

IBHE

# A THRIVING ILLINOIS

2021

Higher Education Paths to Equity,  
Sustainability, and Growth

Ginger Ostro, Illinois Board of Higher Education  
Brain Durham, Illinois Community College Board  
Eric Zarnikow, Illinois Student Assistance Commission

Progress Report  
March 18, 2026

# Goals for a Thriving Illinois



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



Build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions.



Increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth.



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



# A Thriving Illinois: A Review of Progress 2021- 2025



## Purpose of Today's Presentation

- Review progress have we made to date in implementing the 25 strategies to achieve the 3 goals
- 25 strategies come together in 7 strategy clusters:
  - Pathways to Degree Completion
  - Affordability
  - Workforce and Economic Development
  - Targeted Talent Development
  - Efficiency
  - Equity and Student Success
  - Student Access/Retaining Talent in Illinois
- Board discussion – what strategy clusters are most important for Ad Hoc Strategy Committee focus on?



# Pathways to Degree Completion

# Pathways to Degree Completion: Dual Credit



- 101,634 high school students enrolled in community college dual credit courses during FY25, largest enrollment ever in a single academic year.
- Since FY24, \$3 million annually in ICCB grants to expand dual credit capacity, supporting instructor professional development, community outreach, and student retention, with FY25 funding awarded to 21 community colleges.
- Pilot with One Million Degrees to increase access to dual credit for students who do not traditionally participate. Pilot in planning year. Next grant cycle begins April 1, 2026.

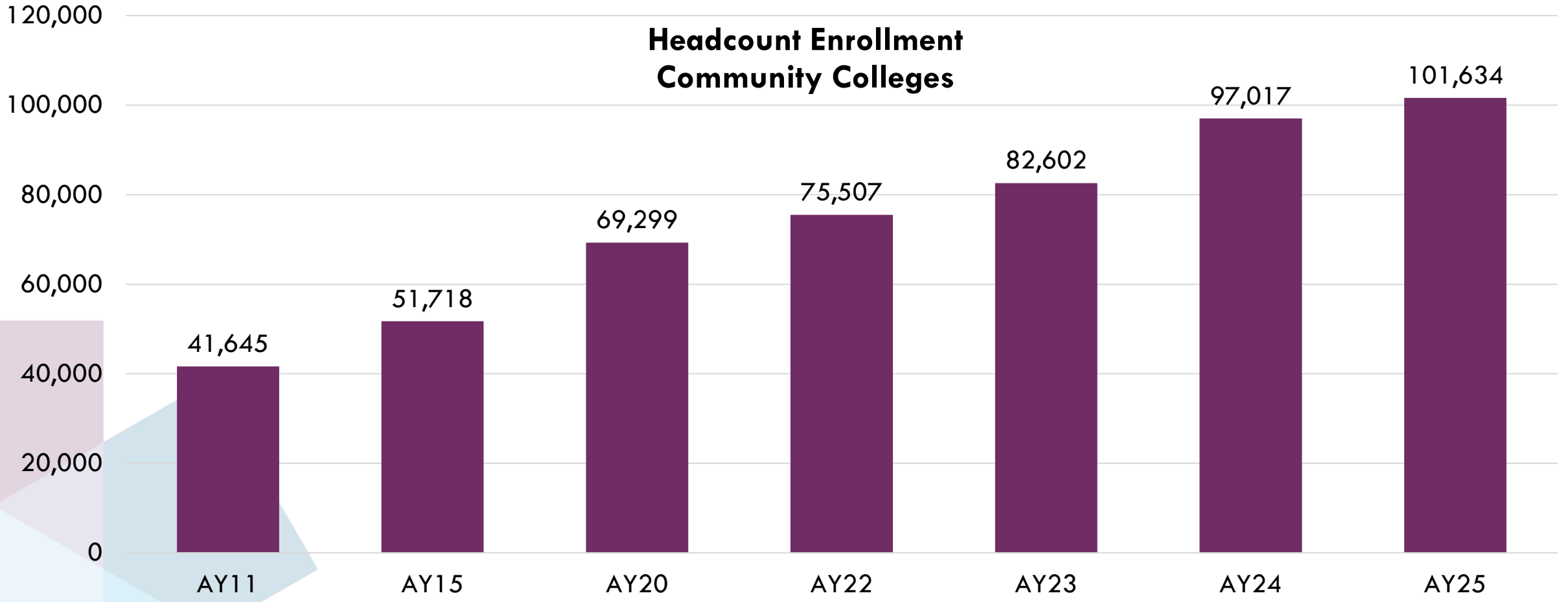


# Pathways to Degree Completion: Dual Credit



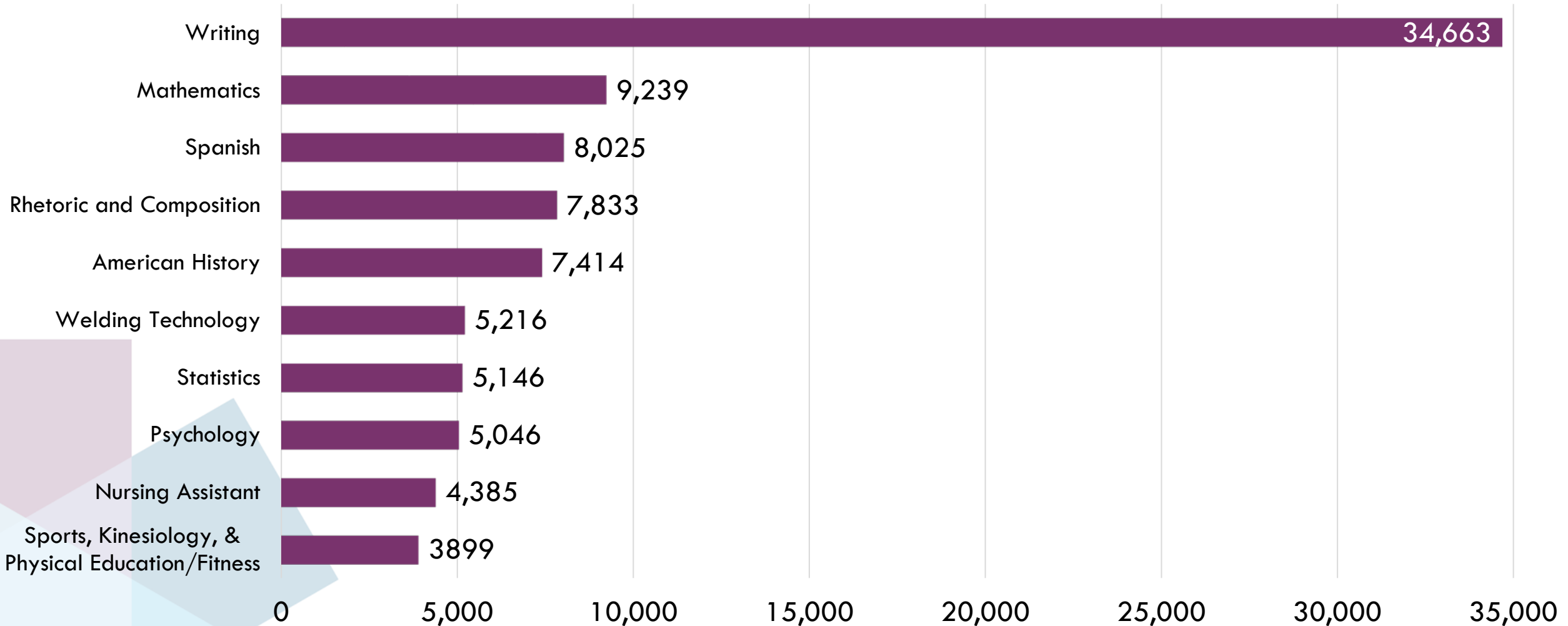
- Dual Credit Quality Act (DCQA) statewide committee co-led by the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois State Board of Education. IBHE is *ex officio*.
- The 20-member committee, representing community colleges and school districts, is responsible for developing best practices to ensure equitable access to dual credit opportunities statewide.
- Since its formation, the committee has met three times (August, October, and January) – approving bylaws and reviewing draft administrative rules – with the April meeting scheduled to consider subcommittee recommendations to update the Dual Credit Model Partnership Agreement.

