

Public Comments: February 19, 2021-February 26, 2021

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1. Comment #1 (Strategic Plan Response): Received 2/22/2021

Strategic Plan Response

Andrianna Smyrniotis [REDACTED]

To: Ginger Ostro

To those at IBHE:

I looked through the strategic plan from the lens of an advocate for Power to the Profession Professional Standards, and the Unifying Framework. These works were developed and vetted nationally through the hard work of fifteen early childhood education member agencies. Their work took 4+ years to balance needs to the science behind child development and quality. Why did it take so long? You may know that for work to be done well it must be done with care and true buy-in from stakeholders. You may know that good policy work is done that will allow flexibility among and between agencies and organizations affected by the policies. For example, rural TEPs will have different barriers to high school > career pathways compared to urban TEPs. Articulation agreements are not always equitable or achievable. Colleges and universities are not cookie cutter institutions, nor should they be. They evolved from community need and response of each institution to those needs.

As I read the strategic plan I returned to the comprehensive, research-based information at [naeyc \(www.naeyc.org\)](http://www.naeyc.org). There is no conflict of intention, recognition of needs, or acknowledgement of the critical importance to compensate the workforce to a living wage. I do take issue with preliminary strategies under consideration for priority area 1. Why lower standards? It is no secret that community-based programs and some PFA classrooms do not meet quality standards. What is the point of accepting prior knowledge if it is outdated or inappropriate? Rapidly-changing skill needs? DAP is DAP. NAEYC competencies are the gold standard of the profession. IBHE and ISBE would be well-served in their efforts to publicly inform all ECE programs about DAP and best practices. Teachers should be supported as they return to the **classroom** (virtual, in-person, or hybrid). Programs should be compensated for their staff upgrading skills. Students closest to earning their AAS or BA should be given preference to educational support monies. Every professional should be given a living wage. It is no secret that wages are the biggest issue keeping competent people out of our profession. Fix that. Train those we have and attract talent with living wages. This is not rocket science.

Now I move to the higher education core principles. ICC exists to serve students - to achieve high quality standards and practices to benefit our youngest children to their full potential. ICC operates under an equity lens and seeks to improve our program and break barriers. This is taken directly from the third bullet in the core principles section: "We value the diversity of our institutions and programs

including public and private, research and regional, four-year and two-year institutions, and credential and certificate programs." ICC is not included in statewide conversations or initiatives. ICC works directly with students to get them their credentials. We offer certificates and degrees in ECE. I consider ICC a diverse institution because we do not fit into the majority culture of other 2-year institutions in Illinois. And yet, I am/ICC is precluded. In this instance, you do not value the diversity of my 2-year institution, working to align to NAEYC. To be equitable, include me. If not, rewrite this principle to be accurate.

I don't want to think that ISBE is working against the largest professional membership organization in the nation and its P2P initiative. I am dedicated to maintaining a connection with our community EC programs. I am dedicated to modifying our courses to increase our attraction to working students. I am dedicated to our connections with high school students and inviting them into the profession. I am committed to earn NAEYC accreditation, which will, I am informed, align with state credentials to accommodate students who may want them. There is a national standard. Illinois should not be an island. That creates a barrier to our workforce. If they move out of state as many are, they will find they are not qualified for the profession they love.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrianna Smyrniotis, Professor
Program Coordinator, Advisor
Early Childhood Education

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

"There is no such thing as online preschool," NAEYC CEO Rhian Evans Allvin wrote in an online statement. "Technology-based apps are not preschool, and they are not high-quality child care."

I will reply to emails within 24 business-day hours, Monday through Friday. Thank you!!



**2. Comment #2 (FAC Public Caucus Recommendations for Scholarship and Research):
Received 2/23/21**

FAC Public Caucus Recommendations for Scholarship and Research

Carr, Amy [REDACTED]

To: Ginger Ostro

Cc: Schumacher, Shawn [REDACTED]

Ginger,

Please see attached--a slightly longer version of what Shawn shared today. He'll share his version separately with the board as well.

