

APPROVED
March 18, 2026

Melissa Bealon
Board Secretary Melissa Bealon

Item #H-1
March 18, 2026

MINUTES – BOARD MEETING
January 21, 2026

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: Minutes of the January 21, 2026, meeting of the Illinois Board of Higher Education held in person at Kennedy-King College, U Building, Great Hall, 740 W 63rd St., Chicago, IL, and Vandalia CUSD #203, District Office Board Room, Entrance Door 9, 1109 N 8th St., Vandalia, 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 January 21, 2026, Board meeting.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

MINUTES – BOARD MEETING
January 21, 2026

A meeting of the Illinois Board of Higher Education was held in person at Kennedy-King College, U Building, Great Hall, 740 W 63rd St., Chicago, IL, 60621 and Vandalia CUSE #203, District Office Board Room, Entrance Door 9, 1109 N 8th St., Vandalia, IL 62471 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, Mara Botman, Sharon Bush, Jennifer Garrison, Nora Lee Heist, Vice Chair Herrero, Donn Mendoza, Magnus Noble, Garth Walker, 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 Darlene Canada, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Kevin McPherson, Illinois Board of Higher Education, and Melissa Bealon, Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Board members present virtually: Jamel Wright and Subhash Sharma.

Pursuant to the Illinois Open Meetings Act, a quorum was present at the Kennedy-King College and Vandalia locations. Additionally, all action items were recorded with roll call votes. The audio of the meeting was recorded and may be requested on the IBHE website.

A. Call to Order/Roll Call

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

Chair Pranav Kothari called the meeting to order at approximately 1:04p.m. Board Secretary Bealon took roll call. A quorum was present.

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

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

- **Opening Remarks by Chairman Kothari**

Good afternoon. Welcome to the first meeting of 2026 of the Illinois Board of Higher Education. We are happy to continue our tradition of taking our meetings to colleges and universities across the state, and we are gathered today at Kennedy-King College in Chicago. Thank you to President Walker and her team for a warm welcome.

Before we get into the substance of our meeting, I wanted to share my support and love for friends and colleagues in Minnesota who are again subject to and actively protesting state-sponsored violence, this time brought on by the federal government. We understand how hard these past weeks have been and please know that your friends in Illinois stand with you. Rest in peace, Renee Good.

To our focus today, it is that time of year again when the Board votes on budget recommendations that will be presented to the governor and General Assembly on behalf of the state's entire higher education system. Before we talk about the budget, I would like to share some reflections from our November meeting which included robust public comment on two main topics.

We heard from students, faculty, labor, and advocacy groups who shared real concerns around adequate and equitable funding for higher education in our state. I want to thank those who joined us in person, virtually, and to the thousands of students who wrote postcards expressing their beliefs and concerns about higher education in Illinois. We had representatives from Latino Policy Forum, Partnership for College Completion, Advance Illinois, and University Professionals of Illinois as well as students from multiple Illinois public universities. I also want to thank the Faculty Advisory Council for their input and continued engagement on these topics after the November board meeting.

We are often asked to vocalize our support for various bills and policies that affect higher education. Let me share more about how IBHE does this with action. With respect to the funding formula, IBHE facilitated the Illinois Commission on Equitable Public University Funding since it was established in 2021. The Commission's final recommendations went to the General Assembly in the spring of 2024. Since that time, our team has remained committed to this work by serving as a technical and content expert to the General Assembly as the bills have been negotiated. That is our highest and best use in the process at this time and respects the role of the General Assembly in getting to a nation-leading equitable funding approach for higher education.

Regarding the budget, we remain aligned with the idea that higher education is still playing catch up from a budget standpoint. Later this afternoon we'll discuss a proposal for the FY2027 budget while we share a concern about the balance of funds from the FY2026 budget. As the governor recently noted, there are competing priorities for scarce dollars in the wake of federal budget cuts that impact working families. While our focus is on higher education, we understand we operate in a much more complex macroeconomic environment with deep need.

The IBHE presents to the governor and General Assembly budget recommendations on behalf of the entire higher education system – including the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. Each year, our goal is to present responsible, meaningful budget recommendations. Our recommendations reflect broad input from across the higher education stakeholder community and attempts to embrace the fiscal realities of the state as well as the fiscal realities of our institutions and our students and families.

Rest assured, personally, in my role as Chair, and along with the balance of the board, I believe deeply in both equitable and adequate funding of higher education in Illinois.

The Board will vote on a budget that recommends a three percent increase in funding for community colleges and public universities and funding increases for the MAP and AIM HIGH financial aid programs – which have proven to make our public institutions more affordable for students and families. We are grateful to Governor Pritzker for the ongoing support of higher education in Illinois even in the face of difficult fiscal pressures.

Later this afternoon, we'll also hear from the team at IWERC/ DPI/ UChicago Consortium on School Research about their recent report, Precarious Prospects. To borrow from their compelling work, educational attainment, along with industry of employment are better predictors about earnings than economic origins. We know and have solid data that tells us that postsecondary opportunity remains critical to individuals to succeed economically and for Illinois to thrive. While many question the value of postsecondary education, we remain confident in the ability of our students to attain, excel, and succeed.

Recently, there were two op-eds written by Jamie Merisotis of Lumina Foundation and Dom McKoy of the To&Through Project that resonated deeply with me. In Jamie's piece in the context of valuing public education, he notes that:

"Higher education is not a binary choice—degree or no degree. It is a continuum of learning opportunities, from apprenticeships and certificates to associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, and graduate study.

We should celebrate the fact that well-structured apprenticeships exist. In fact, we need more of them. They combine hands-on experience with classroom learning and often lead to strong wages and steady careers. But they also demand rigorous study, licensing exams, and continual updating of skills. That looks a lot like higher education—even if it doesn't come packaged as a four-year degree.

Meanwhile, college degrees continue to deliver broad, long-term benefits. Beyond higher median wages, they offer resilience in downturns, open opportunities for career changes, and provide access to professions in which a degree is required. When the labor market shifts—as it inevitably does—college graduates generally have more mobility."

