

UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS REPORT 2022

ASSESSING ATTAINMENT AND EQUITY IN ILLINOIS HIGHER EDUCATION



Illinois Board of Higher Education
February 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Illinois Board of Higher Education's strategic plan, *A Thriving Illinois*, outlines three main goals: 1) close the equity gaps for students who have been left behind; 2) build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions; and 3) increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth.

This report provides equity context by including statewide and national comparisons for postsecondary attainment by race and ethnicity. The report also includes measures and metrics for how the higher education system in Illinois and its various sectors serve African American and Latino students compared to White students, low-income students compared to non-low-income students, and students from rural locales compared to non-rural students.

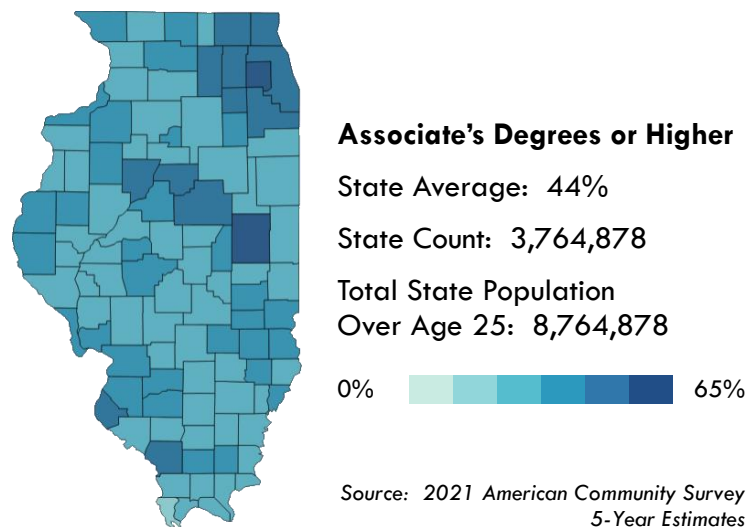
POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT IN ILLINOIS

Postsecondary education is key to ensuring individuals, families, and communities across Illinois can thrive. Individuals who hold a postsecondary credential have higher earnings, greater social mobility, improved health, and other positive life outcomes than their peers with less education. Fifteen years ago, Illinois adopted the 60 by 25 goal: that 60% of adults would have a postsecondary degree or credential by the year 2025 to meet projected workforce needs.

Today, the percentage of jobs requiring postsecondary education is even higher. In 2010, approximately 38% of adults in Illinois had an associate degree or higher. In 2021, over 44% do. As the map in Figure 1 shows, postsecondary attainment varies widely across the state, from a low of 18% of adults to a high of 52% of adults having an associate degree or higher.

While this data only reflects degree attainment, credentials are also considered in the 60% target. According to the Lumina Foundation, Illinois' attainment is at 56.9% when certificates and industry-recognized credentials are included.¹

Figure 1: 2021 Postsecondary Attainment by Illinois County

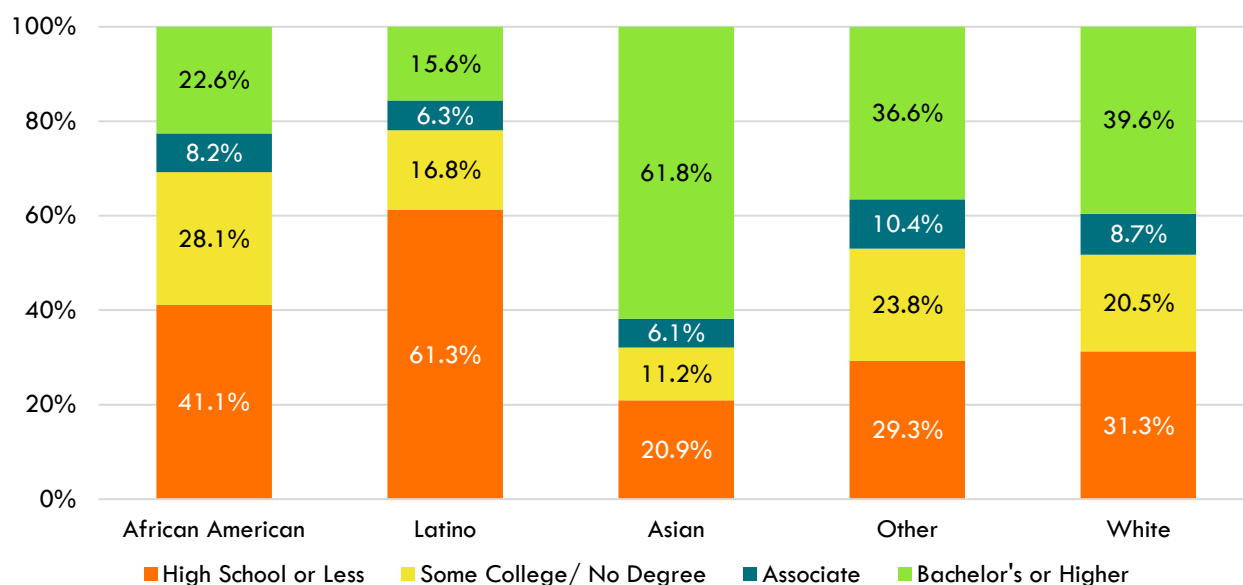


As illustrated in Figure 2, the disparities in attainment outcomes are stark when the information is disaggregated by race/ethnicity. While 48% of white adults have a postsecondary degree, only 31% of African Americans and 22% of Latino adults do. For bachelor's degrees, Illinois has the 14th largest gap of any state in attainment between African American and white adults and the 10th largest gap between Latino and whites.²

¹ [Higher Education attainment data | Stronger Nation \(luminafoundation.org\)](#)

² Illinois Board of Higher Education (August 2020). *Assessing Equity in Illinois Higher Education*. Springfield, IL. Retrieved from [PowerPoint Presentation \(ibhe.org\)](#)

Figure 2: Educational Attainment in Illinois (Age 25+) by Race/Ethnicity

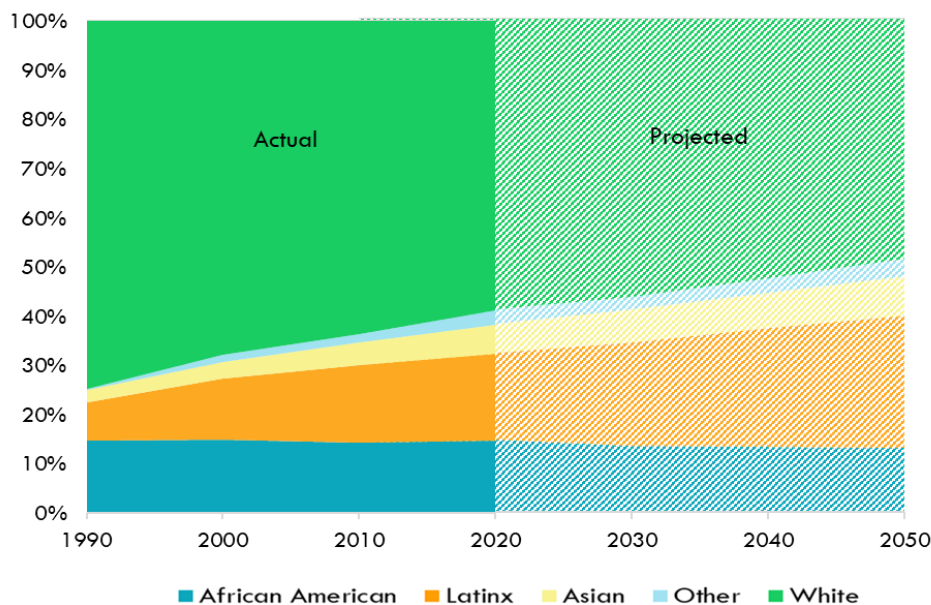


Source: 2020 American Community Survey IPUMS 5-Year Estimates

Equally significant is the percentage of adults with some college, but no degree, representing 324,000 African American, 195,000 Latino, and 1.2 million white adults who started college but never earned a degree. Because the data only show postsecondary degree attainment, it cannot be determined if some of these individuals earned a credential rather than a degree. And it is worth noting the very large percentage, especially of Latino adults, who have only a high school diploma, GED or less.

The challenge becomes even more clear when looking at the demographic projections out to 2050, as shown in Figure 3. The percent of the state's population that is white is projected to decline by 17.5%, while the Latino population is projected to grow by over 60%, and the African American population is projected to slightly decline.