Thanks,

Amy

--

Dr. Amy Carr

Professor of Religious Studies, Department of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Coordinator, Master of Liberal Arts & Sciences (MLAS) Program

Western Illinois University

Morgan 203-A

IBHE Faculty Advisory Council Public University Caucus Recommendations for Supporting Scholarship and Research in the Strategic Plan for Higher Ed in Illinois

In its meeting on February 19, 2021, the IBHE FAC Public University Caucus responded to a request to come up with specific recommendations regarding support for scholarship and research in the strategic plan.

The draft of the strategic plan states that strategies to address the priority areas (access, affordability, and credential/degree attainment) should align with six core principles. One of those principles is "Higher education is a public good that enriches life":

Higher education is a public good that enriches life. We depend on higher education to preserve, expand, and transmit knowledge, offer solutions to society's challenges, serve as a civic partner, and enrich life. Research at our institutions expands understanding and drives innovation and economic development. Learning is enhanced when students participate in research and hands-on experiences. Liberal arts and humanities ensure we support the whole student and better understand the human condition. Institutions are vibrant anchors of communities.

The emphasis on expanding early college in current drafts of the plan does not align with support for scholarship and research, for reasons we have described in earlier feedback. In particular, the exponential growth of Gen Ed courses taught by high school teachers reduces the student credit hour production of college and university faculty members in the liberal arts and sciences. The range of course offerings for dual credit courses also is limited to what can count for high school credit, especially when the range of offerings is further limited to what high school teachers can offer. This means a wider

range of fields may be off-limits to Gen Ed exploration by high school students—fields like African American studies, anthropology, art history, geology, philosophy, religious studies, and women’s studies, among others. Many of these smaller liberal arts fields depend on Gen Ed courses, so there is further pressure to close programs in these areas, despite the increasing recognition (as stated in the core principle above) that the liberal arts and humanities are foundational to the meaning of higher education. Closing these programs means removing spaces for scholarship and research in these fields at colleges and universities. Moreover, students who enter a four year university with their General Education courses completed during high school will have less exposure to possible major and minors—possibilities traditionally explored through Gen Ed courses on a college or university campus.

We have described these concerns in our previous caucus recommendations, as well as in the FAC Dual Credit position paper and FAC Dual Credit Working Group responses to the strategic plan.

Here are some of our specific recommendations:

1. Add a design group whose specific aim is to assess the alignment of every strategic priority strategy with the core principle “Higher education is a public good,” with particular attention to each strategy’s potential or likely effects on scholarship and research. This design group could also recommend alternatives that enhance rather than diminish the state’s commitment to scholarship and research.
2. Limit early college that can fulfill the General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) to no more than two courses, with no more than one course from any of the four areas (Communication, Humanities and Fine Arts, Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Life Sciences, Social and Behavioral Sciences). This provides exposure to college-level work (ideally in a college rather than high school setting), but limits how much college happens in high school itself.
3. Rather than diverting state resources to early college opportunities, invest in the institutions that support scholarship and research: adequately fund public universities and community colleges so that tuition costs can be driven down. This reduces parental pressure for “cheap” college through dual credit courses, and gives students the traditionally wider set of options for their college course work and degree paths.
4. Create public-private partnerships that connect research findings to the needs of industries, business, and local to global communities. At the same time, ensure that the academic freedom of researchers is respected, since universities have been the space in which knowledge is expanded and discoveries made without a purely applied end in mind.
5. Invest in opportunities for part-time independent scholarship and research by those without college or university teaching positions who are employed outside of academia. Create a task force to determine how university libraries can make their resources available to independent scholars in the humanities and social sciences, wherever they live or work in the state (currently only those employed by universities have full access to library resources). Explore avenues for scholars with terminal degrees who, lacking teaching positions, still seek to pursue part-time research in the sciences and in applied fields, and need connections to university resources.
6. If our above recommendations are not pursued, we suggest streamlining secondary to post-secondary higher education not only in the direction of credentialing, but in the direction of scholarship and research: expect high school teachers offering dual credit courses to contribute to scholarship and

research in the fields they teach. Provide time and resources for high school teachers and community college faculty to pursue scholarship and research, and assist them in completing doctorates and other terminal degrees in their fields.