And in Dom's piece which focuses on the college going trends in Chicago specifically, he shares:

"Most headlines about higher education today paint a dismal picture: enrollment cliffs, rising costs, federal attacks and growing skepticism about the value of a degree. But in Chicago, a quieter story has been unfolding — one of steady, remarkable progress in redefining what's possible for public school students and whom college is for."

We are collectively thrilled to see this progress and know there is more to do to support persistence and graduation rates. We applaud the work by so many partners in Chicago who are making these gains possible. I'll note that seven Illinois public university campuses have over 500 CPS graduates enrolled with five have over 1,000 CPS graduates currently enrolled.

We have a robust agenda today, and before we get to it, I would like to welcome our newest member – Dr. Donn Mendoza – to the Board. Dr. Mendoza currently serves as superintendent of Round Lake Area School District 116. Previously, Dr. Mendoza served as deputy superintendent and high school principal in Round Lake, and he previously held superintendent and principal roles in Crystal Lake, Barrington, and Carpentersville. Welcome, Dr. Mendoza and thank you for contributing your time and wisdom to higher education in Illinois.

Welcome from Kennedy-King College President Katonja Webb Walker

President Walker welcomed the Board and guests with gratitude to the KKC campus. She noted that KKC recently concluded their 10-year reaffirmation of accreditation comprehensive site visit by the Higher Learning Commission. A team of faculty, staff and administrators worked tirelessly on preparing a 150-page college self-study to orient the site review team to the college's work since our last review. Along with hundreds of pieces of evidence that attest to our alignment with the four criteria of accreditation. We've received promising feedback and look forward to being able to share more feedback in the coming days.

KKC is home to two centers of excellence, including Washburn Culinary and Hospitality Institute here in this building and Boston Technical Institute where our construction trades programs are housed. While we are well known for preparing students in those fields, we are also home to thriving transfer pathways, the tech launch pad, dedicated to ensuring equitable access to technology and careers in technology and MWKCC, our college radio station.

Our team here at Kennedy King has been busy developing new programs, engaging community and industry partners and enhancing our student engagement efforts. I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate just a few recent achievements and initiatives.

We're in the home stretch of finalizing our 5-year strategic plan, Forward Together. As we map out essential work aligned to our strategic levers of providing exceptional student experience, enhancing our economic responsiveness, creating a collaborative and connected ecosystem together with our partners, and overall, building a culture of excellence.

We are guided by IBHE's strategic ethos that a thriving Illinois has an inclusive economy and broad prosperity with equitable paths to opportunity for all, especially those facing the greatest barriers. And our work reflects our drive to create that reality.

KKC is thrilled to celebrate a continued rise in student enrollment with a 10% increase in opening credit enrollment from Spring 2025 to Spring 2026. However, as we all know, enrollment is only one piece of our success journey.

We understand how important it is to create a campus environment that supports students through to completion, transfer, and entry into the workforce according to their interest. Part of this culture shift is reflected by the phenomenal work of our student affairs team via our student government association. They are working tirelessly to create a welcoming and engaging climate for our students.

In the last 2 years, KKC has expanded the number of student clubs from 2 to 9. And now offers a chess club, Black Students Union, a tech club, a garden club, as well as a brand-new majorette's dance team.

This fall, in direct alignment with IBHE's focus on ensuring that our parenting students receive the attention and support that they need, the college culminated a two-year technical assistance project in collaboration with the Urban Institute to advance our work toward becoming a parent-friendly campus.

I had the pleasure of traveling to Washington, D.C. with our Director of Research and with the City College's Vice Chancellor of Strategy and Planning as well as one of our parenting

students where we shared our capstone project and sat on a panel discussion with an audience of over 300 in-person and virtual participants wanting to learn more about supporting student parents.

Our Center of Equity in the Creative Arts, known as CECA, is also housed here in this building. Some of you had an opportunity to hear about it on the tour CECA has facilitated a number of collaborations with industry and community partners.

Just last semester we served as a site for the Chicago International Film Festival and hosted a celebration in honor of Englewood's own MacArthur Fellow and Genius Grant awardee, Tanika Johnson, who will be working with us on designing arts-related curricula.

Next month, KKC will open the Statesman Market, a beautifully appointed and accessible food pantry for our students who are facing food insecurity which we all know is rapidly becoming all the more acute.

And just last week, in collaboration with Malcolm X College, our sister college, KKC reinstated a nursing pathway on the south side of the city with the launch of two cohorts of basic nursing assistant students. We are on track to house a practical nursing and an associate's degree in nursing track here on our campus in 2027.

I could go on for hours, but these are just a few highlights. I am truly grateful to have an incredibly talented team of faculty, staff, and students here some of whom you had an opportunity to speak to at lunch.

We extend an open invitation to members of the board to visit us and to learn more about the college. Our doors are always open.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Ginger Ostro provided a brief report.

I'm excited to share with you some updates on many of the major initiatives that the board has undertaken. First, I want to highlight the work underway for the Direct Admissions, or as we call it, the One Click College Admit program.

Some reminders for folks listening in, current high school seniors still have time to receive direct admission offers to the state public universities. All seniors have to do is to create a Common App account and profile. They can go to oneclickadmit.org for detailed steps, so we're really trying to encourage folks. Just open that Common App application, they'll get matched automatically. That's students who are high school seniors now.

Phase 2 of the program is to provide an actual data match, so students don't have to affirmatively take steps. So, for high school juniors right now, the class of 2027 students and families must opt into the program in order for us to be able to match their data and to get that direct admissions offer in their senior year.

So, for everyone listening, if you do know someone who's currently a junior in high school, or their families, or their extended friends. Tell them also to go to Oneclickadmit.org to submit an opt-in form. It takes about 2 minutes. And, next spring, that will allow us to match all those students with offers to colleges, their local community college, and the public universities in the state.

Special acknowledgement to all our partners, particularly ISAC, who manage all the opt-in process, all the data matching, a lot of the outreach work. So, thank you very much to Board Member Zarnikow and his team for all their work in really implementing the OneClick process. The partnerships with ICCB and the State Board of Education are also vital to making sure we're reaching all the students and getting everyone to opt-in and take advantage of this new statewide program that this board has advocated for since the strategic plan was launched in 2021.

