauma related to injury, illness, hospitalization, dentistry, bereavement, vaccination, and other related medical experiences. Graduates of the proposed program will qualify for the Child Life Specialist certification exam through the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP), which includes a 600-hour clinical internship under the direct supervision of a Certified Child Life Specialist (CCLS). Although the program is mainly focused on creating a pathway into the Child Life profession, there are other health-related careers that graduates may pursue such as family therapists, researchers, family life educators, social workers, allied health professionals, and community health educators. The University 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 and staff possess the training, credentials, and qualifications to provide instruction in the proposed program. The University has sufficient library, technology, and financial resources to support the program.

- Doctor of Philosophy in Engineering Technology and Management for Agricultural Systems in the Prairie Region

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC or the University) is seeking authorization to offer a Doctor of Philosophy in Engineering Technology and Management for Agricultural Systems (PhD in ETMAS) in the Prairie region. The program addresses the growing demand for advanced expertise in emerging agricultural technology system integration of areas such as robotics, automation, artificial intelligence, industrial biotechnology, and data analytics. The curriculum is a combination of coursework from engineering technology, management principles, data analytics, research methodologies, and original research in agricultural technology systems. The program emphasizes both theoretical understanding and practical application of technology management in agriculture. The program will prepare graduates to work in academic institutions, agricultural technology companies, research organizations, government agencies, and agricultural industries in positions geared toward technological innovation and implementation strategy. The program, delivered as an in-person modality, requires 96 credit hours which builds upon the established bachelor's and master's ETMAS programs. The proposed program will allow students to continue their academic path in the agricultural systems and engineering technology fields to help fill the shortage in industry leadership roles. Students may pursue a PhD in ETMAS from a direct entry program immediately following the completion of a bachelor's degree or a traditional entry following the completion of a master's degree. UIUC

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. The University has sufficient library, technology, and financial resources to support the program.

*Chair Kothari asked if there were any questions. Hearing none, he called for a motion to approve. Board Member Noble moved to approve the programs. Botman seconded. A roll call was conducted, with all members voting in favor. Motion carried unanimously.*

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

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

**Not-For-Profit Executive Summary**

**Darul Qasim College**

- Master of Arts in Islamic Law and Theology in the West Suburban Region

Darul Qasim College (Darul Qasim or the College) requests authorization to grant the Master of Arts in Islamic Law and Theology in the West Suburban Region. Darul Qasim is a private not-for-profit college approved to operate in the West Suburban region by the Illinois Board of Higher Education on June 29, 2022. The College began as a private not-for-profit community-based learning organization offering enrichment courses and programs to educate community members about Islam and its main principles. Darul Qasim serves students seeking knowledge of traditional Islamic and Arabic studies with applications to numerous fields including Imams (spiritual leaders) for Muslim communities, counselors, chaplains, and youth workers. Consistent with its mission to educate students in traditional Islamic and Arabic studies, the College primarily serves Muslim students from diverse ethnic minority groups.

The proposed Master of Arts (MA) in Islamic Law and Theology is aligned with Darul Qasim College's mission and vision. The degree will equip students with crucial methods for deriving and interpreting Islamic law and dogma in the larger, diverse society in which they reside. The 12 course, 42-credit hour degree is designed to enable students to understand Islamic theology and legal methodology at an advanced level for students to become fluent readers of classical Arabic texts. Students will take advanced classes in Islamic comparative theology and law, as well as Arabic semantics, syntax, and rhetoric that will prepare them for in-depth textual analysis of Arabic primary sources. All students will be required to write a thesis. A thesis research and methodology lab will be provided to students to ensure they adhere to the principles of academic writing with close attention given to understanding the logic and practice of building and presenting compelling arguments.