Figure 3: Illinois Actual and Projected Population Distribution



Source: National Equity Atlas and American Community Survey 2020 1-Year Estimates. May not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Illinois is also facing a projected decline in the number of high school graduates due to demographic shifts. According to recently released demographic projections by WICHE in *Knocking at the College Door*, the number

of Illinois high school graduates each year is projected to decline, most precipitously starting in 2026, from just over 148,000 in 2025 to approximately 115,000 in 2037.³

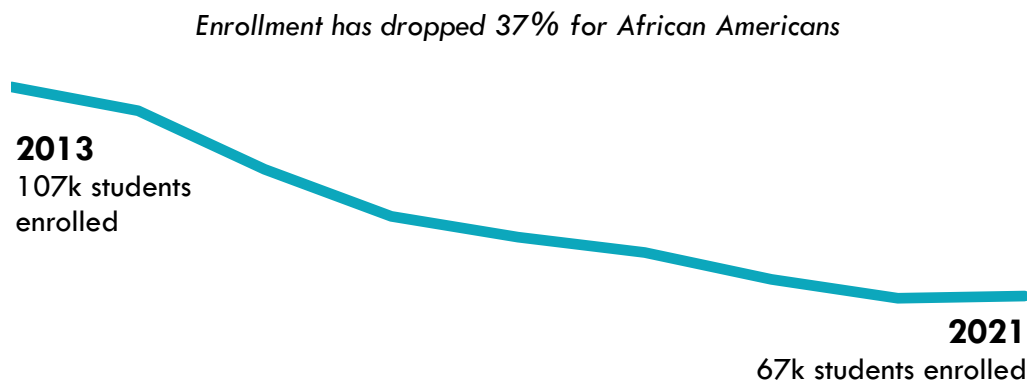
³ WICHE. (2020). *Knocking at the College Door: Projects of High School Graduates*. Boulder, CO. Retrieved from: [Knocking-pdf-for-website.pdf \(wiche.edu\)](#)

EQUITY GAPS: RACE AND ETHNICITY

African American Students

As illustrated in Figure 4, undergraduate enrollment has dropped 37% for African Americans. Undergraduate enrollment in all sectors of higher education has declined by 19.4% between 2013 and 2021. Enrollment for white students has dropped by 25.9% overall, while it has dropped disproportionately for African Americans, even before the impact of COVID-19.⁴ In 2021 there were around 67,000 African Americans enrolled in Illinois colleges and universities, down from 107,000 in 2013.

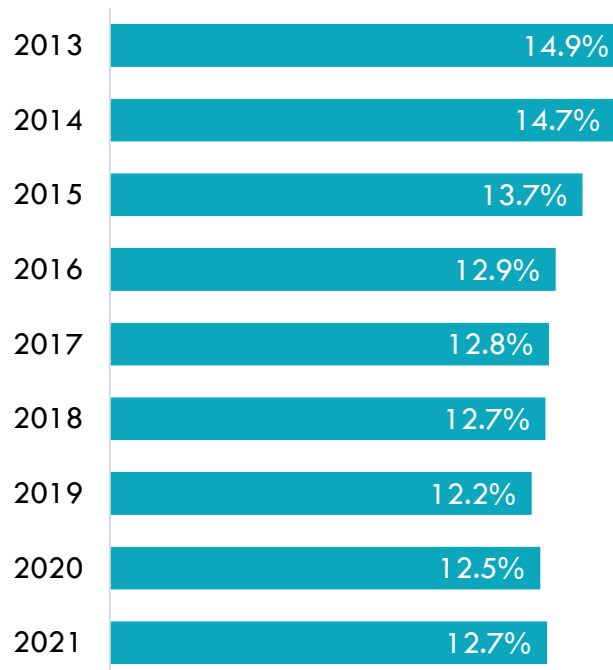
Figure 4: Overall Undergraduate Enrollment Trends for African Americans from 2013 to 2021



Source: IPEDS Fall Enrollment Survey from 2013 to 2021

As illustrated in Figure 5, the proportion of the student population that is African American has declined in most years during that same timeframe from 14.9% to 12.7%. The last two years, 2020 and 2021, there were marginal year-over-year increases.

Figure 5: African American undergraduates as a % of all undergraduates

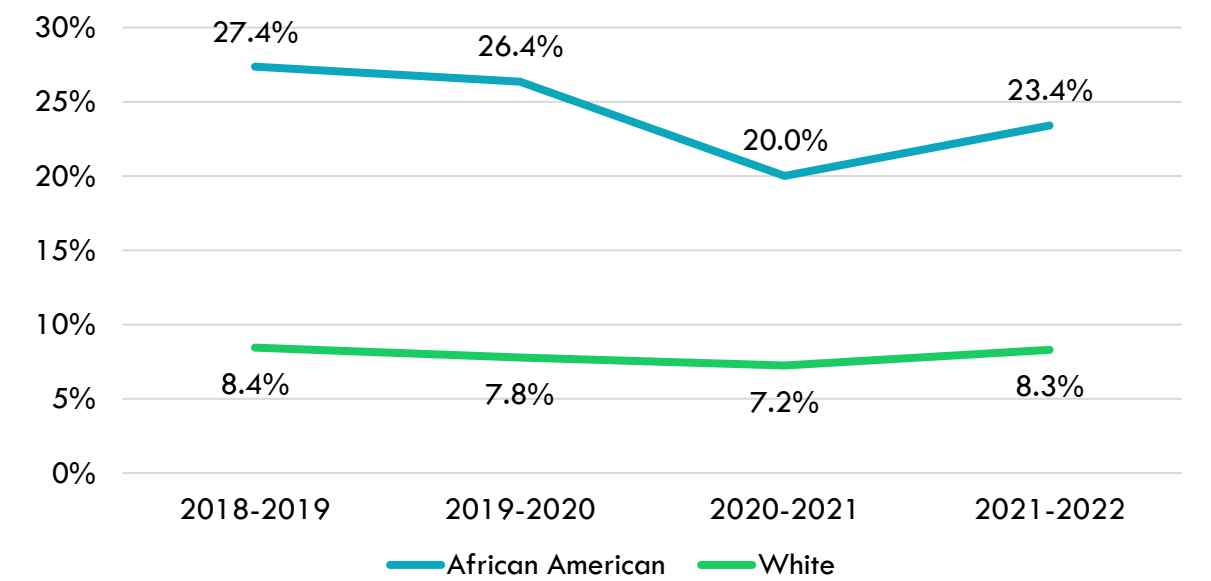


Source: IPEDS Fall Enrollment Survey from 2013 to 2021

⁴ Illinois Board of Higher Education (2021). *A Thriving Illinois. Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth*. Springfield, IL. Retrieved from: [A Thriving Illinois 06-15-21.pdf \(ibhe.org\)](#)

African American first-year students are placed in developmental education at higher rates than white students. As shown in Figure 6, at public universities with traditional developmental education, there has been a consistently large placement gap at Illinois public universities over the past few years. Although the gap has narrowed in more recent years, in fall of academic year 2021-22, 23.4% of African Americans were placed in non-credit developmental education compared to only 8.3% of whites.

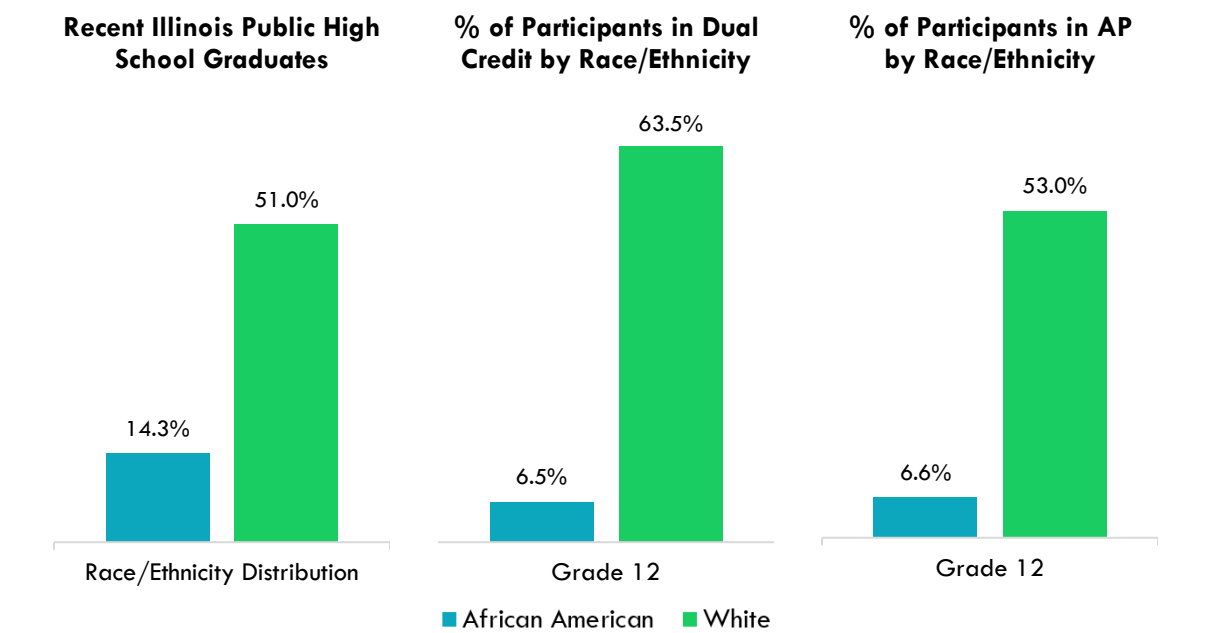
Figure 6: Development Education Placement at Illinois Public Universities: Race Gap Comparison



Note: The chart includes Illinois public universities with development education in the given year. For 2018-19 to 2020-21, all except CSU, NIU, UIUC. For 2021-22 all except CSU, GSU, NIU, SIUC, UIUC, and WIU.

Even earlier in their education career, African Americans have less access to Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Credit early college experiences. As a result, they miss out on the opportunity to earn credits or get exposure to college-level work while in high school. As shown in Figure 7, African Americans made up 14.3% of the Illinois public high school graduating class in 2021. Yet, of the seniors enrolled in dual credit, only 6.5% are African American, while 63.5% are white. A similar pattern holds for AP.