We're working on additional communication materials. We've had a social media campaign out, but we're working on additional materials to send home to parents of current high school juniors describing the program and how to opt in.

ISAC will continue to ramp up its efforts on the ground with events and workshops to help families opt in. That's work in large part of the ISAC Corps and others that work with high school counselors through ISAC.

We're also beginning our outreach to community college transfer students this semester through targeted outreach on community college campuses and a social media campaign. This is part of the ramp-up stage, but again, for those who are high school seniors right now, you can opt in and get those direct admissions offers.

The next program to highlight is our work around equity plan implementation through the SUCCESS program.

As a reminder, it has three components. It includes podcast episodes for all campuses focusing on data use for equity. The second component is communities of practice. There are 3 communities of practice, all of which have launched with our public institutions. Again, the reminder, it's holistic advising and first-year experience is one of the communities of practice. The second, and as we've heard about, is supporting student basic needs, which is such an important part of ensuring student success. And the third is reducing DFW rates.

So, since our last meeting, the communities of practice have launched at least one and maybe two sessions of the communities of practice have occurred, and in total, there will be four concluding this April for the work of this fiscal year. But we know to really be successful, this is an ongoing process, and we look forward to continuing to partner with all our institutions participating in those programs.

There are about 19 colleges and universities participating in targeted technical assistance, being able to dive deeper into some of those areas and working directly with an individual consultant. We're excited to launch that work and to hear how that's going to have additional support where they can really dive into their own data and identify barriers and steps to take to make progress towards addressing student success and equity.

During the veto session, the Diversifying Faculty program called DFI and the Minority Teachers of Illinois, now called Teachers of Illinois Scholarship, both programs now have applications out for students to begin applying. Focusing on DFI, the new program targeted financial needs, identifies institutional eligibility and strengthens pathways into higher education careers.

Under the new program, DFI fellows must be Illinois residents for 3 years, hold a bachelor's degree from an Illinois-authorized institution and received a Pell Grant at some point while earning their undergraduate degree and then as they are admitted to their full-time

graduate program the qualified universities will be able to support them as their DFI application.

The first applications went out in early December, and they are due January 30th, another public service reminder for folks that are eligible for the DFI program. We also anticipate accepting additional renewal applications until February 20th, for those that have the DFI fellowship previously, and are applying for renewal. We do anticipate making awards for this current fiscal year, and as soon as we receive those applications, because of the results of the legislative process, we'll be launching the application process for fiscal year 2027.

Watch closely for DFI applications because we're doing two cycles in this fiscal year, both to fund students for this year, that's what the applications are out for currently and for the fiscal year starting July 1, those applications will be out soon.

Similarly, for the new Teachers of Illinois Scholarship Program, applications are now available. Email notification literally just went out to everyone today. The priority consideration date for that program is February 16th of this year, and as a reminder, pays up to the total cost of attendance, or about up to \$7,500 per year. It's available for up to 4 academic years and recipients must commit to teaching in an eligible Illinois school district with persistent teacher shortages.

IBHE welcomes some new staff members. One is here in person and one who is online. Kevin McPherson as our new Director of Research Analytics, and Data. He comes to us with over 14 years of leadership experience and institutional research, data analytics, and strategic reporting. Most recently as Director of Institutional Research at the Community Solution, where he led IR support for six institutions and supervised a team of five analysts. He coordinated federal and state data submissions, managed compliance across twenty-seven states and provided accreditation support for more than ten independent review agencies. Really excited to have him on our team, as you know how much we depend on data.

We have also added our new Director of Higher Education Finance Policy, Roberto Valadez. He is a senior higher education leader with more than 25 years of experience in student success, equity and data-informed strategy who most recently served as Vice President for Student Development at Joliet Junior College and previously held leadership roles at San Diego City College and the College of DuPage. He brings deep experience in higher education, finance policy governance, and performance-based funding.

We have also continued to fill open positions welcoming our new database administrator to the IT department and have searches underway for several data analysts and academic quality positions, so continue to send great people our way. We love all the talent we have been able to recruit and thank you to the whole team for all of the effort that it takes to both recruit, interview, and select just these amazing candidates, so we're excited about the team that we continue to build out.

B. Advisory Council Updates

Disability Advisory Council

Lisa C. Caringer, Director and ADA Compliance Coordinator, Office for Access Accommodations, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale

Lisa C. Caringer, M.S., ADAC, presented the annual report of the Disability Advisory Committee (DAC). Lisa recognized the valuable support provided by IBHE and the Diversity & Outreach staff, which enables the committee to collaborate, address common

challenges, and improve services that support student retention and degree completion. The report highlighted several key areas including:

Safeguarding Disability Rights: DAC emphasized the importance of strategic action in a shifting national landscape for disability rights. Updates included:

- Implementation of the Removing Barriers to Higher Education Act, which helps reduce obstacles for students seeking accommodation.
- Increased focus on communication with students regarding their rights, appeals processes, and intersecting support needs.
- Continued collaboration with the Illinois Department of Rehabilitation Services to support students' education and employment pathways.
- Recent Supreme Court affirmation of the "deliberate indifference" standard under ADA/Section 504 though uncertainty remains around federal enforcement mechanisms.

Digital Accessibility Requirement (Effective April 2026): State universities must ensure all digital content and websites are natively accessible. The committee stressed that meaningful access requires timely, equal engagement for students with disabilities, including access to course articles, videos, and digital tools.

- This requirement affects not just websites by instructional technologies and faculty-selected digital resources.
- Compliance will require significant campus-wide collaboration and may increase staffing and software costs.

Transition to College: Notable challenges by incoming students include differing expectations from high school and common executive functioning deficits. Disability offices are also experiencing staffing strains as student needs increase.

Technical Standards and Essential Requirements: The committee underscored the importance of developing, reviewing, and consistently applying academic program standards. Collaboration across academic units ensures that standards are transparent, non-discriminatory, and communicated early to students to support retention and informed decision making.