**Dominican University**

- Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences in the Chicago Region

Dominican University (Dominican or the University) is seeking authorization to offer an Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences (AA in LAS) in the Chicago region. The

University is leasing The Resurrection Project Facility in the Pilsen community of Chicago to offer programs. The 63-credit hour program focuses on career and job readiness, blending core, transfer-friendly curriculum with high-demand career coursework. The program has been offered in the West Suburban region starting in 2024. It includes successful retention and student support strategies that have been fully implemented at the University since 2019. The University is seeking an expansion of this program to provide affordable access to higher education for traditionally underserved students in Chicago. The proposed program will establish a pathway to higher education through an associate level degree program coupled with a residential and liberal arts environment.

Dominican University is a Catholic, not-for-profit institution originally founded as St. Clara College in Sinsinawa, Wisconsin in 1901. In 1922, the institution relocated to its current location in River Forest, and the institution changed its name to Rosary College. In 1997, the institution changed its name to Dominican University. In addition to its West Suburban, exempt region, the institution holds the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) authorization to operate in the Central, Chicago, Fox Valley, North Suburban, South Metropolitan and Western regions.

There are policies in place to ensure faculty possess the training, credentials, and qualifications to provide instruction in the proposed program. Dominican University has sufficient library, technology, and financial resources to support the program. Approval request summary, including staff conclusion, follows in Attachment xxx.

#### Excelsior University

- Operating Authority in the Chicago Region

Excelsior University (Excelsior or the University) requests authorization to operate in the Chicago region. Excelsior was founded in 1971 as the external degree program of the New York State Board of Regents, with a mission to expand access to higher education for adult learners through the recognition of prior learning, military service, and professional experience. In 1998, the Board of Regents granted the institution, then known as Regents College, an absolute charter to operate as a private, nonprofit, independent college. At that time, the institution was renamed Excelsior College. In August 2022, the institution transitioned to Excelsior University, reorganizing its academic offerings under two primary units: the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the College of Nursing and Health Sciences.

Excelsior University is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and has served more than 190,000 graduates over its five-decade history. The University's mission is centered on providing educational opportunities to adult learners, particularly those historically underrepresented in higher education. Most students are working adults, including active-duty military personnel and veterans, who engage in their studies entirely online. Programs are designed to be flexible and accessible, allowing students to earn credit through transfer, prior learning assessments, and professional experience. The University offers associate, baccalaureate, and master's degrees, as well as certificate programs.

With this application, Excelsior is seeking operating authority in the Chicago region to offer an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) program. The Illinois-based EMBA represents a significant step in the University's evolution, offering a new modality that combines online learning with in-person engagement to better serve diverse student needs.

## Midwestern University

- Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in the West Suburban Region

Midwestern University (Midwestern or the University) requests authorization to offer the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in the West Suburban Region. Midwestern was founded in 1900 by Dr. J. Martin Littlejohn as the American College of Osteopathic Medicine and Surgery in Chicago, Illinois. Established as a not-for-profit institution, Midwestern specializes in medical education, research, and clinical practice. Rooted in the principles of osteopathic medicine introduced by Dr. Andrew Taylor, the University has grown alongside the profession, maintaining a commitment to training healthcare professionals in a collaborative and supportive academic environment.

Since its founding, Midwestern University has expanded with campuses in Downers Grove, Illinois, and Glendale, Arizona. The Downers Grove campus, acquired in 1986, houses multiple colleges including pharmacy, health sciences, dental medicine, optometry, and graduate studies. The Glendale campus, established in 1995, houses osteopathic medicine, pharmacy, dental medicine, and veterinary medicine. Both campuses feature state-of-the-art facilities and multispecialty clinics supporting a comprehensive educational experience. Guided by its founding mission, Midwestern University continues to foster partnerships nationwide and remains dedicated to preparing the healthcare team of tomorrow through excellence in education and service.