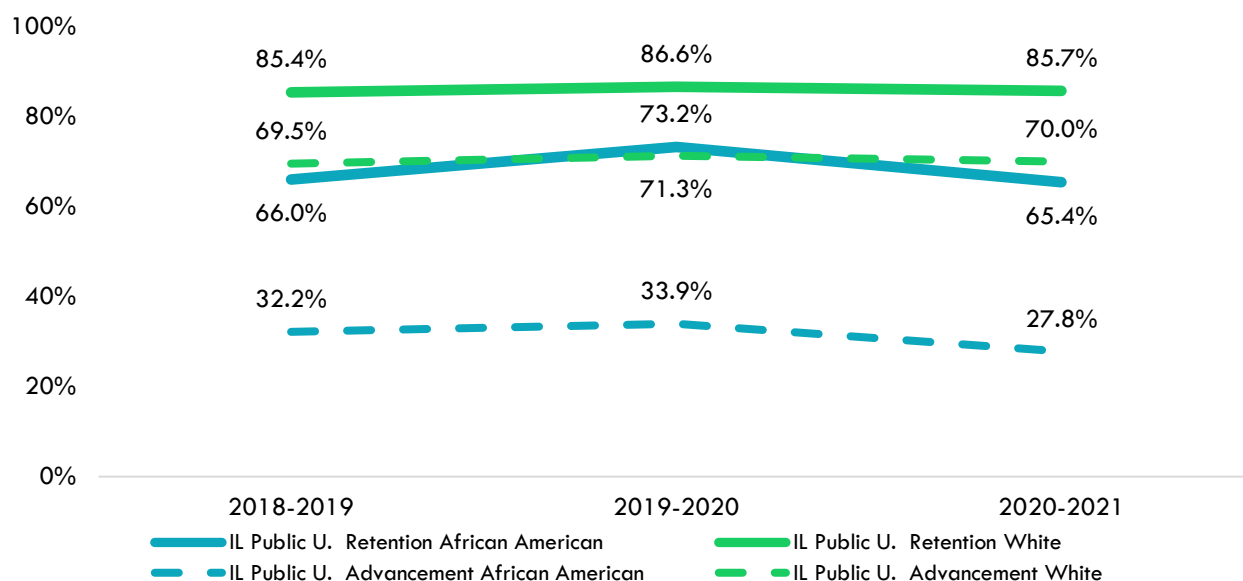
Figure 7: Early College Participation



Source: ISBE Report Card 2021

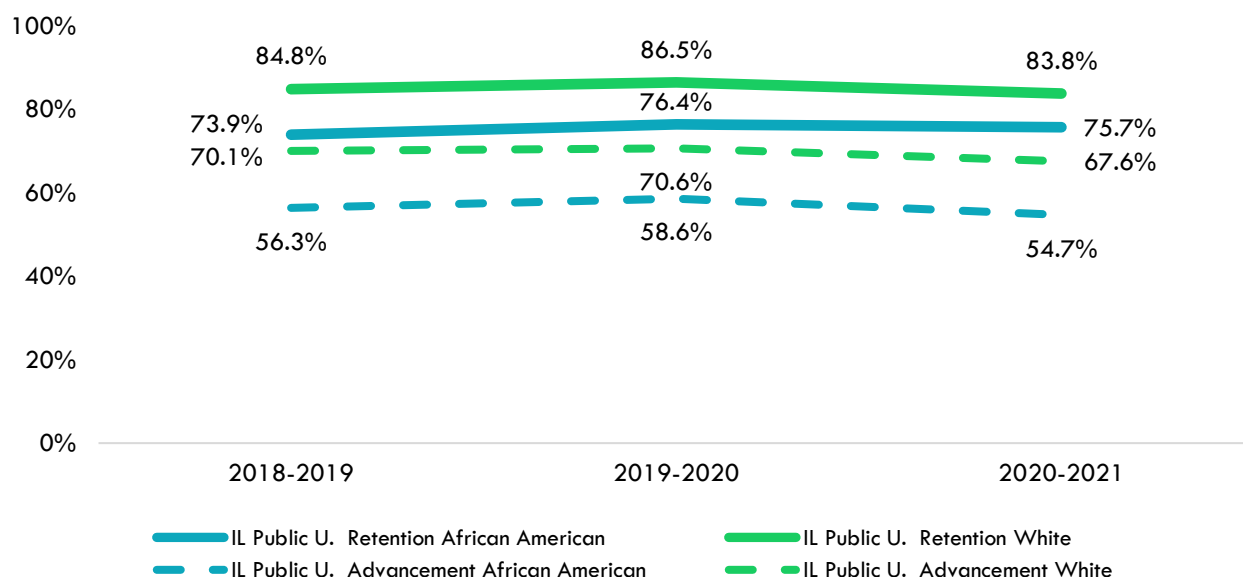
As shown in Figure 8, Illinois public universities are less likely to retain and advance African American students from fall to fall. In the most recent reporting year, public universities retained 85.7% of white students, but only 65.4% of African American first-time freshmen and advanced in class status (e.g., accumulated enough credits to move from freshman to sophomore status) 65.4% of white students and 27.8% of African American students.

Figure 8: Retention and Class Advancement of New First-Time Full-Time Students at all Illinois Public Universities



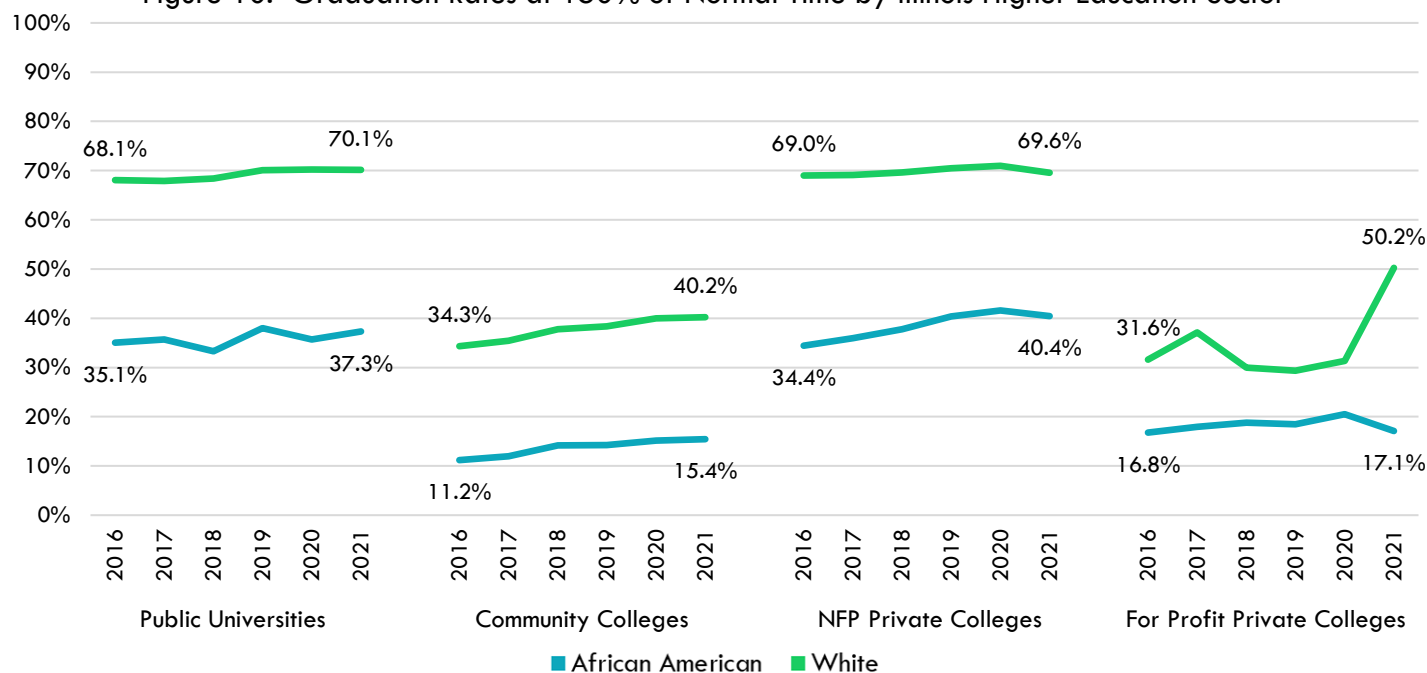
As depicted in Figure 9, the experience of transfer students is better, but gaps remain. In the most recent reporting year, Illinois public universities retained 75.7% of African American transfer students, while retaining 83.8% of whites and advanced 67.6% of whites, while advancing only 54.7% of African Americans.

Figure 9: Retention and Class Advancement of New Full-Time Transfer Students at All Illinois Public Universities



All this leads to dramatic and persistent gaps in the rates institutions graduate students. When examining the percent of first-time, full-time students who complete their degrees within 150% of expected time (e.g., six years for a bachelor's degree) at the same institution they started, there were significant and persistent gaps in the rates at which institutions in all sectors graduate white compared to African Americans students (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Graduation Rates at 150% of Normal Time by Illinois Higher Education Sector



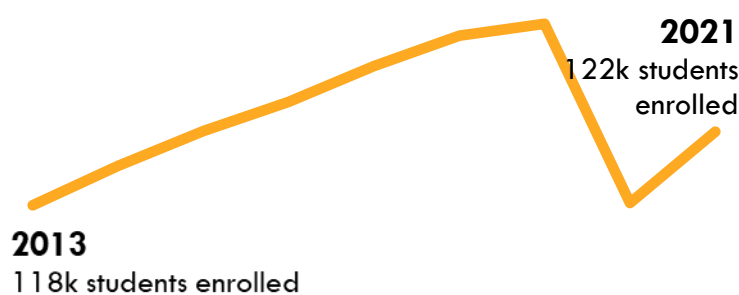
Source: 2016-2021 IPEDS Graduation Rates at 150% of Normal Time for students who first enrolled full time.