Faculty Collaboration and Training: Faculty play a central role in implementing accommodations. DAC reported ongoing difficulties in ensuring faculty engagement with training and procedures, given high staff-to-student ratios in disability services offices. A standard sensitivity training course for all state university faculty was recommended.

Caringer emphasized that disability is a campus-wide responsibility. Effective support requires collaboration across IBHE, campus administration, academic units, faculty, IT, legal compliance, housing, and student affairs. Disability Services cannot meet access needs alone; collective commitment is essential to creating inclusive learning environments.

Chair Kothari opened the floor for questions and then after several questions, thanked Caringer and the committee for the presentation.

The presentation can be found on the IBHE website.

Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities

Dave Tretter, President of the Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities

Tretter thanked Chair Kothari, Director Ostro and the Board for the opportunity and remarked it is always a fun experience.

Tretter started with a brief explanation of what encompasses the Federation. The Federation is a group of fifty-five not-for-profit colleges and universities throughout the state. The Federation itself is the oldest private college association in the country. Originally, just a social group, but in the mid-1960s, formed staff, etc., to work on the same kind of issues that this board follows on a daily basis.

A little bit about the magnitude of what the private colleges or independents represent. Not well known to a lot of people, but certainly unique in the United States, and moreover, in the Midwest is the size of the independent sector here, enrolling twenty-eight percent of the students overall. A slight majority of four-year students are enrolled in independent non-profit institutions, that's not true in a lot of other states, we'll get to that and why it's important. Significant production in degrees conferred (referred to chart).

We are proud of working with our colleagues in the public and the community college sector. Illinois is unique because of the number of private colleges and the enrollment, but certainly the way we work with our public colleagues across the board to offer the best options for students to find a path through higher education.

I talked about that production a little bit, and I think one of the narratives right now going on nationally is about the value of higher education, or some would say lack of value, lack of meaning, too expensive, etc., down the list. But I always remind people, if you need medical care, if you drive across a bridge all those people, nurses, go down the list.

I was at lunch with a young man today who's a cybersecurity major here at Kennedy King. He's gonna be busy for the next few years, I think, right? So, the graduates were producing matter more now than ever and we're a big part of that. I talked about that presence, especially in the Midwest, and frankly, many states don't have that. They're much more public-centered, nothing wrong with that, but that's just the history of how higher education formed in Illinois, and we're proud of that.

So, I talked a little bit about that history, and it continues and I'll go through a couple of charts and then make just a couple of quick points.

We are all aware, whether it's public or private, everybody here is rowing in the same direction. There has been a drop in national enrollment in higher education. I mentioned some of the reasons earlier, national narrative, some fiscal financial challenges at the state level, and more so now at the federal level, which clearly affects the state's ability. But also, some structural and demographic changes.

High school grad numbers and you can see over a twelve-year period a hundred sixty thousand fewer students in our institutions overall, public and private. That is noticeable and makes competition for students in our state incredibly high.

So, what can we do about it? I mentioned that natural pipelines are changing. There's a lot of lip service, and some of it is legit and statistically important about the decreasing high school grads, but if you look at the numbers there is something else going on that is of a higher magnitude, and that gets back a lot of students leave the state, but then the students that are here, again finding a path through. , and I think that's concerning and the good work the board does within the Capitol and the programs you administer, which we are fortunate enough to take part in many of those are super important.

Some work I've done nationally with my counterparts, about forty of us across the country, is to expand our advocacy beyond state capitals into a more coordinated PR campaign. The board has been involved in that over the years in a variety of ways. I'm thinking of the public agenda other items. One of the things I think, though, is expanding beyond state capitals and politics is a broader outreach to the general population. Our colleges and universities do that through admissions and recruitment, and the messages we send out to parents, etc.

One of the things we worked on a few years ago when we didn't have a state budget for a year and a half or two years, I started some work on economic development, kind of the magnitude of our institutions. No one's against education at the Capitol but is that a sufficient argument to put us in a position to be recognized for the value of what we provide and the way we help the state by having fully employed citizens, taxpayers and less demand on social services, all the things that, again, people around this table know.

But just private colleges, if you took them as a business, sixty-two thousand employees statewide. \$22 billion in economic activity. Every student that gets a Pell Grant is bringing federal dollars back to Illinois, so this is the kind of argument that says we are important.

I live in the middle of the state, live in Springfield. You can go a lot farther south from Springfield than you can north. That's a geography lesson. But I'm thinking about my small colleges, for instance, downstate, Jacksonville. Illinois College, Eureka. residents on your board, Bradley and Peoria, Illinois Wesley, and Bloomington, Quincy over in that part of the state, those are important economic hubs in those areas, and critically important to those local economies, and yes, it matters if you're arguing about the politics of why things should be funded, but it's also really important not only to those cities, but to those regions of the state. So, we've done a lot of work in that regard.

Back when we didn't have those budgets, I partnered with the public universities and community colleges to develop a statewide portfolio of why we matter. If you include the public universities and community colleges, one hundred seventy-five thousand employees statewide. Think about what states do to attract businesses to states, economic incentives to bring businesses in and you'll read in the paper the great success, if a new industry brings 200 employees to town, or 500. We should be working on those things, but not at the expense of a massive education industry not only doing good things but good employers and good jobs in those communities.

If you live in a community where you've got a college, be it public, private, community college, those citizens have access to the college, usually cultural things, sporting events, music events. All those things that are hard to sometimes tangibly quantify, but matter. But you can tease out why it matters, and so I've done some work there across the board, I would love to continue to work with the board.

On return on investment and this is conservative, this is out of the University of Illinois, a twenty-five percent to one return on state investment and higher education.

I remind legislators, and anybody that'll listen, that higher education is an appreciating asset, right. People like to make comparisons about the cost of cars and all those things, but those are depreciating assets. The ticket to success, as we know, is college education, and lifelong learning.

