

## Applegate's Update

### **Fighting the Budget Battle...**

This was an eventful week for ongoing efforts to highlight the impact of the current budget crisis on Illinois higher education. Hundreds of students descended on the Capitol to share their concerns about the lack of a budget for their institutions, MAP recipients, and their own education. I met with a group of the students at our offices. They are doing their part: working hard, pursuing degrees our state needs in its workforce, and now even assuming an advocacy role for our system. Let us hope their voices will be heard and our leaders will find a path to progress. The Presidents of our public community colleges and universities also came to the Capitol to share their perspective with state leaders.

As the IBHE has repeatedly said, as important as MAP funding is it is not just about MAP. Without a state appropriation our public institutions are left to exhaust emergency reserve funds or defer costs for necessary and sometimes even emergency needs, and more. One institution has told us MAP funding represents funds needed for only about 45 days of operation. Our faculty has shared stories, such as a biology professor being forced to cancel labs because vendors have suspended providing lab supplies. Advocating for an adequate state budget is, of necessity, priority one.

### **...and Serving Our Veterans**

However, the important work of educating Illinois college students cannot come to a halt. For example, at the request of the Legislature, we are launching the Military Prior Learning Assessment Task Force (P.A. 99-395). The goal of this task force is to identify and support scale up of efforts to ensure our veterans returning to college are afforded all the credit they deserve for the classes and training they received prior to coming to college. This will require our institutions to ramp up their efforts to engage in "prior learning assessment (PLA)" to assign credit to that work. Some estimates project that about 1.6 million people will be leaving the military in coming years and many of those will be coming to Illinois.

Most of these "adult learners" deserve credit for their prior learning. Research has shown that providing that prior credit is one of the most powerful strategies for ensuring degree completion for any adult learner coming to college by doubling their completion rates. I have met too many veterans who were forced to retrace their steps through courses they had already mastered because what they learned was "not taught here" on a particular campus. This is a waste of their time, resources (many are supported by public dollars), and the capacity of the institution to serve the maximum number of students. As an example, one veteran was a trained air force traffic controller who landed multi-million dollar planes while in the service. Despite that his college (not in Illinois) forced him to take many basic courses in his major for which he had already more than mastered the content. As he told me, "Dr. Applegate, I'd love to give my seat to a student who really needs this basic course."

The IBHE has made increasing the number of adult learners going to and completing college a priority. Our data suggest that over the last five years we have made

minimal progress in providing this opportunity to our adult working population. More than one out of five members of our adult workforce actually went to college, accumulated hours, but never graduated. Without this population, given the flattening numbers of high school graduates, we will never meet our workforce needs even if Illinois improves greatly to lead the nation in high school to college success numbers. The work with our veterans, important in its own right, also will open the door to prior learning credit and college success for all adults coming to college. We need all of their talent, veterans and non-veteran adults alike, to succeed as a state.

As you will see as you read the rest of the *IBHE Bulletin* much more work is moving forward despite the budget impasse. IBHE has completed its first analysis of the degree productivity of public universities' academic programs. This annual effort will help our institutions focus resources to produce the maximum number of high quality degrees possible. It is an important step in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Illinois higher education system.

IBHE led the state effort to streamline the process for the delivery of online degree programs in Illinois to better serve and protect the interests of our students. The "State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement" (SARA) is off to a fast start: expanding opportunities and consumer protection for students who benefit from greater access to online degree offerings from around the nation as well as extending Illinois' own online offerings to more students nationwide.

Let us all hope this good work and more like it will soon be accelerated by the passage of an adequate state budget.

## 60 x 2025

### **Colleges are Adopting Practices to Increase Graduations *(Reprinted with permission from Rep. Bob Pritchard's "Pritchard's Perspectives," October 19, 2015)***

I recently had the opportunity to attend Complete College America's annual conference (as a member of the Illinois team) and heard some of the best practices to



L to R: Niketa Brar, Governor Rauner's Postsecondary Education Manager, and Representative Bob Pritchard at the CCA Annual Convening

increase graduation rates at colleges and universities. The practices not only significantly increase the number of students passing their first courses but also the number of students graduating in the expected 2 or 4 years. Colleges and universities from across the country reported on their student success after incorporating one or more of the five research based higher education "game changers." In every case the reporting institutions first clearly stated their focus was to increase student completion. Strategies to accomplish this included corequisite remediation courses, encouraging students to carry 15 or more credit hours per semester so they complete on time, and structured class schedules especially for working students. Other strategies included guided pathways to graduation and mentoring that included early warning for variation from the path to graduation on time.