Latino Students

Enrollment for Latino undergraduates across all higher education sectors in Illinois has increased. As illustrated in Figure 11, enrollment for Latino undergraduate students has increased by over 8% between 2013 and 2021, but declined in 2020 during the pandemic and still has not recovered to the high water mark in 2019 (the year before the pandemic).

Figure 11: Overall Undergraduate Enrollment Trends for Latino Students from 2013 to 2021

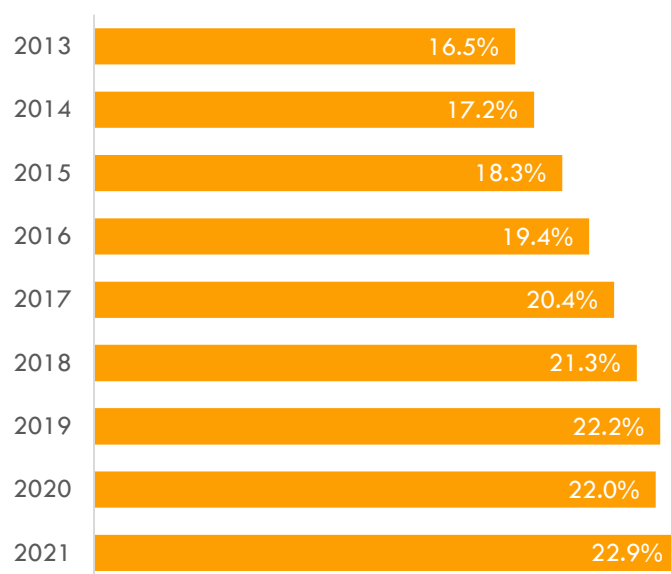
Enrollment has increased by over 8% for Latino students.



Source: IPEDS Fall Enrollment Survey from 2013 to 2021

Given the declines in enrollment for white and African American students discussed above, it is not surprising that Latino students are increasing as a proportion of undergraduate enrollment (see Figure 12).

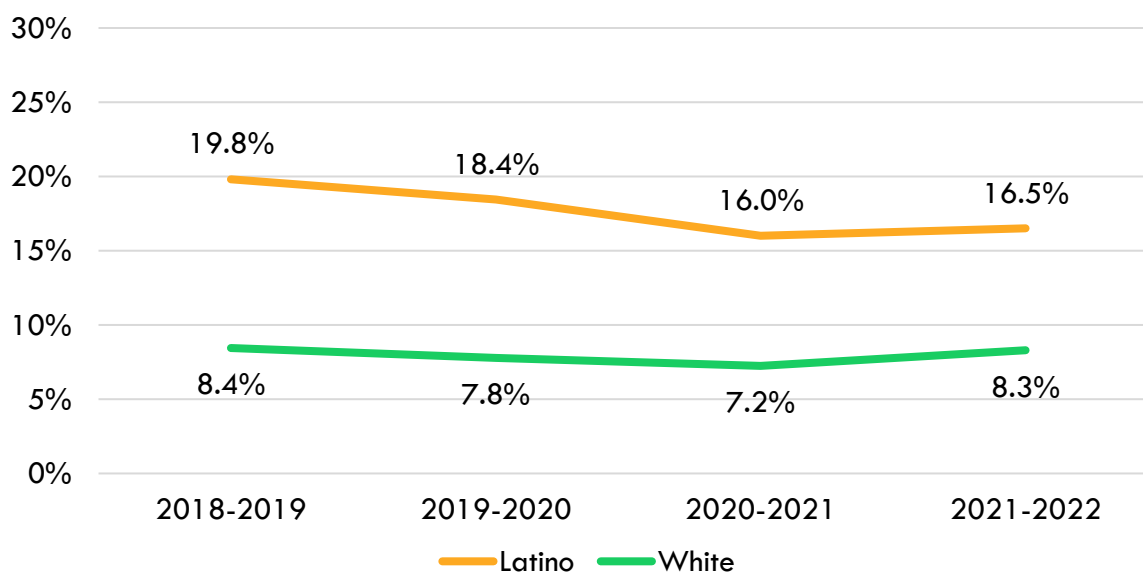
Figure 12: Latino undergraduates as a % of all undergraduates



Source: IPEDS Fall Enrollment Survey from 2013 to 2021

As shown in Figure 13, Latino freshmen are more likely to be placed in developmental education at Illinois public universities. Public universities place 16.5% of Latino freshman in developmental education, which is nearly two times the rate of their white counterparts (8.3%). However, it should be noted that the placement gap has narrowed somewhat from 11.4 percentage points in 2018-19 to 8.2 percentage points in 2021-22.

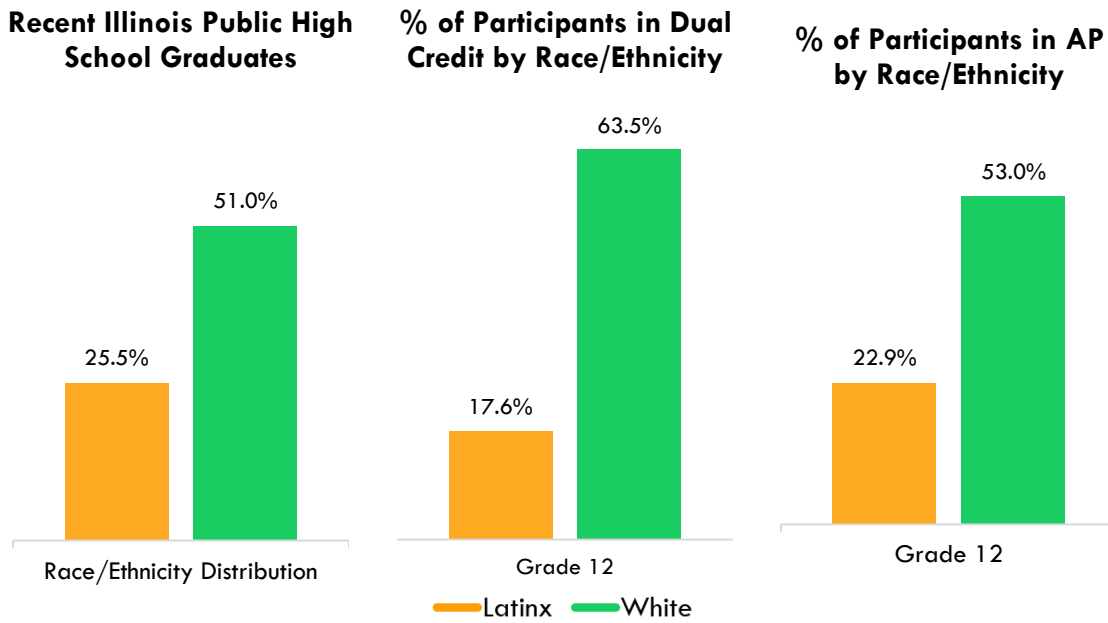
Figure 13: Development Education Placement at Illinois Public Universities: Race Gap Comparison



Note: The chart includes Illinois public universities with development education in the given year. For 2018-19 to 2020-21, all except CSU, NIU, UIUC. For 2021-22 all except CSU, GSU, NIU, SIUC, UIUC, and WIU.

Latino students have less access to dual credit but proportional access to AP coursework in high school. Latinos comprised 25.5% of the high school graduates, but only 17.6% of those enrolled in dual credit courses were Latino high school seniors. However, of high school seniors enrolled in AP, 22.9% were Latino (see Figure 14).