And the last thing I'll say. Is that continued enjoyment working with the Board. I think you should view me as a conduit to the private colleges, and I think Ginger and staff do a great job of that but continue to remember we are an important piece of the higher

education community here in Illinois. As you set policy, as you consider funding, which you will be unveiling today, we want to be helpful, we want our public universities and community colleges to succeed, and I think the current menu of institutions in the state serves the state well.

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

The presentation can be found on the IBHE website.

C. Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative

Presentation: Precarious Prospects

Meg Bates, PhD, Director of IWERC

Sarah Cashdollar, Associate Director and Research Scientist, IWERC

Jenny Nagaoka, Deputy Director, UChicago Consortium on School Research

Researchers from the Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (iWERC) and the University of Chicago presented findings from two major reports analyzing economic outcomes and mobility of Illinois high school seniors (classes 2008-2012). The research is possible because of a partnership between the IWERC and UC team and ISBE, ICCB/ISAC, and IDES.

Using student-level data pathways from high school into postsecondary education and employment were examined. The information presented from the two reports was used as the basis for the panel discussion.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this research today on the economic outcomes of Illinois high school seniors.

Key finding from the report included three main points.

Bachelor's degrees provide the most reliable path to upward mobility.

- Earning a bachelor's degree or higher is the strongest predictor of achieving a "good job," defined as earnings within the top three income quintiles compared to peers.
- Income disparities between low-income and higher-income students narrow substantially among bachelor's degree earners, though they do not disappear entirely.
- Low-income bachelor's completers out-earn higher-income students who earned less than a bachelor's.

The biggest barrier for low-income students: degree completion

- The most common outcome for low-income students was "some college, no degree."
- This group faces:
 - Increased likelihood of student debt
 - Lower earnings
 - Lower likelihood of returning to college in the future

- This incomplete pathway emerges as a major structural obstacle to economic mobility.

Sub-Baccalaureate pathways show mixed outcomes

- Several associate degree and certificate programs yield strong results, especially in:
 - Agriculture/veterinary sciences
 - Engineering and technical fields
 - Health programs
 - Mechanic and repair technologies
- Industries with strong outcomes include:
 - Construction
 - Manufacturing
 - Professional/scientific/technical services
 - Public administration
- However:
 - Men benefit more consistently than women.
 - Women-particularly Black and Latina women-are underrepresented in the highest-return pathways.
 - Overall earnings and job quality for sub-baccalaureate pathways remain lower than bachelor's-level outcomes.

Large racial and gender disparities persist.

- At the high school-only level, “good job” rates range widely by race and gender
- For “some college” pathways, disparities remain large.
- Bachelor’s completion significantly reduces but does not eliminate disparities.
- Black women experience the most consistently lower economic outcomes—even with postsecondary attainment.

The presentation can be viewed on the IBHE website.

Panel Discussion

Moderator: Tara Lawley, Director of Policy, Research & Fiscal Analysis, IBHE
Christine Strohl, Dean for Workforce Solutions and Community Education, Lake Land College

The moderator explained the format for the discussion. Each panelist is going to share how their work addresses the challenges raised in the report and what strategies are showing promise. Starting with Dean Stroll from Lakeland.

MOD: Dean Stroll, what programs or strategies at your college have been most effective in supporting students from low-income backgrounds? And then, can you share an example of a student or group whose outcomes improved because of these supports? And finally, how do state-level initiatives or funding streams enhance your ability to deliver these outcomes?

DS: Thank you. First, thank you for the invitation today. I really appreciate being able to represent not only Lakeland College, but community colleges across the state of Illinois. Again, my name is Chris Stroll, I am the Dean for Workforce Solutions and Community Education at Lakeland College. We are located more southern. I would consider us south-

southern Illinois. Our largest campus is in Mattoon with our largest extension center in Effingham, Illinois.

Programs and strategies that have been most effective in supporting students from low-income backgrounds in our area which is a predominantly white area. The TRIO program at our college, we have 3 different TRIO programs. The first one is talent search. We have student support services and student support services for STEM students. Keeping in mind that as a TRIO program, the students have one of the following barriers, first-generation college student, economically disadvantaged background, or had student accommodations or an IEP in secondary school. They work on making referrals to financial aid, career services, mental and physical wellness accommodations, Perkins, and other internal programs that assist with challenges that students are trying to overcome. Another area is adult education, serving students that are from a non-traditional pathway into the college environment. They didn't complete high school at some place and they came to us to work on getting their GED, which is the Illinois High School Diploma. There are 4 tests that they take to complete. Also, within adult education is English language learners, so we see individuals that come in that are not on a student visa but are here for another reason and they are there to learn how to speak, write, and communicate better in English. We also have a Student Success Center, which offers testing and tutoring services that provides free tutoring to students. Our Perkins program also assists our CTE students and faculty so that they can continue their education with some of the essentials that they need, but also professional development for staff.

Our foundation scholarships and emergency funds support students with barriers to education. Those are individuals who have donated either through the college or through another area to be able to help individuals complete their college education. Counseling services, we do have an early intervention program and mandatory advisement for all degree-seeking students. We also have work-based learning options for students in CTE programs, including apprenticeships internships, supervise occupational experiences. One example that I will give is an FY24 ICCB Illinois Community College Board allocated a specific amount of dollars that students could take free tests so, our program serves about 250 to 300 students a year. We typically have about 50 graduates. The year that we were able to pay for everyone's test, we had 99 graduates. So, when we knew that was a financial barrier, we didn't realize how big a financial barrier that was for students. Twenty-five percent or 24 of those students continued to higher education. At the state level, grant opportunities including DCEO and ICCB grant opportunities to assist individuals with barriers to education, including taking back the trades, mental health grants, non-credit strategies at work. Also, from DCEO, the JTEG grant, which is the Job Training and Economic Development. One of our partners that we work very closely with are our WIOA partners, adult education is that Title II partner. We also work with the Title I partner to assist adult dislocated workers and youth that also includes incumbent workers. In the community college system, we not only have the transfer programs but we also have short-term learning for someone that needs a CDL, which is a commercial driver's license they can complete that within 6 weeks. They receive financial assistance and they're able to go out and receive gainful employment. One of the things we're really looking forward to is Workforce PAL. We know that that has been through the feds, and we are ready to see what that will look like at the state level. I also sit on the Workforce Board in our area, so we know that those programs will have to go through our workforce boards to be approved.