# Illinois Community College Dual Credit Headcount Enrollment\*



\*Unduplicated enrollment, meaning a student is counted only once, regardless of how many courses they are enrolled in.  
Data Source: ICCB Centralized Data System

# Top Ten Dual Credit Community College Course Enrollments in Academic Year 2025\*



\*Duplicate enrollment, determined by enrollment in each individual course.

Data Source: ICCB Centralized Data System

# Pathways to Degree Completion: Developmental Education Reform



- Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act requires high schools and community colleges to jointly develop Transitional English and Math courses that guarantee placement into credit-bearing courses at Illinois community colleges and participating universities.
- In FY24, 26,076 students enrolled in Transitional Math and 9,577 in Transitional English, with 595 approved portable courses currently listed in the iPlacement database.

*Much of reduction in statewide remediation rates attributed to the success of this approach*

# Pathways to Degree Completion: Developmental Education Reform



## Accelerating Student Progress and Increasing Racial Equity (ASPIRE) Project:



- In partnership with ICCB, this initiative works with Illinois community colleges to redesign developmental education, so students enter credit-bearing coursework more quickly and equity gaps are reduced.
- Supports institutional reforms such as improved placement practices, expanded co-requisite support models, and stronger advising while generating research and implementation guidance to inform statewide policy and practice.

# Pathways to Degree Completion: Developmental Education Reform



- In partnership with ICCB, the Partnership for College Completion leads a statewide initiative to replace traditional developmental education with co-requisite remediation models, allowing students to enroll directly in college-level math and English while receiving concurrent academic support.
- Early results show that more than 60% of students complete gateway courses within the first year, compared with fewer than 20% under traditional remediation, while also increasing the number of students placed directly into credit-bearing coursework.



# Pathways to Degree Completion: Developmental Education Reform



## Multiple Measures Placement

- Developmental Education Reform Act enacted in 2021
- In 2022 IBHE convened statewide workgroup that developed a multiple-measures placement framework for public universities.
- Biennial statewide reports required beginning January 1, 2023 assessing developmental education reforms, student placement and success in corequisite models, and equity outcomes; in non-report years, IBHE meets with institutions to review potential updates, most recently in February 2026.
- Over the past year, ICCB convened state-wide Advisory Board to review framework used for multiple measures, considering changes based on updated research, standardized tests updates, and best practices about placement. Recommendations for updates to the multiple measures framework by June 2026.

# Pathways to Degree Completion: Illinois Articulation Initiative



- The Illinois Articulation Act & IAI is a common system for evaluating and approving transferable courses among participating institutions.
- General Education Core Curriculum (GECC), a statewide package of general education coursework, required to be accepted at all participating IAI institutions – every public institution in the state (by law), and many private institutions.
- By law, the GECC satisfies a student's lower-division general education requirements even upon transfer.
- There are **thousands of institution-specific courses approved for IAI transfer**, representing **hundreds of distinct IAI course descriptors** used across the state (each descriptor corresponds to many institutional courses).
- Amendments to the Act, effective January 1, 2024, require public colleges and universities to accept all major courses approved for transfer through IAI as equivalent major courses, insofar as a specific major is offered at the receiving institution.



# Pathways to Degree Completion: Reverse Transfer



- The Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act, enacted in 2016, allows students who have received credit at a community college and have transferred to a university the ability to transfer credit earned at the university back to the community college and be awarded an associate degree.
- New legislation introduced in Spring 2026 would strengthen Illinois' reverse transfer of credit framework by shifting responsibility from individual students to institutions.
- SB3720 and HB5051 establishes a clear and transparent **opt-in option process to automatically identify and notify eligible** students and transmits earned credits back to the student's community college for conferral of an associate degree.

# Pathways to Degree Completion: Community College Baccalaureate



- In partnership with Governor Pritzker's office, the ICCB has pursued community college baccalaureate (CCB) via HB 5319 and SB 4034, legislation to authorize community college baccalaureate programs.
- Illinois employers consistently report workforce shortages in fields such as healthcare, information technology, advanced manufacturing, and early childhood education, while many regions – particularly rural and underserved communities – lack affordable, place-bound bachelor's degree opportunities aligned with local labor market needs.
- Strong negotiated guardrails are in place to ensure CCB implementation in a CC district makes sense
- Negotiated with Illinois universities that collectively stand neutral on the proposal
- ICCB and IBHE have program approval authority and responsibility