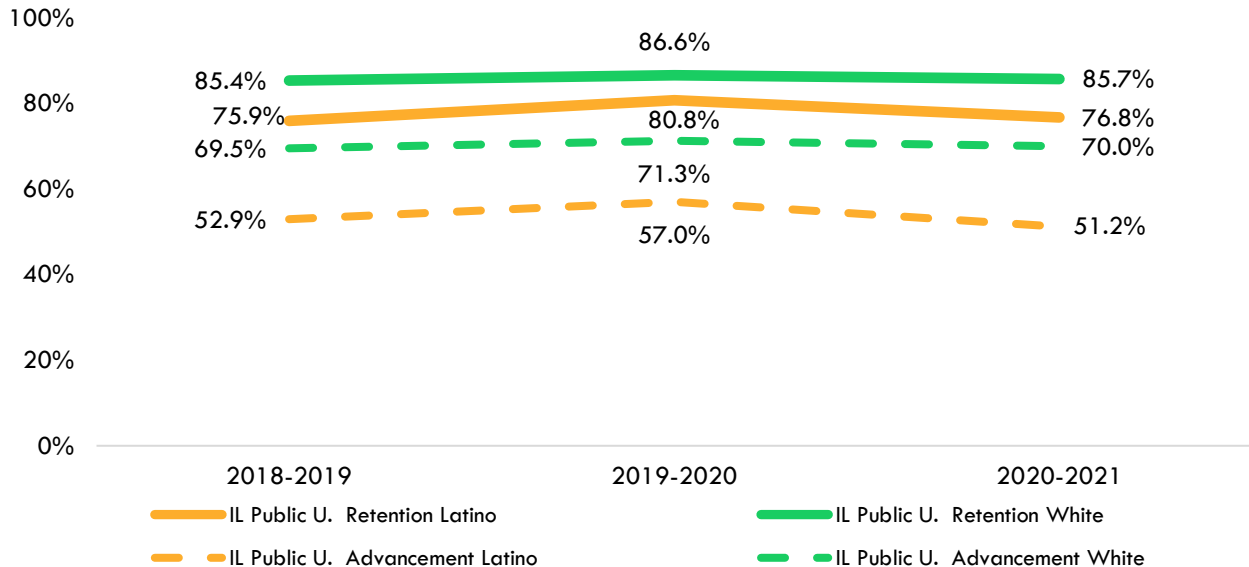
Figure 14: Early College Participation



Source: ISBE Report Card 2021

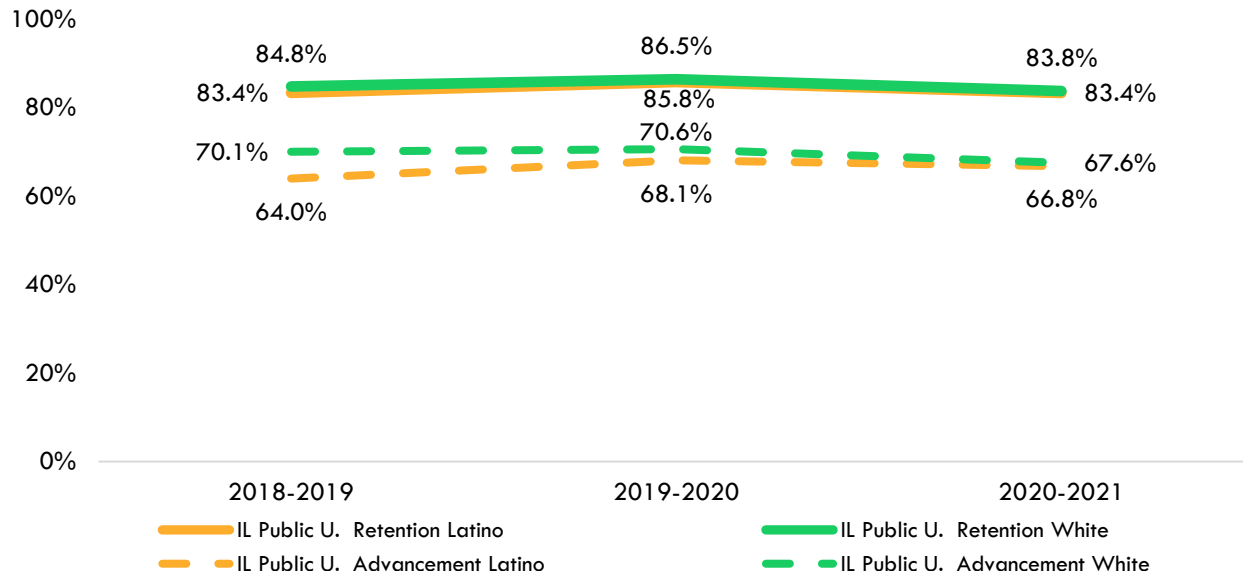
As illustrated in Figure 15, gaps persist in public university retention and advancement of Latino freshmen. Public universities retain 85.7% of white full-time freshmen but only 76.8% of their Latino peers. Similarly, 70.0% of white freshmen will be advanced to sophomore status, while only 51.2% of Latino will.

Figure 15: Retention and Class Advancement of New First-Time Full-Time Students at all Illinois Public Universities



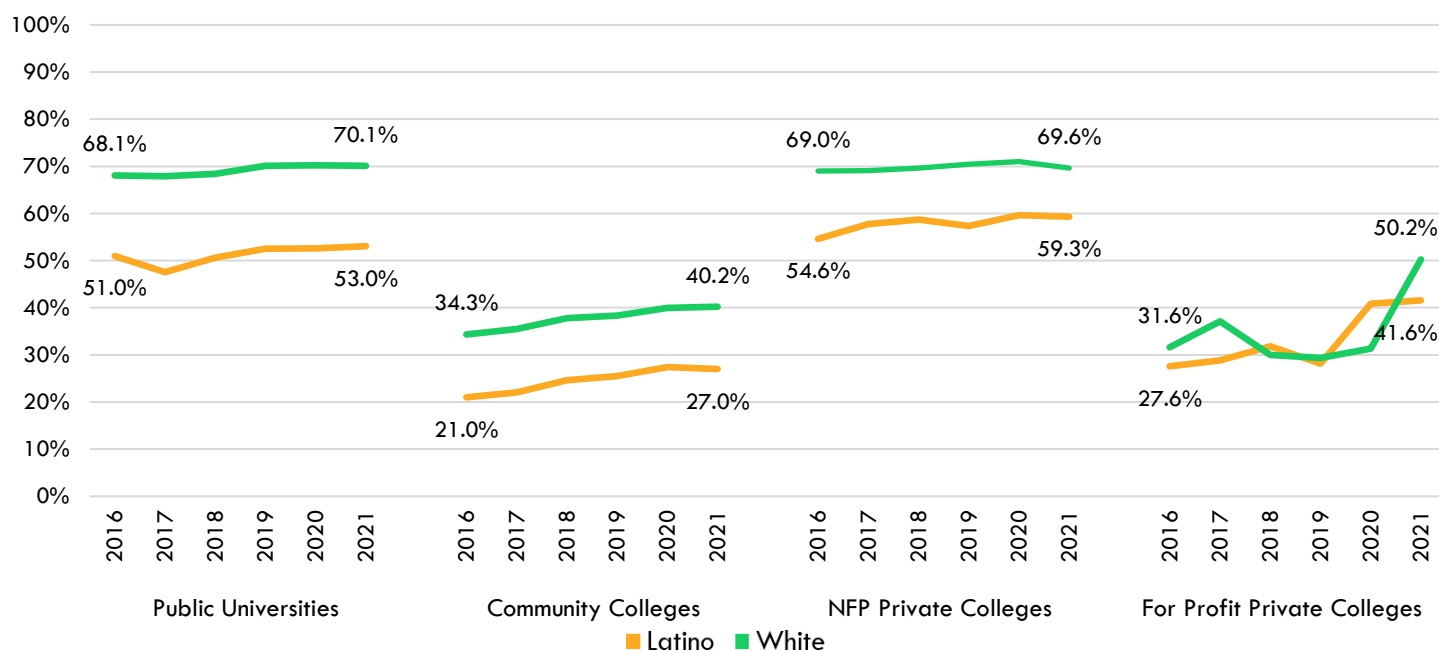
However, public universities now retain and advance Latino and white transfer students at nearly the same rates. Over 83% of Latino and white transfer students are retained. As depicted in Figure 16, around two-thirds of Latino and white transfer students at Illinois public universities advance in class status.

Figure 16: Retention and Class Advancement of New Full-Time Transfer Students at all Illinois Public Universities



Still, institutional completion gaps persist over time. As the charts in Figure 17 illustrate, there are gaps in the rates at which institutions complete white and Latino freshmen across all higher education sectors and these gaps have persisted over time, with the exception of the for profit private sector.

Figure 17: Graduation Rates at 150% of Normal Time by Illinois Higher Education Sector

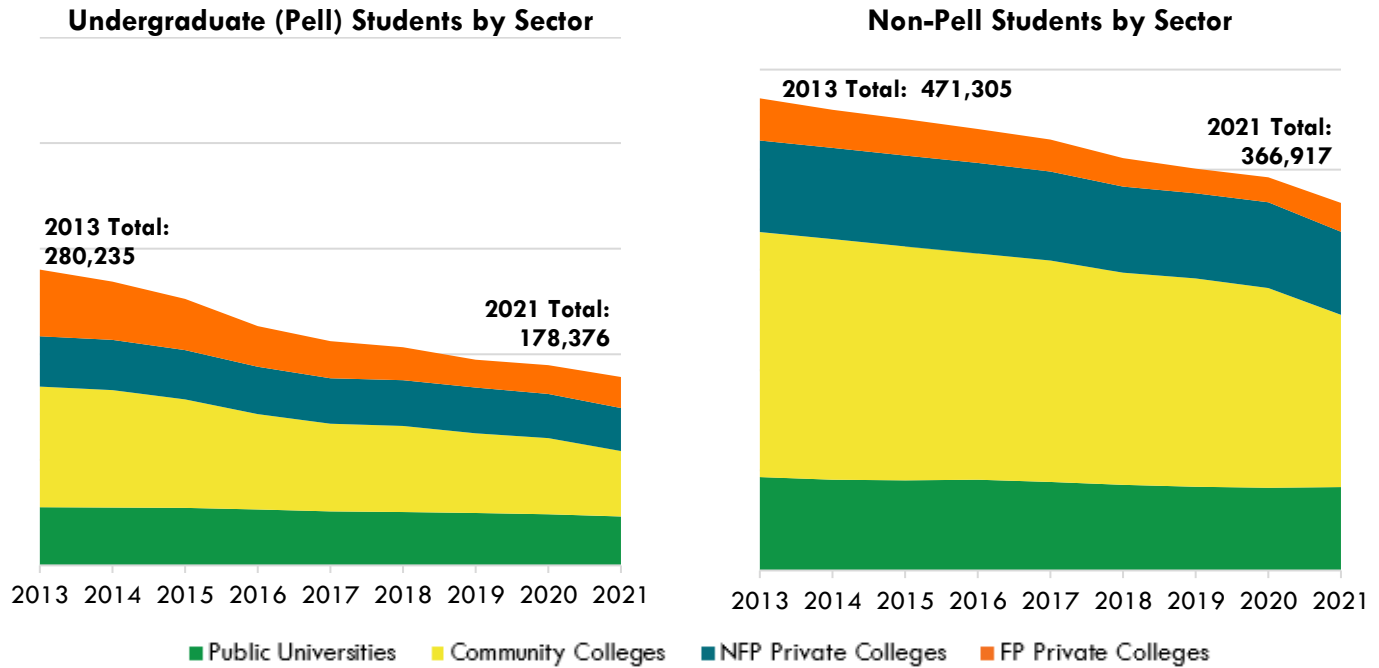


Source: 2016-2021 IPEDS Graduation Rates at 150% of Normal Time for students who first enrolled full time.