MOD: Thank you, thank you for all the work that you're doing there, and this really shows how important it is that we make sure we're resourcing the programs at the community colleges to meet the needs of these students. Thank you.

I'm going to move on now to the panelist questions for Dr. Cobb. And those questions are... Which institutional programs or partnerships have been particularly powerful in improving student success outcomes? Particularly improving outcomes across groups. What innovative approaches at your university help students transition from college to careers? And how do state-level policies or collaborations amplify these results?

DC: All right, thank you so much. I'm really pleased to be here today and have the opportunity to talk with you about what SIUE is doing to make a difference for our students, increasing access and opportunity and closing equity gaps, which is really driving our work. SIUE's sudden ambitious goal in our strategic plan of achieving a ninety percent retention goal for our first time full-time students. Through a campus-wide focus, we've improved our retention rate for domestic students to just over eighty percent made significant progress in closing equity gaps for Pell-eligible students. And we've made remarkable gains for African American students. The retention rate for Pell-eligible students was over seventy seven percent this past fall and for African American students the retention rate was eighty percent. So just think about the parity that we've been able to achieve in that outcome. We've done so through a number of strategies. I'll highlight just a few, and please know that my student affairs colleagues deserve a better shout-out here. All the divisions deserve a better shout-out. I can only highlight some here. To achieve these gains, we've invested in our boundless scholars experience, that provides holistic support for students from advising to common cohorted academic experiences, connection with support networks and deep high-touch engagement. We have democratized access to student outcomes data focusing on DFW rates so that faculty members can see their own data and determine if there are equity gaps that they could address on their own or with support from the university through faculty development or other programming. For example, our math faculty redesigned our college algebra course to make sure that they could improve outcomes, and we've seen improvement in those outcomes. They participated in an AQ course. AQ offers certificates for faculty and staff in professional development focused on inclusive pedagogy or fostering a sense of belonging. We have a coordinated early alert system. And recently, we provided direct entry to all of our first-time students. And I note that because it is changing the profile of our majors already in making clear that students who are bringing diversity into engineering to our school of business, to nursing, even in early days. And if you think about the report, the long-term earning potential for students in these disciplines really is profound. Even our own data suggests that students in nursing and engineering, one year out, earn twenty thousand dollars more than our average student. So, it really is remarkable to see that shift in terms of workforce and career, our chancellor likes to say that SIUE is powering the workforce of the region today and in the future. We have worked hard to ensure that our programming is aligned with industry needs and community needs while recognizing a consistent and profound need for a robust general education program so that students can become critical thinkers and changemakers. We utilize partnerships and advisory boards to inform our programs establishing mentoring and internship opportunities so their employers can be confident in our graduates. We've developed alternative digital credentials for our students, non-credit alternative digital credentials, so a chemistry student could earn an ADC. A laboratory technician can demonstrate to an employer that they have a different practical skill set that distinguishes them from other chemistry majors. We've invested in community-engaged problem solving along with the Mellon Foundation and our community-oriented Digital Engagement Scholars Program, or CODES where students in their first semester particularly use the TRIO Student Support Services definition to report to recruit students, so a lot of Pell-eligible students in that group. They partner with community-based organizations to work on a common problem together in cross-disciplinary teams and they utilize the tools of the digital humanities. It really is a remarkable program with outstanding outcomes, and we have long been proud of our senior assignment, which is required of all undergraduates

and recognized by AAC and U as a signature learning experience. It allows students to apply knowledge and bridge to the next stage. I'll quickly wrap up by talking about state investments that have really made a difference. We added the SIUE Commitment, which is an institutional scholarship program, just in the last few years. It utilizes Pell, Map and Aim High to provide a last dollar award to close the gap for students. The availability of this program has made a difference in our student body. We went from about thirty percent of our undergraduates who were Pell-eligible, we're at thirty-five percent now. Last year, we had 547 undergraduates who were participating in this program and receiving funds through it. 43% of those were receiving MAP. And 18% were receiving AIM high, 50% receiving Pell. If you look at all 547 of those, 70% were receiving at least one of those forms of aid. I'll just lastly say we really depend on our corporate and community partners to help us improve our programs, whether it's identifying new programs that we should develop to meet workforce needs and talent needs or, if it's to host an etiquette dinner, which we require for all of our business majors so that students who are first generation aren't so intimidated at that first professional dinner. They're sitting at the table learning about etiquette and learning about professional dinners, sitting with alums and corporate partners who can help mentor them and help them feel more confident as they go into their careers. In our new health science complex, which we'll be happy to welcome you to in March, we're really excited to have a facility that feels like a hospital wing as you walk through there. But that space is possible and as powerful as it is because chief nursing officers from throughout the region came and said, here are the kinds of things this space should have, and the ways in which it should be organized so that your graduates are ready on the first day at work in our facilities. So, I have much more I'd be thrilled to say, happy to answer questions, but thank you for the opportunity to share.

MOD: Great, thank you very much, Dr. Cobb. It's clear that SIUE is doing a lot of things right to help students.

MOD: All right, finally, we're going to turn to Dr. Arti Dhupelia. The questions that I have for her are, from your statewide perspective, which program strategies or partnerships have been most effective in helping low-income students succeed academically and economically? Can you share examples that illustrate the impact of these best practices on student success? And how can state-level initiatives, whether policies, investments, or collaborations, improve student outcomes?