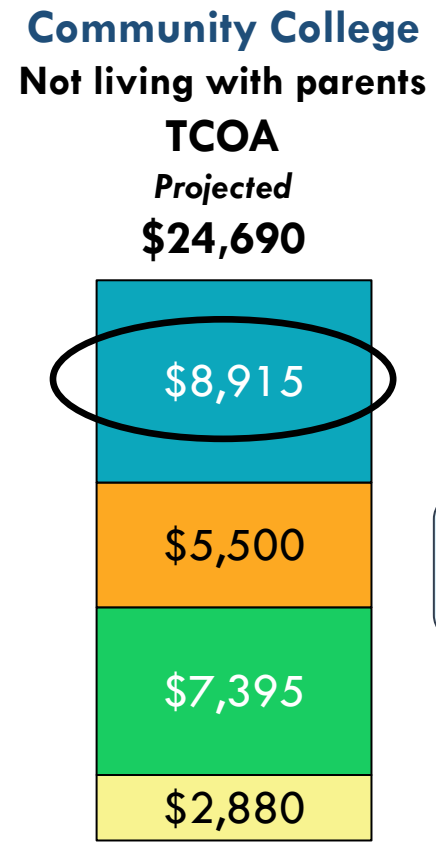
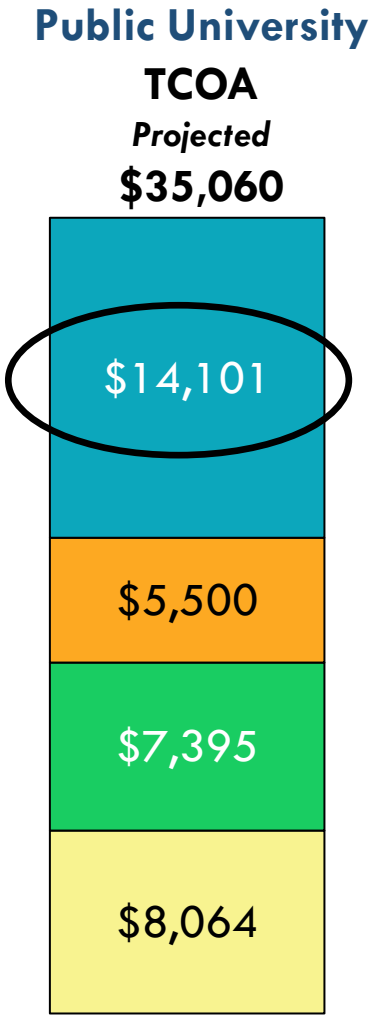
**Affordability**

# How Does a Low-Income Student Pay for an Illinois Public University or Community College in FY26?

(TCOA = Total Cost of Attendance)



**Class of 2024 at public universities: 47% had loan debt (about \$27,420 per graduate)**



FY2026 T&F \$17,832

FY2026 T&F \$5,222

- Unmet Need
- Federal Direct Loan
- Max Pell
- Max MAP

The combination of MAP and Pell grants allows virtually every recipient at or below the median income in Illinois to attend community college tuition-free.

In FY25, 44% of all in-state undergrads at Illinois public universities paid no tuition and fees. 52% of in-state undergrads pay 25% or less for tuition and fees.

# Need-Based Grant Aid (MAP) is Essential for Access to Education



MAP recipients are from **low-income households.**

MAP recipient mean income  
**\$36,568**

Federal poverty guideline for a family of four  
**\$27,750**



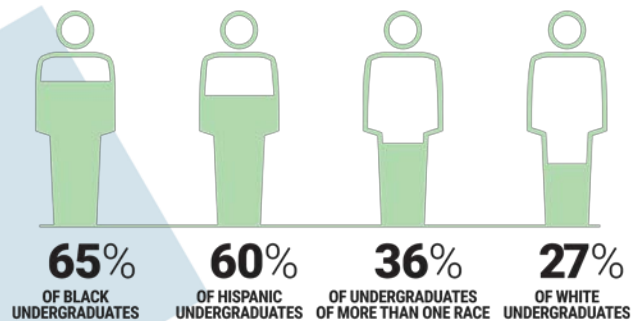
Approximately **79%** of MAP recipients have no financial resources for college.



**68%** of MAP recipients don't have a parent who graduated from college.



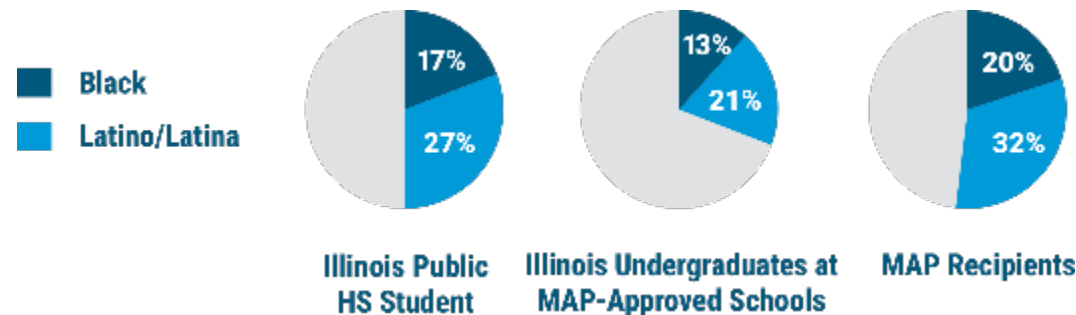
## RACE



...who attend a public university in Illinois receive MAP.

(Source: IBHE/ISAC)

Black and Latino students make up a greater proportion of MAP recipients than of the overall undergraduate student body.



# Increases to MAP in FY19 to FY26 Have Boosted Affordability & Reached New Student Populations



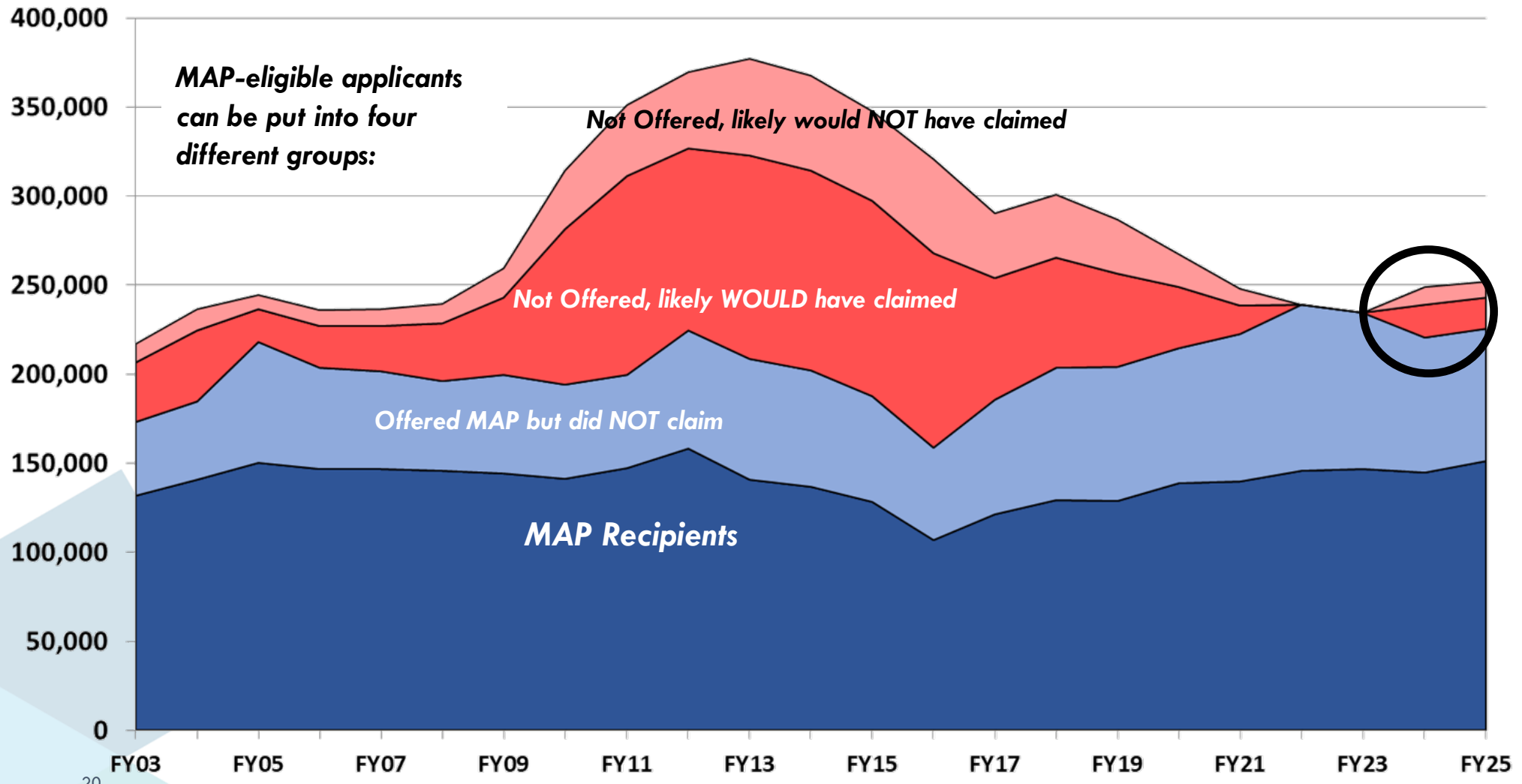
The \$222 M increase in MAP in FY23 (\$122 M) and FY24 (\$100 M) improved affordability in **all** sectors, allowed expansion to many certificate programs not eligible for federal aid, and helped to accommodate the reversal of a ten-year decline in applications. An increase of \$10 M in FY25 helped the program serve additional students during an extraordinary jump in claim rates. (Even with the funding increase, claims increased so much that grants were prorated mid-year to help ensure that all students who claimed could receive a grant for the full year.) In FY26, the \$10 M increase is helping serve more eligible students.