EQUITY GAPS: LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

The same patterns of inequity exist for low-income students. As shown in Figure 18, between 2013 and 2021, Illinois enrolled over 100,000 fewer low-income undergraduate students, a 36.3% decrease, compared to a 22.1% decrease for non-low-income students.

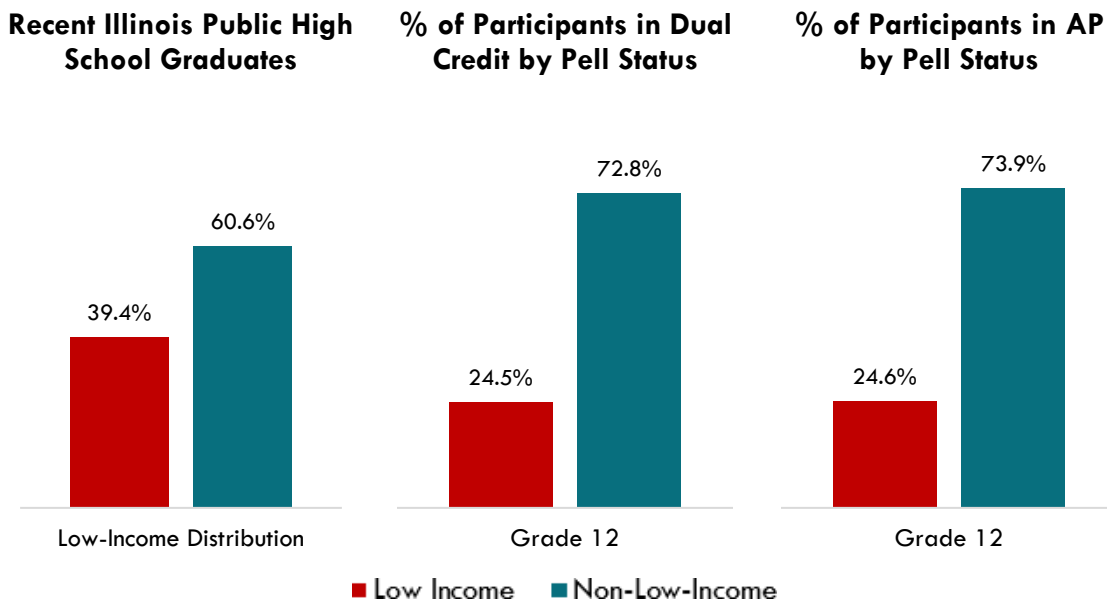
Figure 18: Undergraduate Enrollment Trends in Illinois by Sector: Pell and Non-Pell



Source: 2013 to 2021 IPEDS Student Financial Aid Survey

Low-income students are less likely to have access to AP and Dual Credit and more likely to be placed in developmental education. Of recent high school graduates, 39.4% are from low-income families. However, only 25% of those enrolled in either AP or dual credit were low-income (see Figure 19).

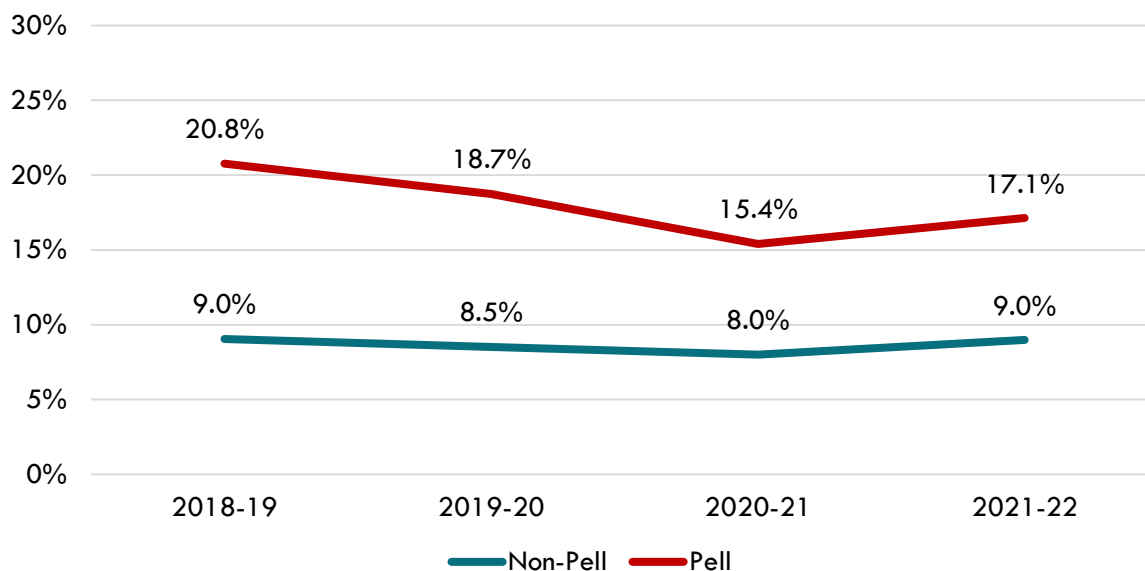
Figure 19: Development Education Placement at Illinois Public Universities: Income Gap Comparison



Source: ISBE Report Card 2021

At Illinois public universities, low-income students were placed in developmental education at higher rates than their not-low-income counterparts. As illustrated in Figure 20, the placement gap has marginally narrowed over time going from 12.8 percentage points in 2018-19 to 8.1 percentage points in 2021-22.

Figure 20: Developmental Education Placement Rates at Illinois Public Universities by Low-Income Status



Note: The chart includes Illinois public universities with development education in the given year. For 2018-19 to 2020-21, all except CSU, NIU, UIUC. For 2021-22 all except CSU, GSU, NIU, SIUC, UIUC, and WIU.

Institutions are less successful in serving low-income students, with fewer being retained and advanced in class status at their respective Illinois public university. As shown in Figure 21, there is a 10 percentage-point gap in the rate public universities retain low-income and non-low-income students. Rates of class advancement are much lower and the gaps much wider with public universities advancing 71.1% of non-low-income students and 46.5% of low-income freshmen.

As illustrated in Figure 22, the results are better for low-income transfer students, with the overall retention and class advancement rates higher, resulting in much smaller gaps relative to their non-low-income peers.

Figure 21: Retention and Class Advancement of New First-Time Full-Time Students at all Illinois Public Universities