DD: Thank you. Can you all hear me okay? Great. Well, thank you, for the opportunity to be here today and share my perspectives with you. My name is Arti Dhupelia and I serve as the CEO of the non-profit One Million Degrees, or OMD. Our mission is to accelerate community college students on career pathways to economic mobility and we do this work by partnering with higher ed institutions to offer a holistic support model that provides students with personal, academic, career, and financial support, and we are in our 20th year of serving toward this mission. We expect to serve 3,000 students this year in Chicago, and Illinois, and now also in three additional states nationwide. I'll combine my answers to your first two questions together and then transition to the third. When I think about what works the headline for me is that the most impactful programs or strategies see and support the whole student rather than just supporting one aspect of a student's development. And I'll share three things that stand out to me not only in OMD's work, but in others as well. First is addressing students' basic needs and insecurity as a critical piece of that work, because as some of you have heard me say, students need to thrive personally in order to thrive academically. City Colleges of Chicago, for example, found in 2024 that 69% of students surveyed experience one kind of basic needs and security, whether food or housing or technology, now has a comprehensive Thrive strategy in place to address that. And there's all sorts of, uh, data statewide and nationwide that shows that these strategies support students' success in college. Second, I will, of course, talk about the

One Million Degrees program model, because it's designed to address the needs of the whole student in order to fuel students' degree completion and post-completion success. At the center of our model is a success coach we call a program coordinator who meets with students in the program one-on-one, at least once a month, to provide encouragement and connection, and to ensure they connect to the resources in a college, like tutoring and counseling, and that they're taking the academic and career development steps necessary to stay on track this person is proactively reaching out and is not going to let an OMD scholar fall through the cracks, as can sometimes happen in a big institution. Additionally, students participate in a monthly series of career development workshops where volunteer coaches from industry partners support students in career development focusing on topics like writing a resume, cover letter, learning to interview for jobs, and network. We also build partnerships with employers as pipelines to match students to apprenticeships and internships and jobs. I'd also say these workshops provide a cohort experience that really build a sense of belonging for our students Lastly, we provide financial support so students have the opportunity to earn up to \$1,000 in stipends per year as they complete different success milestones like meeting with their advisor or registering for the next term, or completing their resume.

randomized controlled trial study published by University of Chicago a few years ago found that our OMD students are 73% more likely to earn an associate degree as compared to similar students not participating in the program. The third set of strategies I want to mention are about supporting students' transitions across different stages of their journey, because I think these are spaces where students fall through the cracks if our work isn't intentional enough. So from K-12 to college, from community college to universities, and from higher ed to employment. So, I do want to lift up Illinois STAR Act from, I believe, 10 years ago, if I'm not mistaken, which included things like Illinois Articulation Initiative and requiring Associate of Arts and Sciences degrees to fully transfer to public universities, and I do think these types of policies have positively impacted transfer rates across the state. I also want to call out the Chicago Roadmap, which is a strong partnership between Chicago Public Schools and City Colleges of Chicago that has really driven up early college enrollment and city colleges' overall enrollment through collaborative efforts around things like early career exposure all the way down even to middle school transitional English and Math, and then targeted efforts to grow early college enrollment in historically underserved high schools.

I also will mention a relatively new initiative for us at OMD, which is the University of Illinois System and One Million Degrees Transfer Drive, where we're supporting each of the UI system institutions to partner with a community college and build a bridge with holistic support so students transfer successfully from community college to university and make it through their first year successfully at university. This is new and sort of getting off the ground this year. I also want to mention, you know, when thinking about a model for supporting the transition from higher ed to employment several years ago at National Lewis University made career exploration, career development, and work-based learning a required part of every undergraduate's experience, so every student takes required credit-bearing career development coursework. Every student must complete an internship as a graduation requirement, and every student has an assigned career advisor supporting them through 6 months post-completion to help them find a job and their employment outcomes do outperform industry benchmarks. As for how state-level initiatives can improve outcomes, I'll quickly just say three things. One is obviously policies that force evidence-based practices, and I would say particularly those where the state can push an action that might take an institutional years, many years to get, for example, faculty buy-in, and so I think about things like IEL. I think about things like, dev ed reform, for example. I'll also make an unusual ask for the future. I'm a big believer in requiring attendance reporting in every classroom and every institution. It's the number one

predictor of student success in high schools, and I found that to be the same in college, and it creates great data for early intervention. I would also say investment in driving collaboration across institutions that serve different parts of the student journey, because those transition points can be places where students trip up if we're not making that journey seamless, and what I found is institutions want to partner, but it's a lot of work, right? So you have to invest in making those partnerships work, and you see that additional investment when folks are making it happen. The third thing I would say, which of course will sound biased, is just investing in evidence-based programs that work, right? So find the bright spots of programs that are accelerators of public institutions' work. Like, in K-12, a one goal in community colleges, of course, a 1 million degrees, and with universities, an organization like Braven where you have proven outcomes and support institutions to build these types of community partnerships that are proven to accelerate outcomes growth, particularly for low-income and first-gen students.

MOD: It's alright, I feel like we probably could have heard a lot more from all of you and learned a lot more, but we just have limited time, so... I do think if we take all these perspectives together, they show how institutional practice and partnerships with nonprofits can influence the outcomes that were highlighted in the data in the report and it can give us, as a board, some levers that we might be able to look at for improving student outcomes as well. So, thanks to everyone. I'm now going to turn it over to questions from the board.

Chair Kothari opened the floor for questions and after several questions, thanked the panel for the presentation.

D. 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:

Keith Nyquist, Vice-President University Professionals of IL #4100, university funding
Hassan Hillard, Advance Illinois, SB13
Andrew Franson, ISU student, increase in university funding
Betsy Jewell, parent of EIU student, release of 2% funding
Eyob Villa-Mogos, Advance Illinois, SB13, FY26 Funding
Nancy Matthews, UPI NEIU, Higher education funding
Cherita Ellens, Women Employed, Higher education funding
Richard Larence, CSU, deferred time to students
Olivia Cronk, NEIU-UPI, Higher education funding
Mike Abrahamson, PCC, Higher education funding
Serenity Howard, CSU, 2% funding, higher education funding
N'mari Ward, CSU, higher education funding
Gabe Pellebon, CSU, Higher education funding

E. Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Recommendations Presentation

Director Ostro presented an overview of the Fiscal Year 2027 budget recommendations.

At the conclusion of the presentation Chair Kothari opened the floor to questions. After comments, Chair Kothari thanked Director Ostro for the presentation.