Our caucus identified additional harms that accompany expanded early college:

- Students who anticipate attending a 4-year institution, but who enter college with most or all of their Gen Ed requirements completed, will have a shorter time at a 4 year school, and so much less opportunity to be mentored by professors and drawn into undergraduate research. Research teams at universities often include undergraduate and graduate students along with faculty members. **Faculty-undergraduate research programs are key to recruiting top-notch students to our institutions.** These research programs attract some of the best students and help to keep them in the state of Illinois.
- Expanding **early college** in the name of equity **fosters new forms of inequity**. By limiting how many early college courses can transfer, highly selective private colleges and universities across the country that do not opt into the Illinois Articulation Initiative (which forces the acceptance of all early college courses) can now market themselves in the way that many of Illinois' public universities increasingly cannot do: by promising to offer a full 4-year residential undergraduate education, with the opportunity to build meaningful social capital over time with faculty and fellow students, by taking courses taught by faculty members with terminal degrees in their fields who are actively engaged in scholarship and research.
- One might argue that early college still allows a commitment to the liberal arts and sciences, including the humanities and social sciences, because early college still involves taking Gen Ed courses. But for every dual credit Gen Ed course taken, a student's educational engagement with the humanities, social sciences, or sciences is cut in half (since one course counts as two).

Members of the public caucus emphasized that scholarship and research are a public good, including scholarship in all the fields that help us "better understand the human condition." One scientist said her motto is, "At most schools the STEM makes the living, but the arts and humanities make life worth living." A mathematician pointed out that most patents are initiated by work done in universities, and added that humanities research is a national security issue. Another faculty member observed that in Korea, Samsung is training employees in the humanities, including philosophy and logic, because they foster the ability to see problems from new angles and to imagine alternatives; this increases innovation, even in technology. Several noted that many employers don't want employees who come in with a specific skill set so much as with soft skills and with the ability to think independently and critically, "outside the box." This ability to adapt is also crucial when most people are changing jobs and careers over the course of their lives.

Our caucus perceives that scholarship and research is taken for granted in the strategic plan, as something that exists in the background rather than foreground of educational policy strategizing. But the unintentional consequence of early college and alternative credentialing is a disinvestment in scholarship and research, and in the fields that are supported by these endeavors—including fields

important for all the reasons stated in the core principle, “Higher education is a public good that enriches life.”

3. Comment #3 (IBHE Strategic Planning Board meeting): Received 2/23/2021

IBHE Strategic Planning Board meeting.

From: Schumacher, Shawn [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, February 25, 2021 2:13 PM

To: Lohman, Gretchen [REDACTED] Rembusch, Tracy [REDACTED]

Cc: Bernoteit, Stephanie [REDACTED]

Subject: [External] Advisory Committee Report notes

The notes from the February 23, 2021 meeting are attached.

Best always,

Shawn

Shawn Schumacher, Ph.D. | Senior Professor English and Humanities

Faculty Advisory Council to the Illinois Board of Higher Education | Chair

[REDACTED]

1221 N. Swift Road | Addison, IL 60101 | devry.edu



Acting Board Chair Kothari, esteemed members of the Board, fellow colleagues, and friends:

The Faculty Advisory Council to the Illinois Board of Higher Education has been invited to convey specific recommendations regarding support for scholarship and research in the IBHE strategic plan.

The draft of the strategic plan states that strategies to address the priority areas—access, affordability, and credential/degree attainment—should align with six core principles. The fifth core principle, as written in the current iteration of the strategic plan, is “Higher education is a public good that enriches life”:

The emphasis on expanding early college in current drafts of the plan does not align with support for scholarship and research, for reasons we have described in earlier feedback. In particular, the exponential growth of Gen Ed courses taught by high school teachers reduces the student credit hour production of college and university faculty members in the liberal arts and sciences. The range of course offerings for dual credit courses also is limited to what can count for high school credit, especially when the range of offerings is further limited to what high school teachers can offer. This means a wider range of fields may be off-limits to Gen Ed exploration by high school students—fields like African American studies, anthropology, art history, geology, philosophy, religious studies, and women’s studies, among others. Many of these smaller liberal arts fields depend on Gen Ed courses, so there is further pressure to close programs in these areas, despite the increasing recognition that the liberal arts and humanities are foundational to the meaning of higher education. Closing these programs means removing spaces for scholarship and research in these fields at colleges and universities. Moreover, students who enter a four year university with their General Education courses completed during high school will have less exposure to possible major and minors—possibilities traditionally explored through Gen Ed courses on a college or university campus.