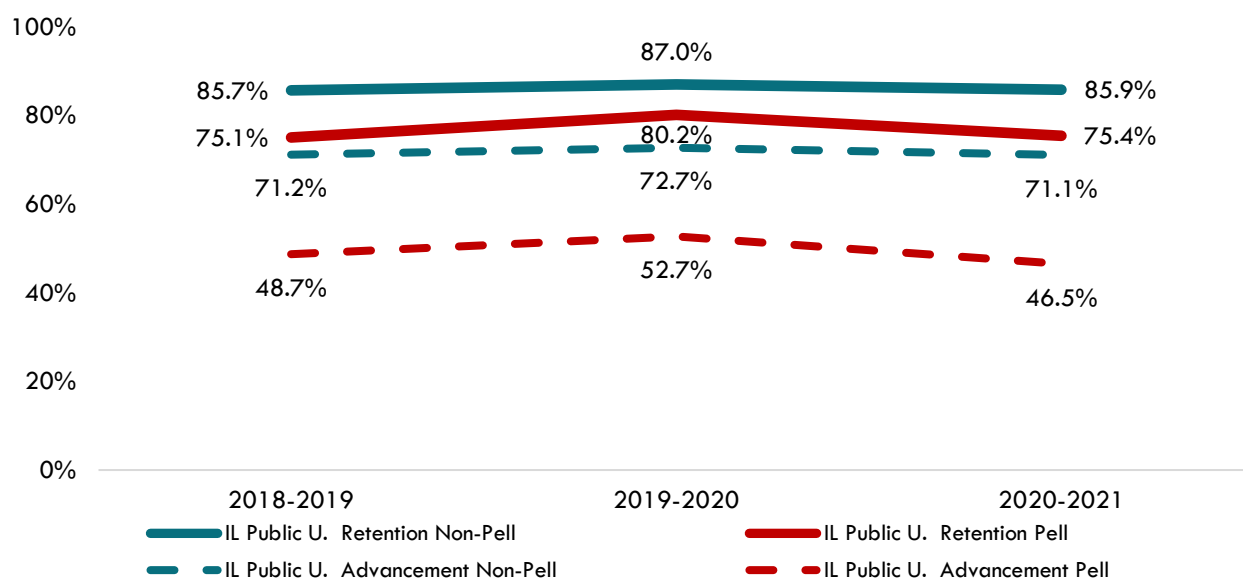
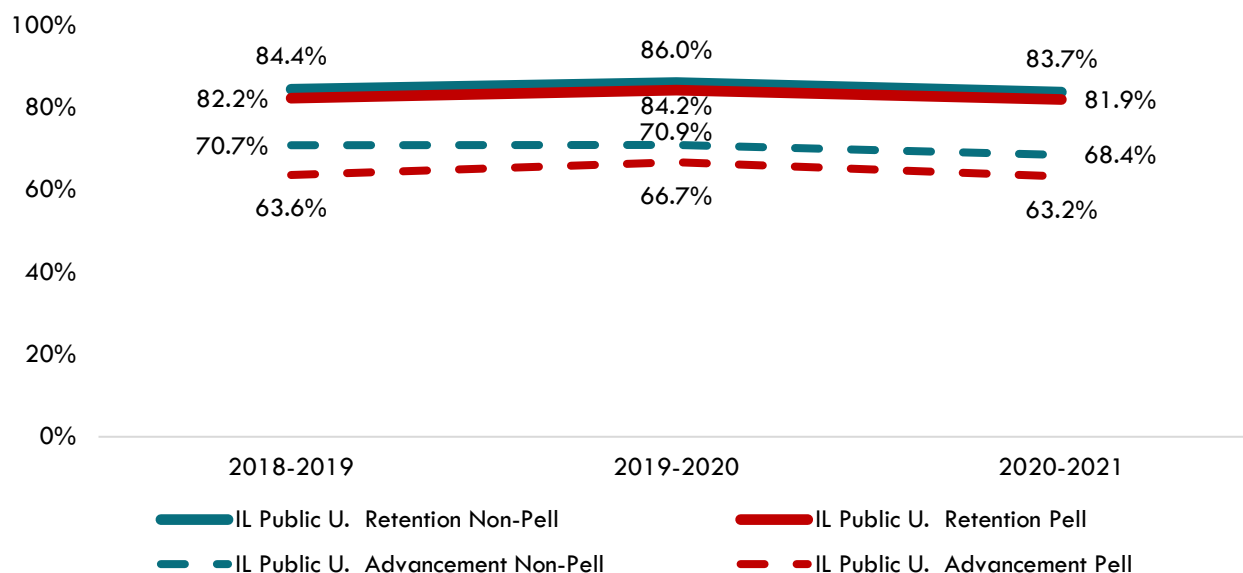
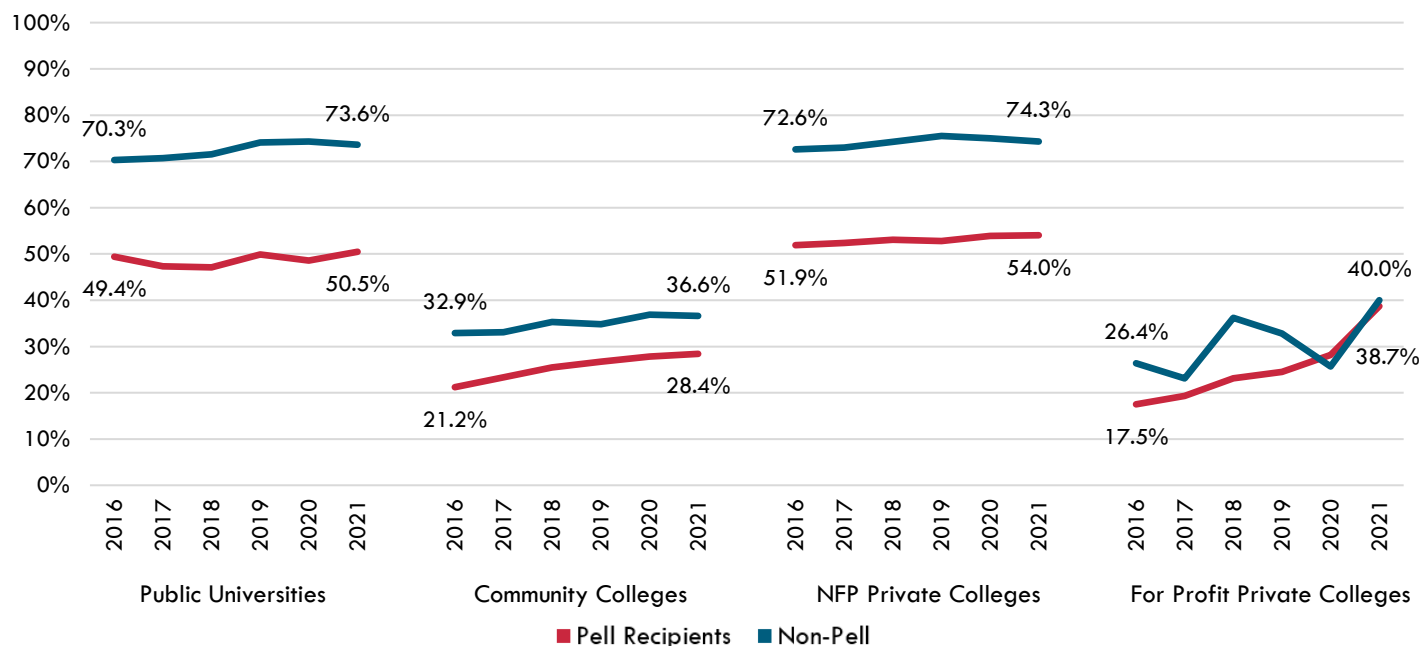


Figure 22: Retention and Class Advancement of New Full-Time Transfer Students at all Illinois Public Universities



As shown in Figure 23, completion rate gaps between low-income and non-low-income students are stark across all higher education sectors in Illinois with the exception of the last couple of years within the for profit private sector.

Figure 23: Completion Rate Trends in Illinois by Sector: Pell and Non-Pell Students

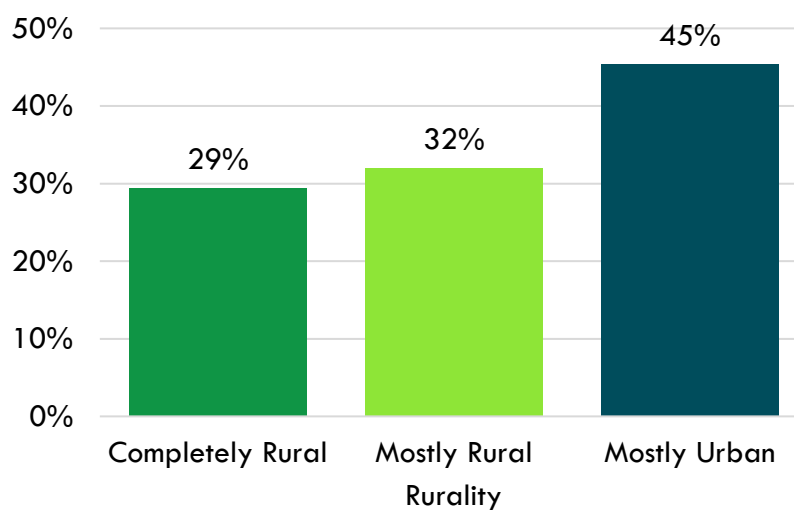


Source: 2016-2021 IPEDS Graduation Rates at 150% of Normal Time for students who first enrolled full time.