**Increases in MAP Size & Coverage, FY19-FY26**

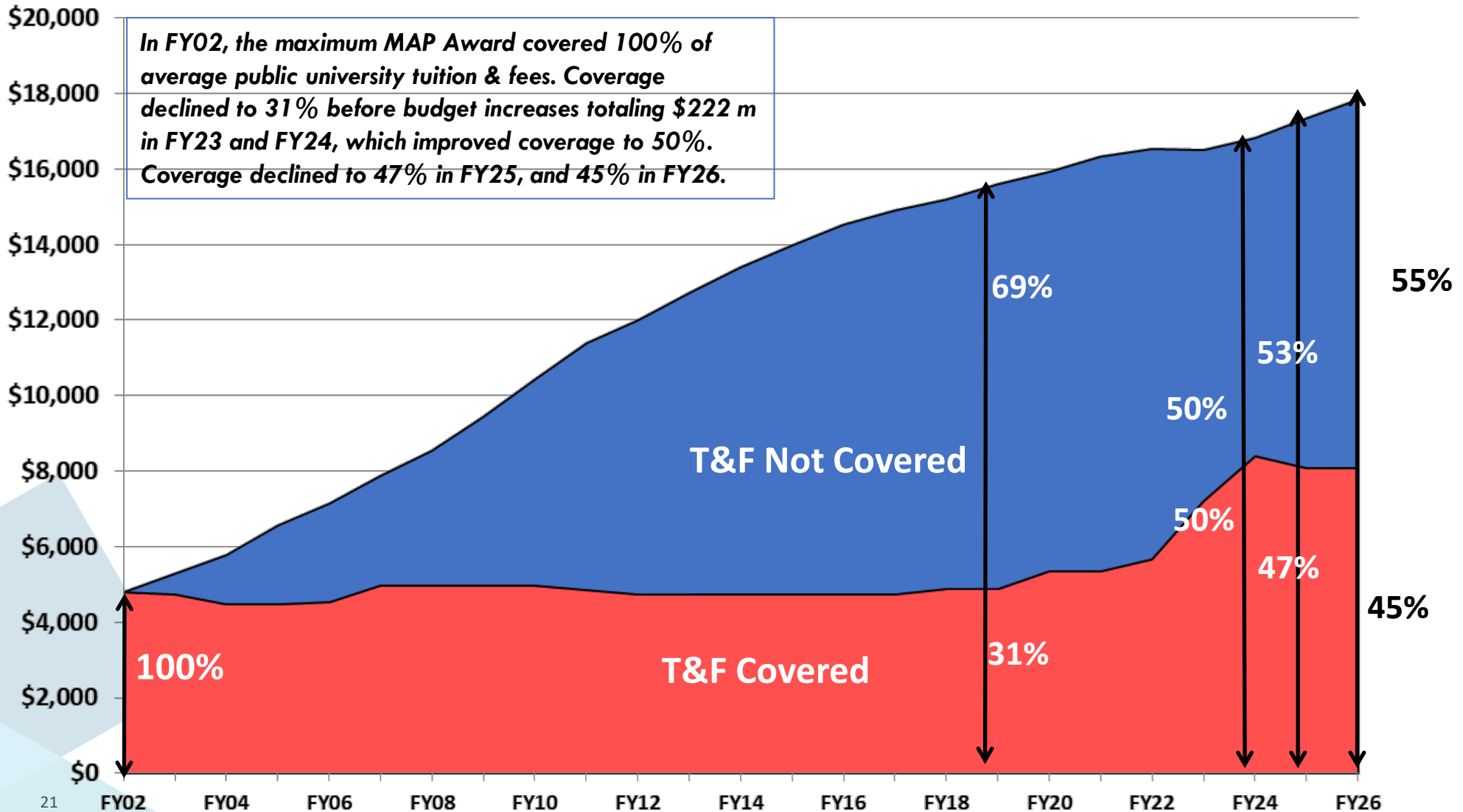
	<b>FY19</b>	<b>FY26 (proj.)</b>
<b>Maximum Grant</b>	\$4,869	\$8,064
<b>Average Grant Claim</b>	\$3,044	\$4,710
<b>Public University Tuition &amp; Fees Covered by MAP</b>	31%	45%
<b>Comm Coll T&amp;F Coverage</b>	36%	55%
<b>Recipients</b>	128,865	150,100

- All eligible applicants were offered grants in FY22 and FY23 (due to decreased app volume and increased funds). Due to increased app volume, we suspended FY24 MAP near the end of September (an application period of just under a year); nearly 90% of eligible students were offered an award; FY25 suspense was August 21; currently in FY26 applicants through July 1<sup>st</sup> have been offered awards.
- In FY23, MAP grants were expanded to cover short-term certificate programs (less than or equal to 1 academic year/30 credit hours).