These concerns have been addressed in our previous FAC recommendations, as well as in the FAC Dual Credit position paper and FAC Dual Credit Working Group responses to the strategic plan, which have been provided to the IBHE staff.

Now, I’d like to relay the Faculty Advisory Council’s six specific recommendations:

Recommendation 1:

Add a design group whose specific aim is to assess the alignment of every strategic priority strategy with the core principle “Higher education is a public good,” with particular attention to each strategy’s potential or likely effects on scholarship and research. This design group could also recommend alternatives that enhance, rather than diminish, the state’s commitment to scholarship and research.

Recommendation 2:

Limit early college that can fulfill the General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) to no more than two courses, with no more than one course from any of the four areas (Communication, Humanities and Fine Arts, Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Life Sciences, Social and Behavioral Sciences). This provides exposure to college-level work—ideally in a college rather than high school setting—but limits how much college happens in high school itself.

Recommendation 3:

Rather than diverting state resources to early college opportunities, invest in the institutions that support scholarship and research. Adequately fund public universities and community colleges so that

tuition costs can be driven down. This reduces parental pressure for “cheap” college through dual credit courses, and gives students the traditionally wider set of options for their college course work and degree paths.

Recommendation 4:

Create public-private partnerships that connect research findings to the needs of industries, business, and local to global communities. At the same time, ensure that the academic freedom of researchers is respected, since universities have been the space in which knowledge is expanded and discoveries made without a purely applied end in mind.

Recommendation 5:

Invest in opportunities for part-time independent scholarship and research by those without college or university teaching positions who are employed outside of academia. Create a task force to determine how university libraries can make their resources available to independent scholars in the humanities and social sciences, wherever they live or work in the state. Explore avenues for scholars with terminal degrees who, lacking teaching positions, still seek to pursue part-time research in the sciences and in applied fields, and need connections to university resources.

Recommendation 6:

If our above recommendations are not pursued, we suggest streamlining secondary to post-secondary higher education not only in the direction of credentialing, but in the direction of scholarship and research. We should expect high school teachers offering dual credit courses to contribute to scholarship and research in the fields they teach. We also should provide time and resources for high school teachers and community college faculty to pursue scholarship and research, and assist them in completing doctorates and other terminal degrees in their fields.

Furthermore, through Council discussions, additional harms that accompany expanded early college have also been identified:

First, students who anticipate attending a 4-year institution, but who enter college with most or all of their Gen Ed requirements completed, will have a shorter time at a 4 year school, and so much less opportunity to be mentored by professors and drawn into undergraduate research. Research teams at universities often include undergraduate and graduate students along with faculty members. Faculty-undergraduate research programs are key to recruiting top-notch students to our institutions. These research programs attract some of the best students and help to keep them in the state of Illinois.

In addition, expanding early college in the name of equity fosters new forms of inequity. By limiting how many early college courses can transfer, highly selective private colleges and universities across the country that do not opt into the Illinois Articulation Initiative can now market themselves in the way that many of Illinois’ public universities increasingly cannot do: by promising to offer a full 4-year residential undergraduate education, with the opportunity to build meaningful social capital over time with faculty and fellow students, by taking courses taught by faculty members with terminal degrees in their fields who are actively engaged in scholarship and research.

Finally, one might argue that early college still allows a commitment to the liberal arts and sciences, including the humanities and social sciences, because early college still involves taking Gen Ed courses. But for every dual credit Gen Ed course taken, a student's educational engagement with the humanities, social sciences, or sciences is cut in half, since one course counts as two.