The presentation can be found on the IBHE website.

F. Action Items

1. Consideration and Approval of Fiscal Year 2027 Higher Education Budget Recommendations, Operation, Grants, and Capital Improvements (Ginger Ostro)

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

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

Southern Illinois University Carbonale

- Doctor of Philosophy in Biomedical Engineering

Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC or the University) requests authorization to offer a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Biomedical Engineering in the Southern region. The proposed program, administered by the School of Electrical, Computer, and Biomedical Engineering (ECBE), is designed to prepare graduates with deep and fundamental knowledge in the field of biomedical engineering, equip them with a highly desirable and advanced skill set, create new knowledge through original research and publications, and foster professional development that will help graduates succeed in the global economy. Applicants entering the program with a master's degree, are required to complete 24 credit hours of graduate lecture type courses and 24 dissertation credit hours. The program also offers a direct and accelerated option that requires 30 credit hours of graduate lecture type courses and 24 dissertation credit hours. All candidates must have completed a two-credit hour course in life sciences that includes medical ethics. 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, staff, and financial resources in place to support the program.

Approval request summary, including staff conclusion, follows in attachments.

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

- Bachelor of Arts in Sports Media in the Prairie Region

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC or the University) requests authorization to offer a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Sports Media in the Prairie Region. The 124-hour program is designed to provide a rigorous, interdisciplinary education that integrates core coursework in advertising, journalism, and media and cinema studies with specialized instruction focused on the sports industry. This structure ensures that graduates develop both theoretical knowledge and practical skills relevant to contemporary sports media careers.

The proposed program will prepare students for professional roles such as sports broadcasters, strategic communication specialists, public relations professionals, content creators, and digital storytellers. The program will be jointly administered by the three departments within the College of Media: the Charles H. Sandage Department of Advertising, the Department of Journalism, and the Department of Media and Cinema Studies, with additional elective opportunities through the College of Applied Health Sciences' Department of Recreation, Sport, and Tourism. While students will enroll in courses shared with existing majors in advertising, journalism, and media and cinema studies, the BA in Sports Media offers a distinct curricular focus on sports media across disciplines, differentiating it from current programs and providing a unique educational pathway for students seeking careers in this growing industry. 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.

- Social and Behavioral Science Institute in the Prairie Region

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC or the University) is seeking authorization to establish the Social and Behavioral Science Institute (SBSI) in the Prairie region. The institute started in 2017 as a strategic initiative within the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Research and Innovation (OVCR). Shortly thereafter, in 2018, the SBSI initiative was included in the University's strategic plan. SBSI was then housed within the Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Institute and received funding commitments from the chancellor and provost in 2019. Upon review of its structure, OVCR determined that SBSI's mission would be supported and recognized by the University to become an established new unit of administration and would seek IBHE approval.

SBSI currently operates under OVCR, serving primarily as a research unit without a direct instruction component. The Social and Behavioral Science Institute is integral in providing student learning and training opportunities in advanced research methods, policy, and public engagement. SBSI aspires to position UIUC as a national leader through excellence in social and behavioral science across disciplines by leveraging the unique strengths of the campus to foster groundbreaking advances. This goal will be accomplished through evidence-based public engagement and research-practice partnerships that bridge science and society to support the UIUC land-grant mission. 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 student learning and training opportunities in advanced research methods, policy, and public engagement. The University has sufficient library, technology, and financial resources to support the institute.

Chair Kothari asked if there were any questions. Hearing none, he called for a motion to approve. Vice Chair Herrero moved to approve the programs. Noble 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:

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

Not-For-Profit Executive Summary

Southern California University of Health Sciences

- Operating Authority in the Chicago Region

Southern California University of Health Sciences (SCUHS or the University) is a private, nonprofit institution with a primary mission to educate students as competent, caring, and successful integrative healthcare practitioners and professionals. The University is committed to providing an academic community imbued with kindness, integrity, humor, and determination. It offers educational credentials ranging from certificates through doctoral programs in areas such as health sciences, acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, medical science, genetic counseling, human genetics and genomics, physician assistant, chiropractic, occupational therapy, physical therapy, whole health leadership, Ayurvedic medicine, and psychodynamic psychology.

SCU was founded in 1911 as Los Angeles College of Chiropractic (LACC). The Chiropractic Initiative Act of 1922 was established, adopting legal requirements for chiropractic education. During this time and continuing through the late 1940s, the LACC absorbed the Eclectic College of Chiropractic and continued to expand curriculum and acquire many institutions including Golden State College of Chiropractic, Cale Chiropractic College, College of Chiropractic Physicians and Surgeons, Southern California College of Chiropractic, Hollywood College of Chiropractic, California College of Chiropractic, and the California College of Natural Healing Arts. In the late 1940s, the non-profit corporation California Chiropractic Educational Foundation (CCEF) was created and acquired LACC. The holding company CCEF retained the LACC name for its chiropractic college and moved its operations to Glendale, California. In 1981, LACC moved to Whittier, California. In 2000, the Board of LACC voted to change the name of the institution to Southern California University of Health Sciences (SCUHS) in order to offer additional programs in the health sciences. In that same year, the Board created the College of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine which is today's College of Eastern Medicine, housing both Master and Doctor of Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine programs.

SCUHS is seeking operating authority in the Chicago region as part of its acquisition of several acupuncture and Chinese medicine programs from Pacific College of Health Sciences (PCHS) which holds IBHE authorization in the Chicago region. The acquisition of PCHS will help SCUHS work towards its strategic goals to become "The nation's premier integrative and interdisciplinary healthcare educator."

SCUHS policies are 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.

Chair Kothari asked if there were any questions. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve. Board Member Noble moved to approve the new programs of instruction. Bush 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:

I. Consent Agenda Action Items

1. Consideration and Approval of Board Meeting Minutes – November 12, 2025

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

J. Executive Session

The Executive Session was moved to the March meeting.

L. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion of Board Member Noble and seconded by Board Member Botman, a voice vote was taken, and by unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at approximately 4:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Melissa Bealon, Secretary to the Board.