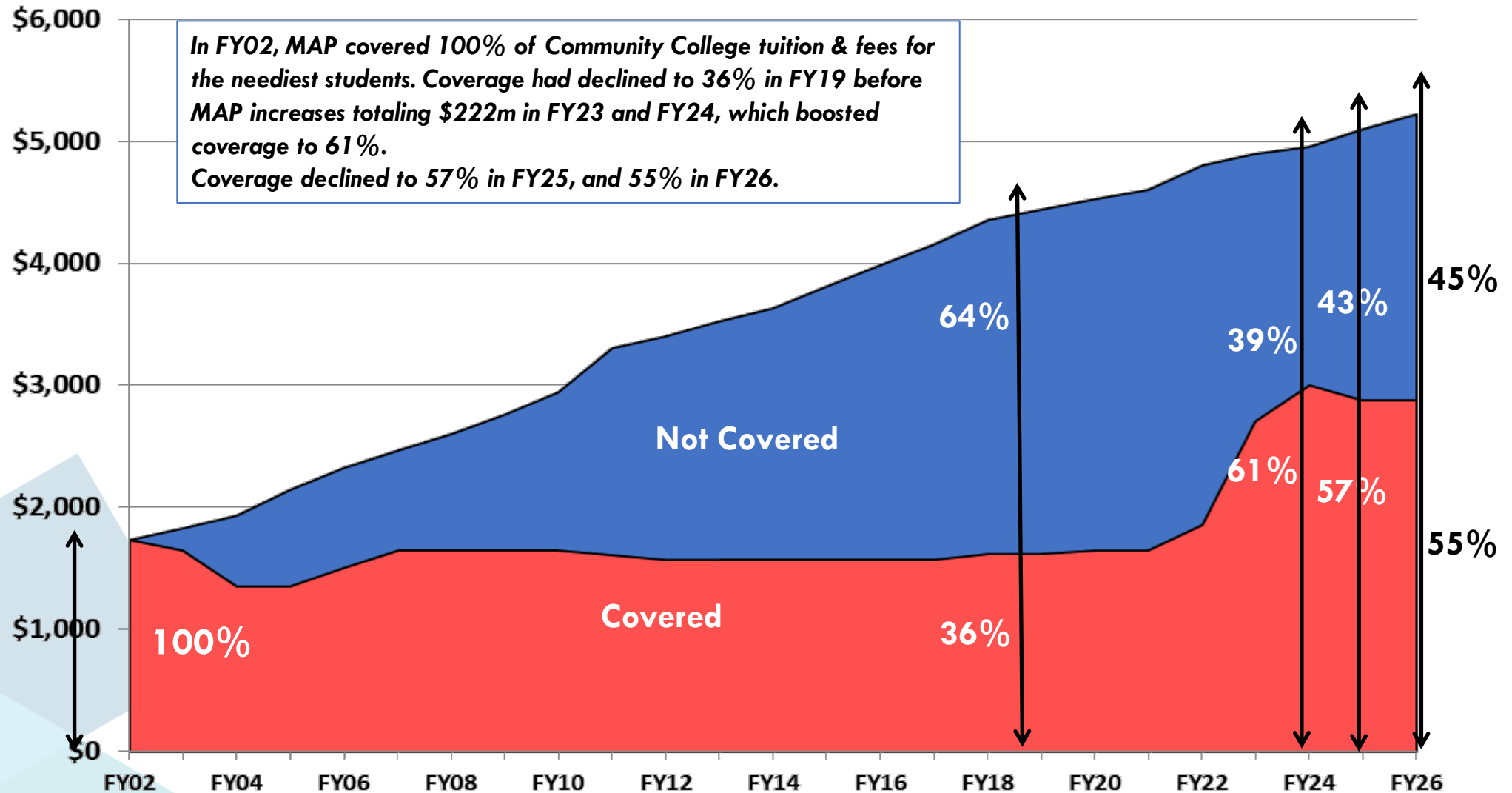
# Demand for MAP is Exceeding Supply Again (at current award levels)



# MAP Purchasing Power at Public Universities Has Improved but Declined in FY25 & FY26



# MAP Purchasing Power at Community Colleges Has Improved but Declined in FY25 & FY26



# Affordability: Equity-Centered, Adequate Public University and Community College Funding



## ILLINOIS COMMISSION ON EQUITABLE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY FUNDING

### Bill Status of HB1581

[Home](#) / [Legislation](#) / [Bill Status](#)

### Bill Status of SB0013

[Home](#) / [Legislation](#) / [Bill Status](#)

# Affordability: Equity-Centered, Adequate Public University and Community College Funding



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Adequacy and Equity in Community College Funding Working Group

### Recommendations

March 2025

The Illinois Community College Board convened the Adequacy and Equity in Community College Funding Working Group to assess disparities in the current funding model and recommend improvements. This executive summary outlines key findings and actionable recommendations to promote equity, ensure financial sustainability, and better align funding with Illinois' educational and workforce goals.

### Key Findings

- **Funding Challenges:** The original shared funding model for Illinois' community colleges balanced state appropriations, local taxes, and student tuition. However, declining state support has shifted the burden toward local and student-based funding, creating disparities among districts. This imbalance threatens institutional sustainability and limits student access.
- **Equity and Adequacy Gaps:** The current funding model does not adequately address differences in student demographics, regional cost variations, or institutional needs. As a result, colleges serving underrepresented populations face higher costs without proportional funding adjustments.
- **Unstable and Unpredictable Resources:** Fluctuations in funding—especially in equalization grants—cause financial instability, making it difficult for institutions to plan for the long term.
- **Limitations of the Current Funding Formula:** The existing formula is based on outdated cost structures and does not account for modern instructional methods, workforce demands, or the full costs of delivering education and student support services.

### About the Illinois Community College System



53% of Illinois undergraduates are enrolled in Illinois Community Colleges



552,000+ enrolled in credit and noncredit  
76% part time  
26 average age  
50% minority



Tuition is 70% lower at community colleges than public universities

- In June 2024, ICCB created the **Adequacy and Equity in Community College Funding Working Group** to evaluate Illinois' community college funding system and recommend improvements.
- Declining state appropriations resulted in greater reliance on tuition and local property taxes, increasing disparities among districts and financial pressure on colleges and students.
- Five recommendations addressing **cost analysis, base funding, equity allocations, equalization formula improvements, and dual credit funding.**
- Technical modeling groups (beginning August 2025) reinforced that while formula refinements may help, the primary barrier to adequacy and equity remains insufficient and unstable state investment in the community college system.

# Workforce and Economic Development

# Workforce and Economic Development: Rev Up EV! and Noncredit Strategies



## **Rev Up EV!**

- Supports community colleges in developing training programs aligned with electric vehicle and advanced transportation manufacturing sector in Illinois.
- Provides grants and technical assistance to colleges to build or expand EV-related curricula, purchase training equipment, and develop programs in areas such as EV manufacturing, battery technology, and charging infrastructure.

## **Noncredit Strategies at Work Grant Program.**

- Grant program helps community colleges develop and scale noncredit workforce training programs that respond quickly to employer needs and lead to industry-recognized credentials or career advancement.