With this application, the University is seeking authorization to grant the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) in the West Suburban region. The Doctor of Veterinary Medicine is a full-time didactic and clinical program that spans four academic years at the graduate level. The program is designed to prepare students for key roles in the healthcare delivery system for both humans and animals. The program will also teach students the importance of animals in the ecosystem with human health and how to manage, recognize, and report zoonotic diseases. The entry-into-practice Doctor of Veterinary Medicine is offered as a full-time curriculum divided into two distinct phases: an in-person didactic phase (eight quarters) and a clinical phase (five quarters). The program will provide students with an education that meets the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education standards and preparation for the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination, administered by the International Council for Veterinary Assessment. The proposed degree program complements the University's spectrum of educational programs in healthcare and will also expand opportunities for interprofessional education and scholarship. The program will also assist in addressing the profound shortage of veterinarians.

## Pathways College

- Operating Authority in the Chicago Region

Pathways College (Pathways or the College) is a non-profit institution headquartered in Arizona and dedicated to providing high-quality, affordable educational programs to students. Pathways College was founded to primarily serve non-traditional students who were less likely to attend a traditional post-secondary institution due to accessibility and cost. The mission of Pathways College is to provide opportunities for students to realize their dreams by removing financial barriers in attaining a college education. Pathways College offers affordable and accessible programs that include a challenging, innovative, and rigorous curriculum designed to prepare students to compete in a global market. Pathways College received approval to operate from the California Bureau of Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE) in November 2016. In January 2017, the College

enrolled its first cohort of students, some of whom were first-time, full-time students and transfer students. Currently, Pathways College offers two bachelor's degree programs and three associate degree programs. The College has sufficient library, technology, staff, and financial resources to support the proposed operation.

### Ranken Technical College

- **Operating Authority in the Southwestern Region**

Ranken Technical College (Ranken or the College) requests authorization to operate in the Southwestern region. Ranken is a private, non-profit institution whose primary mission is to provide comprehensive education and training to prepare students for employment and advancement in a variety of technical fields. As a leading technical college in Missouri, Ranken has multiple locations in St. Louis, Wentzville, Troy, Perryville, and Ashland. The College offers certificate, associate, and bachelor's degree programs across six divisions: automotive, architecture, construction, electrical, information technology, and manufacturing. Ranken works closely with industry leaders to equip students with the essential academic and technical skills to succeed in today's labor market.

With this proposal, Ranken is seeking operating authority in the Southwestern region to expand its academic offerings to Illinois. The proposed new location in Edwardsville, Illinois is based on a request from Schneider National, Inc. to address a lack of highly skilled diesel technicians in the area. Currently, Illinois students drive up to 90 minutes to Ranken's Wentzville, Missouri location to receive the proper training to work in Schneider's Edwardsville facility. The goal is to make Ranken's programs more accessible for Illinois students and prepare graduates for entry-level diesel technician positions at various transportation companies. Ranken 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. The College has sufficient library, technology, staff, and financial resources to support the proposed operation.

- **Certificate of Technology in Diesel Technology in the Southwestern Region**

Ranken Technical College (Ranken or the College) requests authorization to grant the Certificate of Technology in Diesel Technology in the Southwestern Region. Ranken is a private, non-profit institution whose primary mission is to provide comprehensive education and training to prepare students for employment and advancement in a variety of technical fields. As a leading technical college in Missouri, Ranken has multiple locations in St. Louis, Wentzville, Troy, Perryville, and Ashland. The College offers certificate, associate, and bachelor's degree programs across six divisions: automotive, architecture, construction, electrical, information technology, and manufacturing. Ranken works closely with industry leaders to equip students with the essential academic and technical skills to succeed in today's labor market.

Based on a request from Schneider National, Inc. to address a lack of highly skilled diesel technicians in the Edwardsville, Illinois area, Ranken is seeking authorization to offer its existing program, the Certificate of Technology in Diesel Technology, in the Southwestern region. The 54-credit hour program provides hands-on diesel mechanic training preparing students to work on a variety of systems including air brakes, hydraulics, and auxiliary units, as well as diagnosing high-end multiplexed computer networks and electronics. Industry certification for diesel technicians is provided through the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE). Students will also qualify for the Class B commercial driver's license exam (CDL) and have the opportunity to obtain various industry

certifications from Cummins, Kenworth, and PACCAR. Ranken 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. The College has sufficient library, technology, staff, and financial resources to support the proposed program.

