

Applegate's Update

Some Good News Amidst All the Bad

Illinois received some good news recently showing strong performance by its higher education system compared to other states and the nation as a whole. Please continue reading for that good news is coming. However, it would be irresponsible not to comment on the fact that now going on nine months into the fiscal year Illinois has no state budget and has not provided one dime of support to its public higher education system. Its private colleges are suffering as well, especially those who admirably serve high numbers of low income students and are heavily reliant on the unfunded state need-based aid program, MAP. I think I can confidently say nothing quite like this has happened to higher education in any state ever. Chicago State University has declared financial exigency (a radical move in higher education only done when you are on the brink of fiscal calamity), the regional accreditor, the Higher Learning Commission, who along with IBHE monitor the stability and quality of institutions across Illinois has, in an unprecedented action, asked ALL two- and four-year public colleges in Illinois to submit a special report documenting their financial stability and providing plans to protect students in the event of closure. The 125,000 low income MAP students already attending college, stand on the brink of losing the opportunity for a college degree if they can't afford to cover the expected MAP grant amount, and, hence, economic security.

At last, in recognition that the state is threatening to dismantle its well-regarded higher education system, a flurry of bills have been introduced in the legislature to provide various kinds of emergency, often short-term relief. The real solution to this crisis is of course to pass an adequate budget providing foundation-level funding that allows our colleges to continue to do their work and to enter into a three-year "Compact" in which the state promises stable funding going forward in exchange for improved performance by the higher education system. That is what the IBHE recommended to state leaders in its budget proposals for fiscal year 2017, based on detailed analysis, campus visits, and national benchmarking ([Budget Document](#) and [Compact](#)).

The financial uncertainty and attacks on the system continue even as national studies show that our colleges are in many areas leading the nation in performance. Every leader in higher education is committed to improved performance. The IBHE has set three core priorities for improvement based on data trends over recent years: 1) improving declining college affordability for middle and low income families, 2) reducing college success gaps for low income and underrepresented students, and 3) providing greater opportunity for adult learners without college degrees to return and earn the degrees that will allow them to succeed in an economy where more than two-thirds of all the jobs will require one. We are all committed to addressing these and other improvements that we hope will be a part of the promise of the "Illinois Higher Education Compact" referenced earlier.

However, let's give credit where credit is due. The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) which collects data on student outcomes across 96% of all college students and 98% of all public and private colleges in the U.S. just last week released [a comprehensive report on those outcomes](#). NSC is one of our best resources for

following students across institutions and states as this increasingly mobile population follows complex paths to college success. Illinois' performance was impressive:

- Over 87% of students who enrolled full-time at an Illinois public university had completed a degree within six years. This was seven percentage points higher than the national average (80%). In addition, approximately 5% of students who had not completed were still currently enrolled and pursuing a degree.
- Illinois was best in the nation in completion rates for students starting part-time at public universities. Its completion rate of 46% was over two times the national average (19%).
- Illinois was also best in the nation in completion rates for adult learners (defined as students who started college who were older than 24) at public universities and about 50% higher than the national average (63% to 43%). So we do well once we enroll adults - now we just need to have the capacity to enroll about a million more of them given the undereducated state of our workforce where 57% have no two- or four-year degree.
- Illinois was third in the nation for full-time community college students completing bachelor's degrees at four-year colleges. Transfer works in Illinois! These results echo another recently released study from the Community College Research Center (Columbia University) that also establishes Illinois' place among the best performing states for community college transfer process.
- Illinois was fourth in the nation in completion rates for full-time community college students and roughly 13 percentage points higher than the national average.
- Illinois was eighth in the nation in terms of completion rates for adult learners at community colleges (15% higher than the national average).
- Illinois was also above the national average in terms of completion for students enrolling at private universities (87%). In fact, there was little difference between full-time students at public and private colleges (see above).
- Illinois was among ten states in which at least one in five women who started at a community college completed a bachelor's degree regardless of enrollment status (full-time/ part-time).

IBHE is committed to system performance improvement based on high quality data that tells us where we are doing well and where we are not and then helps us design effective improvement strategies. For example, IBHE devotes enormous effort in collaboration with our colleagues at the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) to ensure effective transfer from two- to four-year colleges. We will continue to do that. However, the fact that we are third in the nation for successful transfer tells us what we are doing is working for our students. So when someone uses an isolated anecdote to justify saying "transfer is broken in Illinois" the response should be: we will work to fix that isolated problem but overall we are staying the course because what we are doing is working.

So a thank you to the hard working faculty, administrators, and staff who are producing these results for Illinois students. And they are for the most part Illinois students. Our public universities, for example, enroll a higher percentage of in-state students than any of their peers across the country and a higher percentage of low income, PELL eligible students than any of their peers. These achievements are not the result of "creaming" only the best and brightest to make things easier.

And finally, again, a plea to our state leaders to pass an adequate budget and join a multi-year compact that stops the bleeding so our higher education system can continue to provide results like these, serve the thousands of additional students we need to enroll to meet our 60 X 2025 goal, and use good data to inform even higher levels of performance.

Northern Illinois University and **Rock Valley College** are launching the **Engineering Our Future** campaign to support the [NIU Engineering Program at Rock Valley College](#). RVC and NIU will begin this fall to offer a program where students can earn their associate degree in engineering from RVC and go on to earn a bachelor's in engineering from NIU, all on the RVC campus in Rockford. Graduate students also can earn NIU master's degrees in engineering at RVC. "Over the years, we've had a number of great partnerships, and on several occasions those partnerships have involved Northern Illinois University. But this is our most ambitious project yet," **RVC President Mike Mastroianni** said. "If this were solely a partnership between RVC and NIU to bring four-year engineering degrees to Rockford, that alone would be a major accomplishment, but this is more than that," he added. "Thanks to our industry partners – especially Woodward and UTC Aerospace Systems – our students can not only earn four-year engineering degrees from great RVC and NIU faculty, in state-of-the-art facilities right here at this campus, but they also have internship opportunities and career pathways to some of the largest and most innovative aerospace companies in the world, right here in Rockford."