# Workforce and Economic Development: Workforce Empowerment Initiative



## Workforce Empowerment Initiative

- ICCB grant program to community colleges to help low-income individuals and underserved populations complete training for high-demand occupations.
- Funds provide tuition assistance, supportive services, career coaching, and job placement support that help participants enter and persist in workforce training programs.
- Program focuses on equity and economic mobility, prioritizing participants facing barriers to employment and connecting them to living-wage careers in high-demand sectors.
- Outcomes for WEI are shown to double national averages of similar programs.

# Workforce and Economic Development: Workforce Pell



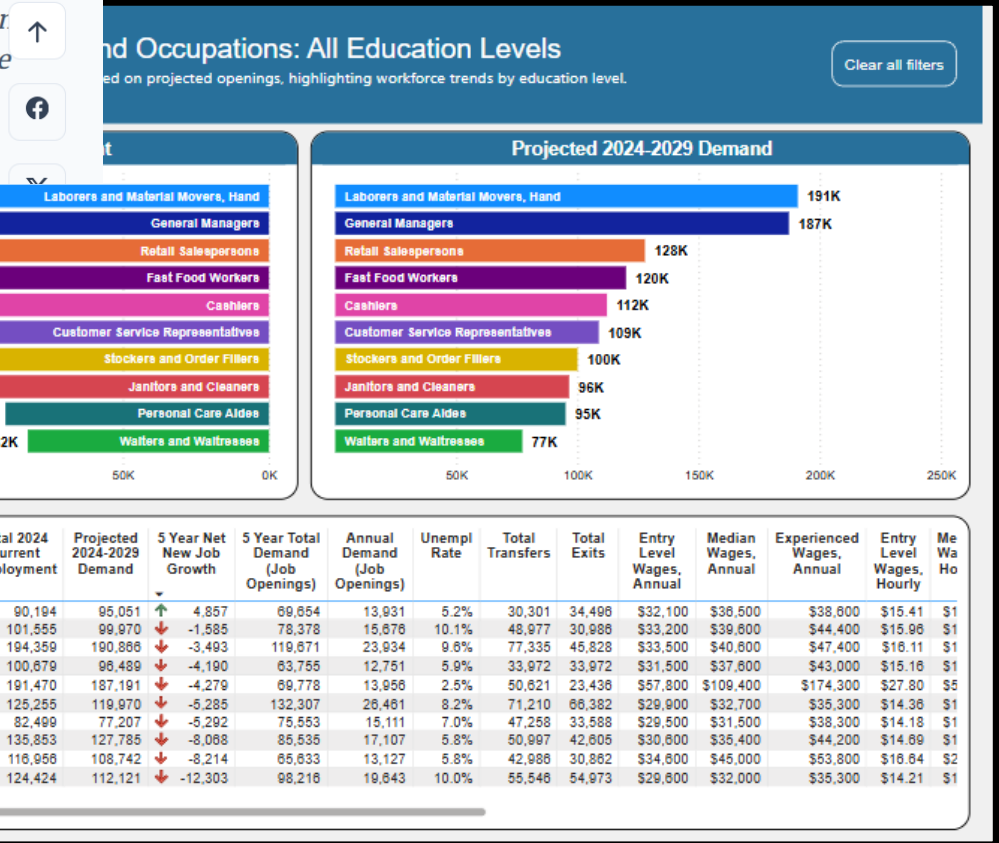
## Workforce Pell

- Workforce Pell is a federal initiative that allows Pell Grants to be used for short-term workforce training programs that lead to in-demand jobs.
- The policy is designed to expand financial aid access for low-income students pursuing career and technical education programs shorter than traditional degree programs.
- The initiative aims to strengthen workforce pipelines by supporting training in high-demand industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, and information technology.
- The State has convened an interagency working group and an Agency Leadership group to develop, refine, review, and approve the policies for statewide implementation.
- Currently Negotiated Rules are available for public comment.
- Implementation “Go Live,” date is July 1, 2026.

## Gov. Pritzker Signs Executive Order to Prepare Illinois' Workforce for the Jobs of the Future

The Illinois State Attainment Working Group will establish attainment goals and identify degree, and credential needs to bolster Illinois' workforce while promoting economic mobility across the state

MARCH 13, 2026



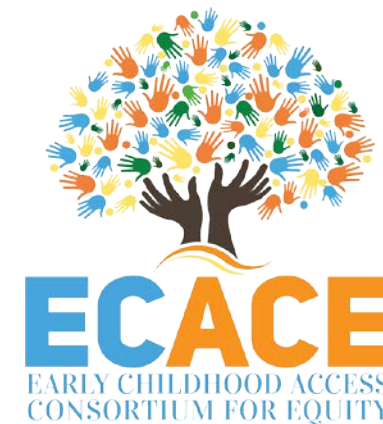
New Workforce Insights Dashboard at [IBHE.ORG](http://IBHE.ORG)

# Targeted Talent Development



## Workforce Scholarships and Loan Repayment Programs

- Nurse Educator Fellowship
- Nurse Educator Loan Repayment
- Nurse Education Scholarship
- Nursing School Grants
- Veterans' Home Medical Provider Loan Repayment
- Human Services Professional Loan Repayment
- Social Work Scholarship and Loan Repayment
- School and Municipal Social Work Shortage Loan Repayment
- Community Behavioral Health Care Provider Loan Repayment
- ECACE Scholarship
- Diversifying Faculty in Illinois Fellowship



# Efficiency

# Efficiency: Joint Purchasing



UnitedHealthcare  
StudentResources



## IPATHE Cybersecurity

Illinois Partnership to Advance Technology in Higher Education



IPATHE Cybersecurity is comprised of information security leaders from the public universities of Illinois. The group is charged with cross-institution sharing and coordination of information security practices, solutions, threats, challenges, and strategies.

# Equity and Student Success

# Equity and Student Success: Equity Plans



## Equity Plans enacted in [P.A. 102-1046](#), June 7, 2022.

- Baseline plans submitted May 31, 2024
- Coordinated implementation through SUCCESS collaborations (Supporting Universities and Colleges to Equitable Student Success)
- Three-pronged approach:
  - Communities of Practice,
  - Targeted Technical Assistance
  - Knowledge Sessions
- Three areas of focus:
  - Strengthening Holistic Advising and First-Year Experience
  - Meeting Student Basic Needs
  - Reducing Rates of DFW
- Annual report on effectiveness and outcomes to the General Assembly/  
Governor



# Equity and Student Success: Complementary Student Success Initiatives



Benefits Navigators



HOUSE Liaisons

Student Success grants



Illinois Campus Cares Mental Health Services  
Illinois Campus Cares Technical Assistance Center  
Mental Health Early Action on Campus grants

# Equity and Student Success: Measuring Outcomes



- Data Dashboard to be released March 15, 2027, then annually March 15
- Is result of legislation championed by IBHE, ICCB, and ISAC for accountability and transparency
- Uses [Illinois Postsecondary Profiles](#) as the foundation
- Data presentation to be built with human-centered design process