- Associate of Technology in Diesel Technology in the Southwestern Region

Ranken Technical College (Ranken or the College) requests authorization to grant the Associate of Technology in Diesel Technology in the Southwestern Region. Ranken is a private, non-profit institution whose primary mission is to provide comprehensive education and training to prepare students for employment and advancement in a variety of technical fields. As a leading technical college in Missouri, Ranken has multiple locations in St. Louis, Wentzville, Troy, Perryville, and Ashland. The College offers certificate, associate, and bachelor's degree programs across six divisions: automotive, architecture, construction, electrical, information technology, and manufacturing. Ranken works closely with industry leaders to equip students with the essential academic and technical skills to succeed in today's labor market.

Based on a request from Schneider National, Inc. to address a lack of highly skilled diesel technicians in the Edwardsville, Illinois area, Ranken is seeking authorization to offer its existing program, the Associate of Technology in Diesel Technology, in the Southwestern region. The 72-credit hour program provides hands-on diesel mechanic training preparing students to work on a variety of systems including air brakes, hydraulics, and auxiliary units, as well as diagnosing high-end multiplexed computer networks and electronics. Industry certification for diesel technicians is provided through the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE). Students will also qualify for the Class B commercial driver's license exam (CDL) and have the opportunity to obtain various industry certifications from Cummins, Kenworth, and PACCAR. Ranken 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. The College has sufficient library, technology, staff, and financial resources to support the proposed program.

#### Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing

- Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing in the Western Region

Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing (SFMC CON or the College) requests authorization to grant the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing in the Western Region. The College is an independent, not-for-profit institution operating and granting degrees in Peoria, Illinois. The Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis, headquartered in Peoria, Illinois, own and operate OSF HealthCare with the goal of providing healthcare to the sick, injured, and poor and offering education to healthcare providers in the community of Peoria and surrounding areas. St. Francis Hospital School of Nursing was organized in 1905 exclusively for the education of Sisters as nurses. The school's diploma program was approved by the State of Illinois in 1915 and opened to lay students in 1918. The school migrated to an upper division collegiate program in 1985 with the creation of the baccalaureate program and the first students enrolled as juniors in August of 1986. The College is located on the campus of OSF HealthCare Saint Francis Medical Center and one of the largest Catholic healthcare facilities in the United States. The College offers several nursing programs including a Bachelor of Science in Nursing with pre-licensure and post-licensure (Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing or RN-BSN), a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), an

accelerated Pathway MSN providing a master's level entry licensure opportunity for students with non-nursing bachelor's degrees as well as a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) and several post-graduate certificate tracks. Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing has consistently been accredited since 1950 through the National League for Nursing. In 2018, the College sought and received initial accreditation for the BSN, MSN, DNP and post-graduate certificate programs through the Collegiate Commission of Colleges of Nursing Education (CCNE). The institution's emphasis on quality preparation of nursing students has resulted in a 94 percent National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) pass rate for 2023.

With this application, the College is seeking authorization to grant an accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) degree in the Western region. The ABSN degree consists of 123 semester hours of coursework divided into 59 semester hours of pre-nursing courses and 64 semester hours of coursework within the nursing major. The ABSN is a collaboration between SFMCCON and Monmouth College to offer a 3 plus 1 program of study. Monmouth students will first complete their biology or theory of human movement plans of study in three years, then receive a bachelor's degree. Receipt of the bachelor's degree allows the student eligibility to enroll in the SFMCCON accelerated nursing program on the Monmouth campus. Educational resources include teaching spaces on the Monmouth campus. The classroom spaces will include a new space designed for a skills lab with simulation capability with Monmouth Colleges financing the renovation of the skills/simulation space and SFMCCON providing simulators, beds, and laundry as in-kind resources for teaching and learning. The accelerated nursing program is a one-year program, and after completion the students will receive a bachelor's degree and sit for the NCLEX examination. Students will complete their educational journey at the Monmouth campus with two bachelor's degrees. There are policies in place to ensure faculty members possess the training, credentials, and qualifications to provide instruction in the proposed program. The College has sufficient library, technology, staff, and financial resources in place to support the proposed program.