Through continued discussions, Council members emphasized that scholarship and research are a public good, including scholarship in all the fields that help us "better understand the human condition." One Council member, a scientist, said her motto is, "At most schools the STEM makes the living, but the arts and humanities make life worth living." Another Council member, a mathematician, pointed out that most patents are initiated by work done in universities, and added that humanities research is a national security issue. Another faculty member observed that in Korea, Samsung is training employees in the humanities, including philosophy and logic, because they foster the ability to see problems from new angles and to imagine alternatives; this increases innovation, even in technology. Several Council members noted that many employers don't want employees who come in with a specific skill set so much as with soft skills and with the ability to think independently and critically, "outside the box." This ability to adapt is also crucial, when most people are changing jobs and careers over the course of their lives.

The Faculty Advisory Council to the Illinois Board of Higher Education perceives that scholarship and research is taken for granted in the strategic plan—as something that exists in the background rather than foreground of educational policy strategizing. But the unintentional consequence of early college and alternative credentialing is a disinvestment in scholarship and research and the fields that are supported by these endeavors—including fields important for all the reasons stated in the core principle, "Higher education is a public good that enriches life."

Faithfully submitted,

Shawn Schumacher, Ph.D.

Faculty Advisory Council Chair

February 23, 2021

4. Comment #4 (Illinois Access): Received 2/25/21

illinois access [REDACTED]

To: Ginger Ostro

To: IBHE Strategic Plan Advisory

2/25/2021

We, a group of committed and experienced community college Early Childhood faculty, gratefully accept the request to provide feedback on the IBHE Draft Strategy Document 2/2/21. We are professionals who work across the state of Illinois within Certificate, AAS and AA programs preparing and supporting the early childhood workforce in private and public settings. IBHE and ICCB are valued and engaged partners in educator preparation, and therefore we would like to express our support, with limited concerns, for the Strategic Plan contents.

Beginning with the “Working Higher Education Core Principles” on page 6, we wholeheartedly agree with the first principle: “Students are our priority”. Student’s short-term objectives and long-term success should always be first in mind to guide IBHE decisions. Institutions of higher education must always begin where each student is at presently, and then provide the instruction, financial resources and companion supports to help them overcome barriers and reach their life’s potential.

Considering the second principle: “Equity drives our system”, we strongly agree that IBHE must always view each decision to ensure it will build access and affordability for all students. As Early Childhood faculty, we lead programs where the majority of our students are female, first generation, and low- income students. Depending on our institution, our Early Childhood programs will have high representation of students of color, adult learners, and rural students. IBHE should continue to engage with diverse students and connect with faculty from community colleges to explore and determine what services and supports are desirable, utilized and impactful.

We applaud IBHE for including “We reinforce the P-20 education continuum.” as another Higher Education Core Principle. Like IBHE, as faculty we thoughtfully acknowledge our role in facilitating the preparation of future early childhood birth – 3rd grade teachers. Taking a cohesive and collaborative approach with professionals across all education settings, IBHE should continue this important long-term strategy.

In addition to our congruence with the three Core Principles stated previously, there is much in the Strategic Plan draft that we support. However, there are a few statements which give us pause. We also would like additional specific emphasis added to the Educator Workforce section that would explicitly engage new, interested candidates to begin a pathway toward teaching.

Concern #1 on page 1 under Priority Area 1.

o Build on current educational delivery innovations and broaden to new ways and flexible ways to deliver and document education (e.g., shorter-term, stackable learning modules to help students develop new skills; competency-based models that provide options for students to complete a personalized path to degree; portable ways for students to document their credentials, like a “passport”).

We agree we must continue to innovate with multiple modalities and up to date instructional delivery. It is essential to allow institutions flexibility to design courses and programs to meet learner needs in line with accrediting bodies. However, we are hesitant to agree to such specific action steps without understanding how faculty will be engaged in the execution. The examples given blur training, module portable learning and credentials with college coursework and degree attainment. We respectfully suggest more study and research is needed to understand the rate of retention, future understanding, and delayed skill production after completion of "short term, stackable learning modules" in lieu of

college courses and certificates. It is a disservice to students of all backgrounds if an emphasis on completion rates and segmented learning leads to uneven, inferior career preparation, as well as additional barriers to credential or degree attainment and transferability. Further, it is a disservice to the children and families for whom they serve, which can lead to further inequity for children.