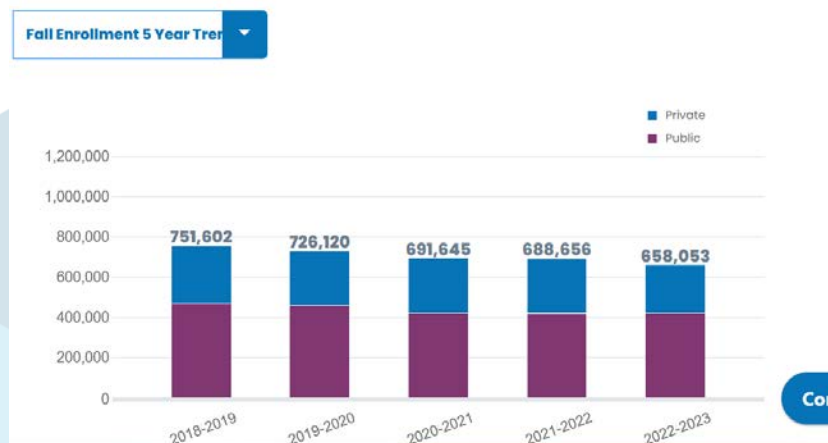
## What do you want to view?

Start selecting student demographic characteristics.  
Begin by selecting either an age group, ethnicity, or gender.



**Overall Fall Enrollment: Trend**  
From School Year 2018-2019 to 2022-2023

School Year 2022-23  
**Total Enrollment: 658,053**





# Student Access and Keeping Talent in Illinois

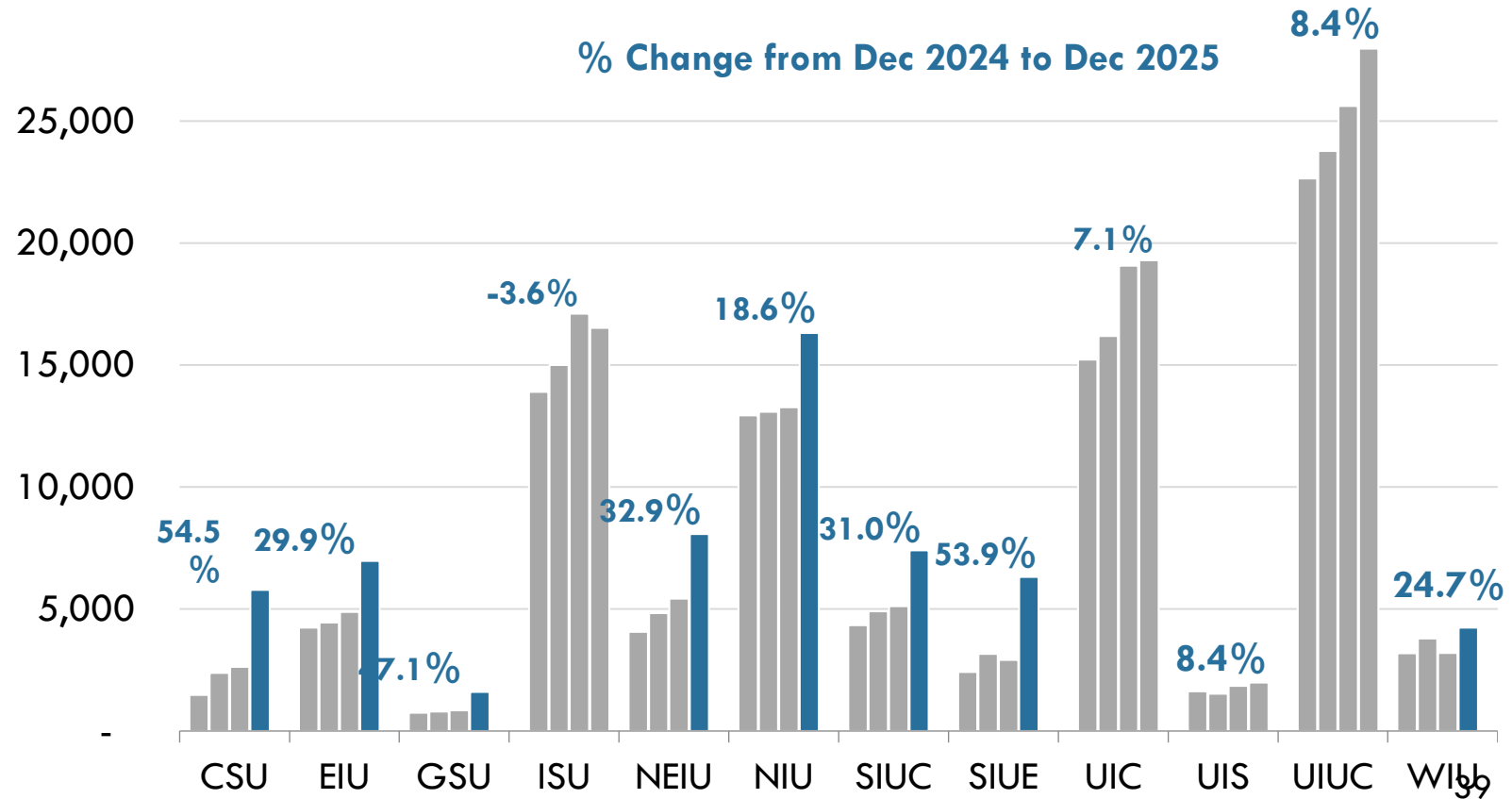
# Student Access and Keeping Talent in Illinois



As of February 2026, 68,407 graduating high school seniors received offers to Illinois public universities through One Click 1.0

Opt-In is open for High School Juniors to have automatic college offers!

*Application volume through December each year 2022- 2025  
Blue: Participated in the One Click College Admit direct admissions program in 2025*



# ISAC Support for Students and Families

Since 2009, more than 750 ISACorps™ members have served more than 1.6 million students and parents across the state.

## FY 2025 ISACorps Activities

- More than 3,100 college outreach events
- Attended by approximately 44,000 students and 20,000 parents
- Events in every legislative district and 90% of counties
- Supported more than 3,000 students with one-on-one mentoring
- More than 1,900 virtual meetings assisting families with financial aid questions and applications (schedule at [isac.org/booking](https://isac.org/booking).)

Near peer mentorship and support for the college planning and financial aid process; available to any student statewide.

## ISACorps Demographics



- 3.5% Asian
- 19% Black or African American
- 26% Hispanic or Latino
- 3.5% Two or more races
- 48% White

Fifty-five percent of ISACorps members were first generation college students.

ISACorps alums work as school counselors, in financial aid, college advising and admissions, and in other public service positions.

## Annual Financial Aid Application Completion Campaigns September through November 2025

- 1,900** Outreach events
- 44,100** Students and families
- 381** Cities and Towns
- 395** virtual one-on-one support meetings



During the College Changes Everything® (CCE) Campaign, ISAC and partners support high schools and students/families with college planning, applications, and financial aid applications.