Illinois is one of 33 states that have joined Complete College America's Alliance of States taking bold actions to significantly increase the number of adults successfully completing some certificate or degree after high school. The focus is on achieving degrees and credentials with value in the labor market and closing attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented students.

IBHE has finalized its [Annual Report on New, Consolidated, Closed, and Low Producing Programs at Illinois Public Universities](#) and has sent copies to Governor Rauner and the General Assembly as required by 110 ILCS 205/7. Working closely with the public universities and building on existing institutional program review processes, IBHE identified academic programs that fell below thresholds for degree completion, agreed upon by the universities. The universities described their plans to eliminate, consolidate or redesign these programs, as well as flagging for priority review programs for next year's annual report. Assessing programmatic capacity to ensure maximum degree production in one important strategy to reach Illinois' 60 x 2025 Goal.

Since Illinois became a participant in the **State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) for online education**, IBHE has received 25 applications from Illinois institutions. Out of the 25 applications received, 21 have been reviewed and approved by IBHE. A total of 19 institutions are SARA participating institutions. These institutions were approved by IBHE and NC-SARA to participate in SARA through the State of Illinois. IBHE application processing time is approximately within three working days after payment is received. [The IBHE's SARA webpage is updated to reflect the SARA-approved Illinois institutions.](#)

**Governors State University has been selected to receive a Title III grant of \$1.99 million** over five years from the U.S. Department of Education's Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP). The GSU grant will be used to fund a program called "Integrating Pathways: Student Success and Retention through Junior Year Transition," which focuses on student success in transitioning to the junior year and attaining a baccalaureate degree. The program is under the direction of Deborah E. Bordelon, PhD, GSU Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. It will create "The Center for the Junior Year" (CJY) at Governors State, which will provide the mechanism to remove degree completion barriers, and to increase opportunities for students to participate in activities identified by research to improve degree completion. The goal of the CJY will be to assist students in making informed choices about majors and careers. Students entering their junior year, whether from GSU, one of the 17 partner community colleges, or any other college or university, will meet in specially designed cornerstone courses in each major.

## People in the News

President Barack Obama spoke at length about [Illinois Math and Science Academy Junior Pranav Sivakumar](#) at the White House Astronomy Night event on October 19, praising the "adventurous spirit" that led to his passion for in-depth astrophysics research. Pranav's original quasar research and algorithms recently won him the Virgin Galactic Pioneer Award at the 2015 Google Science Fair. Here is what President Obama said about the IMSA student: "When Pranav Sivakumar was six years old he found an encyclopedia about famous scientists lying around the house," said President Obama, "and he's been fascinated with outer space ever since. For years every Saturday morning his parents drove him an hour to an astrophysics lab for 'Ask-a-Scientist' class, and before long he teamed up with researchers he met there to study gravitational lensing of quasars. That is not what I was thinking about at his age. Pranav was a Global Finalist in the Google Science Fair not once, but twice so you know he's going to do some important things. Give him a big round of applause!"

## Reducing Gaps for Underserved Students

The **IBHE Common Core State Standards Initiative Grant** report highlights the outcomes of regional alignment projects led by three public universities: Eastern Illinois University; Illinois State University; and Northern Illinois University. These projects were funded by federal grant money which was procured from the Illinois State Board of Education and focused on the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS, also known as the new Illinois Learning Standards) throughout the state. The grant was completed in June, 2015. The three primary goals for recipients of the IBHE CCSS grant were:

1. Integration of CCSS in educator preparation programs
2. Secondary/postsecondary curricular and assessment alignment
3. Build and sustain ongoing partnership between PK-12 and 2 year/4 year postsecondary institutions

Outstanding accomplishments of the regional alignment projects include:



Formed the Eastern Illinois Common Core Collaborative (EC3) which included five community colleges and five local K-12 school districts. This collaborative was formed to develop and undertake regional project goals which included redesigning teacher education courses and programs, improving the understanding of Common Core and its implementation in P-12 schools across the region, and modifying/refining EIU policies impacting current and future students.



Partnered with three public and private colleges and universities as well as four local K-12 school districts to examine curriculum, faculty expectations, and student work informed by the Common Core standards with a particular focus on reducing remediation at the post-secondary level. Many seminars were held to bring secondary and postsecondary faculty together to discuss ways to integrate CCSS into teacher-prep courses as well as alignment of secondary/postsecondary courses and assessments.



**Northern Illinois University**

Created the Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network which established an infrastructure for collaboration to increase college and career readiness for urban, suburban, and rural students across a diverse region. This network has grown to include 10 community colleges, 12 local K-12 school districts, and 12 education agencies and organizations.

# IBHE

1 North Old State Capitol Plaza • Suite 333 • Springfield, Illinois 62701  
217-782-2551 TTY 888-261-2881