Chair Kothari asked if there were any questions. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve. Board Member Evans moved to approve the new programs of instruction. Heist seconded the motion. A roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

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

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

College of DuPage

- Associate of Applied Science in Artificial Intelligence

The College of DuPage is seeking approval for a 62-credit hour Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Artificial Intelligence. The program will prepare students for entry-level employment and advancement opportunities in tech-driven industries as technicians or analysts who can support Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven projects, analyze data, and assist in the development and maintenance of AI systems. The curriculum requires 20 credit hours of general education coursework and 42 credit hours of career and technical education coursework. Career and technical coursework includes instruction in AI essentials, AI ethics, AI security, AI deep learning, programming logic and technique, introductory Machine Learning, data analytics and visualization, introductory Python programming, Standard Query Language (SQL), and a choice of related electives focused on programming, data visualization, or

generative AI. Assessment of student learning will be achieved through the evaluation of student performance on the capstone project which incorporates experiential/work-based learning experiences through a real-world project associated with a local industry partner.

### Lake Land College

- Associate of Applied Science in Culinary Arts

Lake Land College is seeking approval for a 60-credit hour Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Culinary Arts. This program will prepare students from the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) for entry-level employment and advancement opportunities in cooking, management, and operations within the culinary industry. The curriculum requires 19 credit hours of general education coursework and 41 credit hours of career and technical education coursework. The career and technical coursework include instruction in culinary professional arts, culinary fundamentals, meat/poultry/fish preparation, introductory and intermediate baking, specialty foods, food presentation, sanitation and safety, culinary nutrition, culinary customer service, cost and portion management, and food service operations and management. Assessment of student learning will be achieved through the evaluation of student performance by program faculty. Students will complete three assessment instruments per course in the program.

### Southwestern Illinois College

- Associate of Applied Science in Dental Hygiene

Southwestern Illinois College is seeking approval for a 66-credit hour Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Dental Hygiene. The program will prepare students for entry-level employment as dental hygienists in a variety of dental healthcare environments. The curriculum requires 15 credit hours of general education coursework and 51 credit hours of career and technical education coursework. The program adheres to the education and training requirements of modern practice for dental hygienists within the scope of the Illinois Dental Practice Act, and under the guidance of the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) of the American Dental Association (ADA) and will prepare students for the National Board Dental Hygiene Examination (NBDHE) and licensure in Illinois as a Registered Dental Hygienist (RDH). Assessment of student learning will be achieved through the evaluation of student performance during the clinical practicum by program faculty.

Chair Kothari asked if there were any questions. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve. Board member Botman moved to approve the motion. Noble seconded the motion. A roll call was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

## I. **Consent Agenda Action Items**

1. Consideration and Approval of Board Meeting Minutes – August 13, 2025
2. Consideration and Approval of Proposed Amendments to 2026 Board Meeting Dates and 2027 Board Meeting Dates

3. Consideration and Approval of Non-Instructional Capital Projects for  
Fiscal Year 2026

Board member Zarnikow moved to approve the items on the Consent Agenda. Heist seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion was approved unanimously.

**J. Other Business**

Board member Jenkins announced she was recently appointed to Chair of the Illinois Community College Board. As a result, she will be resigning from the board. She expressed her appreciation to the Board and staff.

The next Board meeting will be held Wednesday, January 21, 2026, in Chicago. The specific location is to be determined. 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 Noble and seconded by Board Member Evans, a voice vote was taken, and by unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at approximately 4:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Melissa Bealon, Secretary to the Board.