Furthermore, in the same priority area the phrase “personalized path to degree” is mentioned. This “personalized path” is also stated later in the strategic plan. As faculty, we work with diverse student populations with varying personal and community needs and help them reach their individual career objectives. However, we have strong reservations about this “personalized path” encompassing this IBHE Strategic Plan due to the significant level of financial resources that would have to be committed. Competency based education systems, where each student would have their individual baseline competencies toward a subject measured and mapped would require an entire overhaul of the Illinois Higher Education System. That investment of time and financial resources could be invested in more immediate and impactful strategies in student supports, advising, tutoring, cohorts, apprenticeships, scholarships, etc. Illinois has a finite amount of capital to invest in higher education, therefore we should be identifying and funding those that will be the most student focused, cost effective, and high-quality innovations.

Specifically, to the field of early childhood, community college faculty are in support of capital being funneled to the teachers and professionals who are in direct service based on an equity lens. All early childhood college degrees and pathways must align to the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s Professional Standards and Competencies to ensure portability, state to state. To be successful and impactful on the early childhood teacher shortage crisis, these pathways must be connected to substantial salary increases based on credential and degree attainment, regardless of employer and in alignment to the national ECE landscape.

Concern #2, page 2 State educator workforce,

How can the higher education system respond to the state’s urgent need to address educator shortages, including early childhood educator upskilling needs?

As a group of Early Childhood faculty at community colleges across Illinois, it is wonderful to have a spotlight on the critical and urgent need for qualified, well-prepared early childhood educators. At most community colleges there is only one full-time and limited part-time faculty, yet we have successfully initiated dual credit partnerships, transfer agreements, cohorts and personalized student advising. There still needs to be more collaboration and discussion with IBHE around these areas to better support and advance our diverse student populations. Considering the four strategies mentioned, we will continue to work to support the strategic direction of IBHE to the extent that it aligns with what is best for children, families, our students, and the communities our college districts serve. However, as explained above, we will remain mindful and focused on the depth and breadth of our teacher preparation when aligning to competency structures.

Respectfully, we ask that two strategies which are mentioned later in the strategic plan are also specifically stated as “educator workforce strategies”

- (1) “Build better, more explicit partnerships among institutions of higher education, high schools, and Early Childhood employers”. Instead of an emphasis on “prior learning” where educators become better prepared for the workforce they are already part of, institutions of higher education could have additional resources to form clear and supportive pathways beginning in high school. There are many models for these partnerships currently operating across the U.S. The strategies below should also be called out as specific needs for teacher preparation.
 - Expand equitable access to and success in early college, including but not limited to dual credit, early college models, etc.
 - Expand internships, apprenticeships, experiential learning, learn-and-earn opportunities, etc.
 - Provide meaningful career exploration, career development, and work-based learning opportunities for students.

- (2) “Close equity gaps” and “Design a system to meet students’ needs”. As stated in the IBHE draft strategic plan, it is our moral imperative to prepare an early childhood education workforce that represents all children and families of our communities. Through our experiences, we believe that the strategies of “high-impact academic and student support practices, such as intrusive advising, ... first-year experience, summer bridge” should also be highlighted as promising strategies to increase the enrollment and completion of diverse students in all teacher preparation programs. Cohorts could be formed to formalize academic and personal supports and create belonging and commitment between students. Placing cohort delivery models into the IBHE Strategic Plan with more emphasis holds promise to guide and engage a more diverse educator workforce.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer feedback and suggestions for the IBHE Strategic Plan, and stand ready to continue our service to children, families, communities, and our community college students.

Respectfully,

Dr. Melissa Batchelor, Lewis and Clark Community College

Carolyn A. Beal, Faculty

Sarah Gowler, Kankakee Community College

Melissa Johnson, Highland Community

College Tammy Landgraf, Faculty

Paula Luszc, Faculty

Dr. Dawn S. Munson, Elgin Community

College Kathleen Nikolai, Harper College

Andrianna Smyrniotis, Illinois Central College

Melissa Szymczak, Joliet Junior College

Dr. Marilyn Toliver, John A Logan College

Danyle Watkins, Faculty

Jean Zaar, College of DuPage