## Serving First Generation Students



More than 2,450 students since 2023

First Generation Scholars Network

43 podcast episodes



FGSN offers students who will be the first in their family to graduate from college a way to connect with, collaborate, and learn from other first generation students.

The First Up Podcast shares stories about the challenges — and triumphs — that many first generation college students and their families experience.

## Outreach Tools and Resources



Tools, videos, and apps for college and financial aid planning.

# Student Access and Keeping Talent in Illinois: AIM HIGH Grant Program

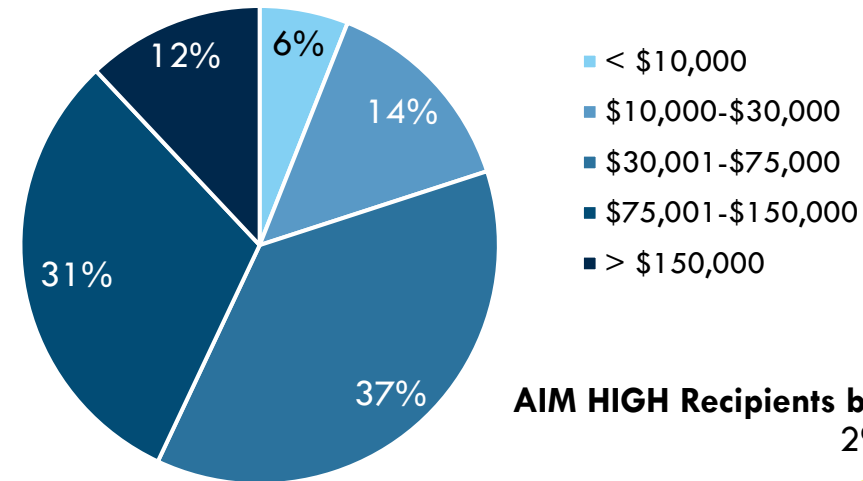


- AIM HIGH is a hybrid need/merit-based scholarship program that helps public universities to attract and retain Illinois students.
- The program was made permanent in FY24 along with an increase in appropriation from \$35M to \$50M, where it has remained.

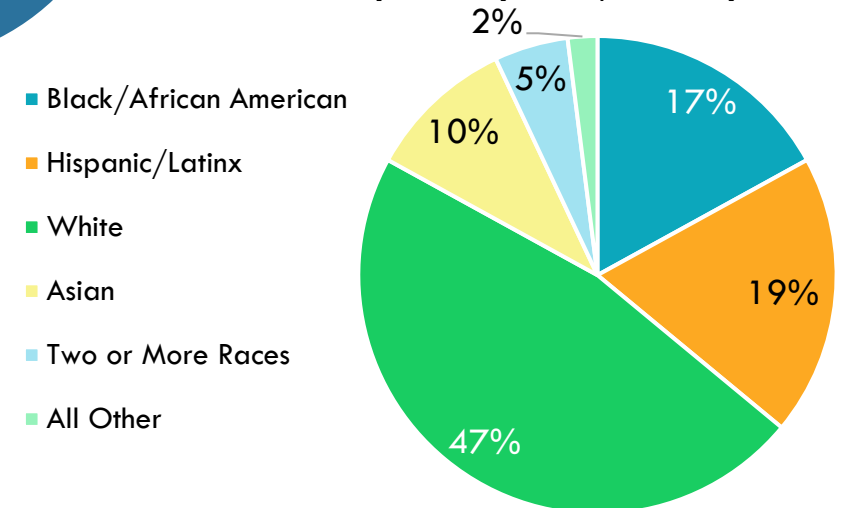
## FY25:

- 46 scholarship programs across the 12 public universities;
- 18,108 recipients, representing nearly 14% of all public university undergraduates;
- average grant of \$4,391;
- 53% of recipients are people of color;
- 57% of recipients have incomes of \$75,000 or less.

AIM HIGH Recipients by Income Level



AIM HIGH Recipients by Race/Ethnicity



# Ad Hoc Strategy Committee Process



- Today establish Ad Hoc Strategy Committee
  - Board charge to Ad Hoc Strategy Committee of areas of focus
- Three Committee meetings, including time for public comment
  - June 17, 2026 9:00 am – noon
  - August 19, 2026 11:00 am – 12:30 pm
  - November 18, 2026 11:00 am – 12:30 pm
- Additional stakeholder engagement opportunities
- Recommendations to full Board at January 20, 2027 meeting
- Potential deliverables: Progress Report on work to-date; Stakeholder Engagement report; *A Thriving Illinois* Addendum; Monitoring Rubric for Board

# A Thriving Illinois: Looking Ahead 2026 - 2030



- What **4** areas are the most important for the Ad Hoc Strategy Committee focus?
  - Equity and Student Success
  - Student Access/Retaining Talent in Illinois
  - Pathways to Degree Completion
  - Affordability
  - Targeted Talent Development
  - Workforce and Economic Development
  - Efficiency



# Appendix

# 25 Strategies for a Thriving Illinois



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

1. Support **learning renewal and student supports**
2. Implement institution-level **equity plans and practices**
3. Use **equitable talent management** to increase and retain faculty, staff and trustees of color
4. Provide more pathways through **higher education for adults**
5. Consider a **direct admissions program** to simplify college search and admissions
6. Expand equitable access to **early college coursework** for high school students
7. Support implementation of **developmental education reform**
8. Expand **college access and support** models to improve college-going and completion

# 25 Strategies for a Thriving Illinois



Build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions.

1. **Invest** in public higher education through an **equitable, stable, and sufficient funding** system
2. Increase **Monetary Award Program (MAP) funding to \$1 billion** over ten years
3. Allow MAP grants to be used for **year-round study**
4. Address the **challenge of “holds”** on student accounts that prevent them from completing their degrees
5. Support new **low-interest loan programs** through the Office of the Treasurer for low-income students
6. Encourage creative options for family **savings through Illinois’ 529 plans**
7. Pilot and expand **shared services** programs to reduce administrative costs
8. Expand **joint purchasing** among institutions

# 25 Strategies for a Thriving Illinois



GROWTH

Increase  
talent and  
innovation  
to drive  
economic  
growth.

1. Leverage the **Illinois Innovation Network**
2. Establish a statewide **Business and Employer Advisory Council** to foster the growth of Illinois' talent pipeline
3. Align the state's **economic development and higher education** strategies, ensuring that both address historic inequities
4. Encourage high school graduates to **stay in-state for college** and keep talent in Illinois
5. Establish a consortium of community colleges and universities to better serve the incumbent **early childhood workforce**
6. Expand higher education models of teaching and learning to prepare students for **success in the work of the future**
7. Enhance access to **teacher preparation** programs
8. Strengthen the **credit transfer system** to help students stay on track
9. Consider the role the **Private Business and Vocational sector** for workforce needs