NIU President Doug Baker told the crowd that he's proud and grateful for everything that's been accomplished in such a short time, saying none of it would be possible without Mastroianni. "He's a person we trust," Baker said. "He's doing this the right way." **Bradley Robison**, who graduated from Machesney Park's Harlem High School in 2014, will earn an associate degree in Engineering Sciences from RVC this spring. He is excited to become an NIU Huskie in the fall – but not in DeKalb. "A lot of people have asked me, 'Why do you want to enroll in the program? Don't you want to go away and get the college experience?' My answers to those questions were really quite simple," said Robison, who is also working as an intern at Woodward. "I can stay at home. I don't have to move away from my family. I don't have to pay for room and board. I can continue to get on-the-job experience working at Woodward, which is something that is so vital nowadays," he added. "Also the affordability of the program is fantastic. I don't know where else you're going to be able to find a four-year mechanical engineering degree program for maybe less than \$50,000."

The **Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs** (CACREP), a specialized accrediting body recognized by the **Council for Higher Education Accreditation**, has granted accreditation to the Doctor of Education in Counselor Education & Supervision program at [Argosy University, Chicago](#), making it the first private institution in Illinois to receive this accreditation for its doctoral program.

Advocacy for Quality Higher Education

Missouri Senator David Pearce, commission chair of the [Midwestern Higher Education Compact](#), joined the Illinois MHEC commissioners, **President Larry Isaak**, and guests for dinner and a higher education discussion on March 2, in Springfield.

The Illinois delegation of MHEC Commissioners includes:

- **Dr. James Applegate**, Executive Director, IBHE
- **Rep. Kelly Burke**, Chair, House Higher Education Committee
- **Dr. Alice Marie Jacobs**, President, Danville Area Community College and Member, IBHE Board
- **Sen. Pat McGuire**, Chair, Senate Higher Education Committee
- **Suzanne Morris**, Illinois Community College Board

Increasing Affordability

ISAC launches “Get to Know MAP” video

The proliferation of news stories about The **Monetary Award Program** has highlighted the importance of the program. To help improve the accuracy of public information about MAP and explain how it works, the **Illinois Student Assistance Commission** has developed [a short video](#) targeted to assist media, legislators and others who need basic information on the program. The video also provides a high level explanation of “suspense” – when ISAC determines it has exhausted expected funding and stops announcing MAP awards. By using animation, the video addresses the fundamentals of how grants are distributed, helping to break down some of the more complex parts of the MAP process into more easily understandable concepts.

ISAC launches free college access text messaging service

ISAC recently launched [ISAC College Q&A](#), a free text messaging service for students. Students can connect with ISAC's college mentors to get their college planning and financial aid questions answered and receive important information about college planning events and deadlines – all via text. Students need only text their first and last name to one of the ISAC College Q&A phone numbers in their area code. ISAC has also set up a phone number for returning adult students: 872- 395-GRAD(4723).

Increasing Adult Degree Completion

The State of Illinois has been invited by the [National Academy of Medicine to participate in its “Innovation to Incubation” \(i2I\) project](#). The focus of the project is to advance key recommendations for enhancing the skills and qualifications of early childhood professionals in Illinois based on the results of a 2015 study published by the Institute of Medicine. **IBHE Associate Director for Academic Affairs Dr. Stephanie Bernoteit** is serving on the Illinois team, one of five state teams developing early childhood and education workforce plans.

People in the News



[Governor Bruce Rauner](#) has appointed former State [Representative Tom Cross](#) as the Chair of the **Illinois Board of Higher Education**. Cross's experience as a state legislator and fiscal reformer will be an asset to the board. Cross served in the Illinois General Assembly for 22 years and was the House Republican Leader from 2002-2013. He is currently a distinguished fellow at Aurora University where he promotes innovation in STEM education programs and a senior consultant at Culloton Strategies. Cross is also an attorney and a former prosecutor in the Kendall County State's Attorney's office.

Cross earned his bachelor's degree from Illinois Wesleyan University and his law degree from Samford University. He lives in Oswego.

Dr. Teresa Garate, ICCB representative on the IBHE Board, has been appointed by Governor Bruce Rauner to the [Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities Task Force](#). **Niketa Brar**, Post-secondary Projects Manager for Secretary Purvis, serves as co-chair.



Dr. Teresa Garate



Niketa Brar

IBHE Student Art Exhibition

Kathryn Kane, Oakton Community College



31st Street Harbor Ice



Tree Bark 6



Tree Bark 9

Student Laureates

In each issue of *The Bulletin*, we will feature students laureates recognized by the Lincoln Academy of Illinois.

Eastern Illinois University



Shirmeen Ahmad
Romeoville, IL

*Majors: Journalism and
Political Science*

Elmhurst College



Angil J. Tate
Atlanta, GA

Major: Music Business

Eureka College



Michael A. Sain, II
Reynoldsburg, OH

*Majors: Business Administration
and Economics*

In Case You Missed It

A few articles and updates worth the read:

[The Pantagraph](#): House OKs \$3.7B for higher ed, social services, March 4, 2016

[FOX Illinois Channel 55](#): Report: State Board Of Higher Education Finds Minority Enrollment Declining, February 29, 2016

[Associated Press](#): Illinois universities brace for more state budget cuts, February 28, 2016

[The Washington Post](#): Chicago State University sends layoff notices to all employees amid Illinois budget battle, February 26, 2016

IBHE

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