EQUITY GAPS: STUDENTS FROM RURAL COMMUNITIES

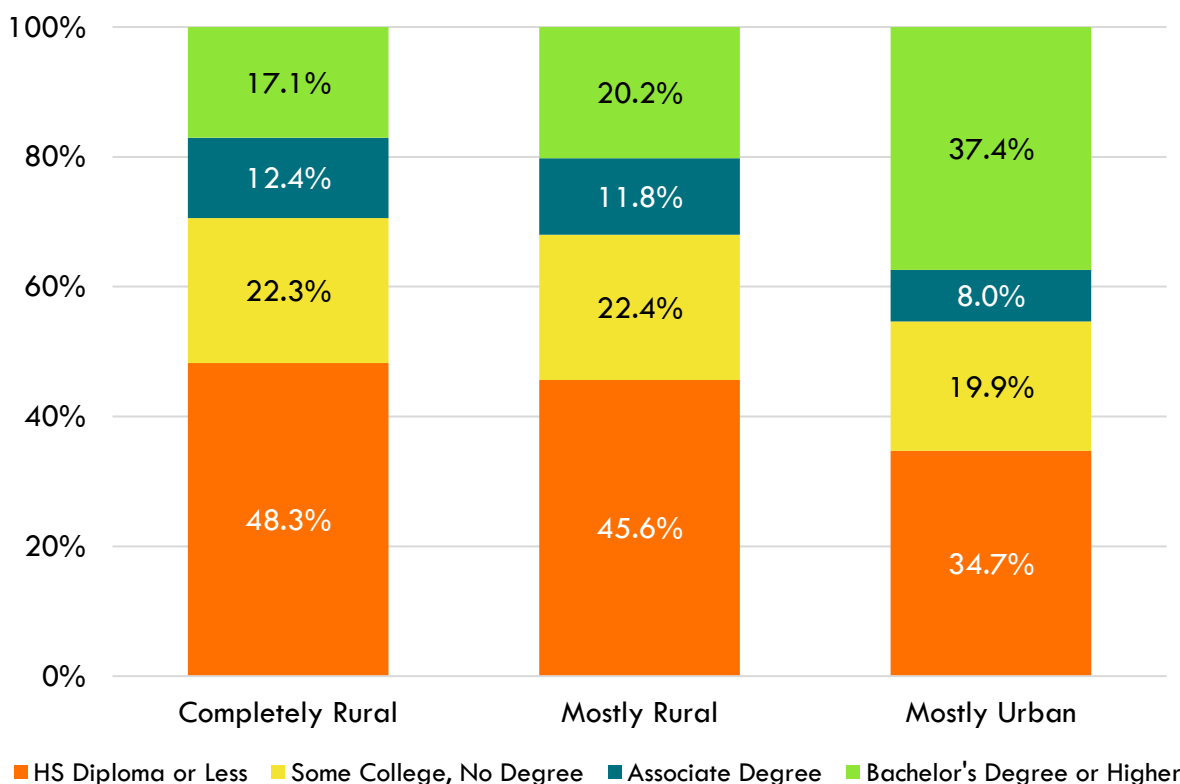
Rural counties generally have smaller proportions of their working-age population with an associate degree or higher, as illustrated in the [interactive maps](#) on the IBHE website. Relatedly, as shown in Figures 24 and 25, rural counties have higher proportions of the adult population with a high school diploma or less and slightly higher proportions with some college, but no degree.

Figure 24: Percent of Adult Population in Illinois with an Associate Degree or Higher by Rurality



Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

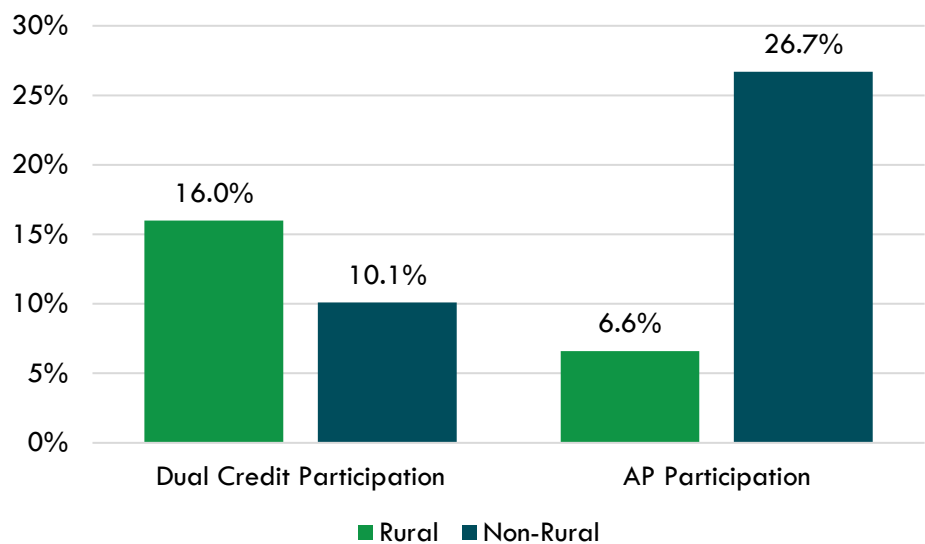
Figure 25: Educational Attainment in Illinois (Age 25+) by Rurality



Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

As shown in Figure 26, rural students have greater access to dual credit, but significantly lower proportions have access to AP compared to students in non-rural high schools. Sixteen percent of rural students (based on high school location) had access to dual credit programs, while only 10% of non-rural students did. However, only 7% of rural students had access to AP programs, while 27% of non-rural students did.

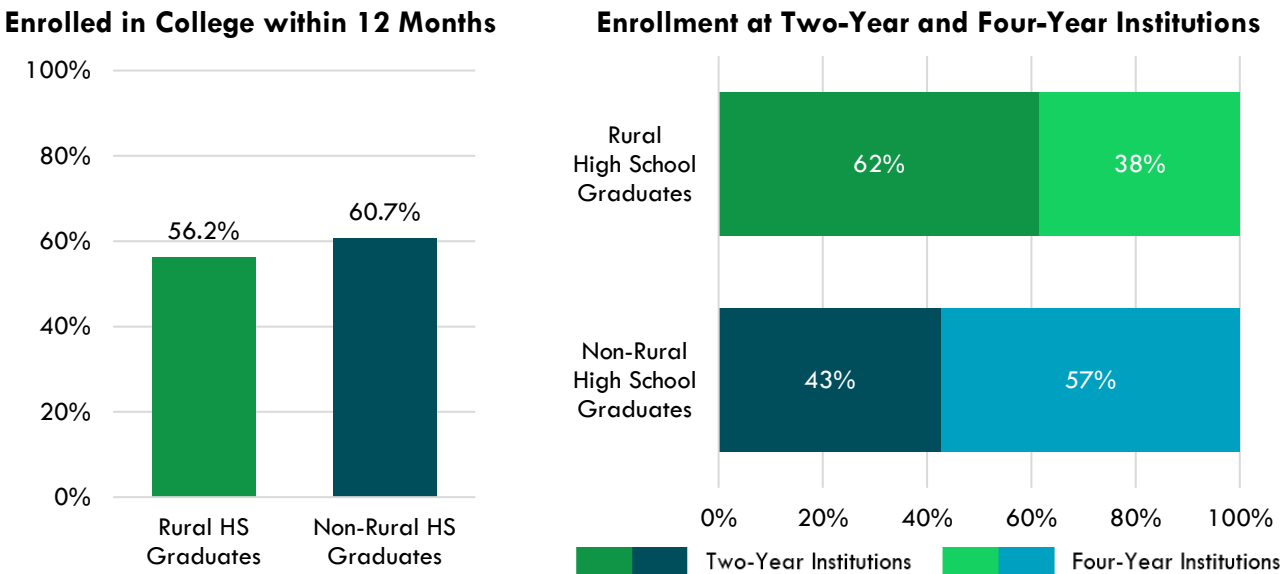
Figure 26: Early College Access by High School Rural Designation



Source: Illinois State Board of Education Report Card File 2021

Rural high school students are slightly less likely to go to college right after high school, and when they do, they are more likely to go to community colleges (see Figure 27). The average college enrollment rate within 12 months of graduation for rural high schools was 56.2%, compared to 60.7% for high schools located in non-rural areas. For those that do enroll, 62% will go to a community college, compared to 43% of students from non-rural areas. The rate of enrollment at four-year institutions was lower among students from rural high schools (38% to 57%).

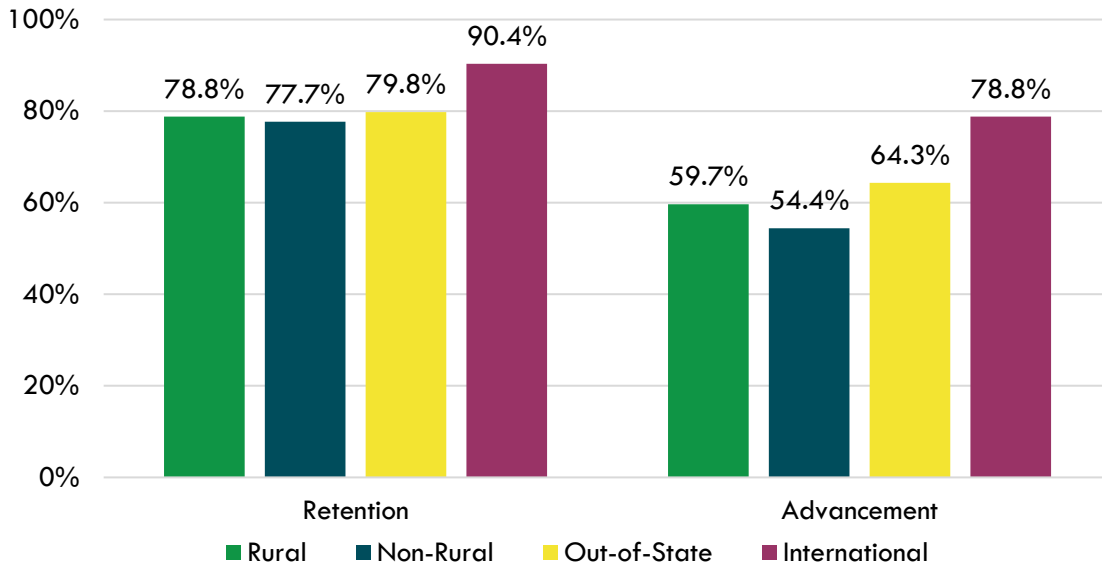
Figure 27: College Enrollment Patterns for Illinois High School Graduates: Rural and Non-Rural Students



Source: Illinois State Board of Education Report Card File 2021

Although rural students are underrepresented among freshmen at Illinois public universities, institutions retain rural and non-rural freshmen at similar rates. In fall of 2021- 22, rural students represented approximately 7.5% of the freshmen at public universities and about 14% of transfer students. Institutions retained just under 80% of rural and non-rural freshmen and advanced rural freshmen at a greater rate than non-rural students (see Figure 28).

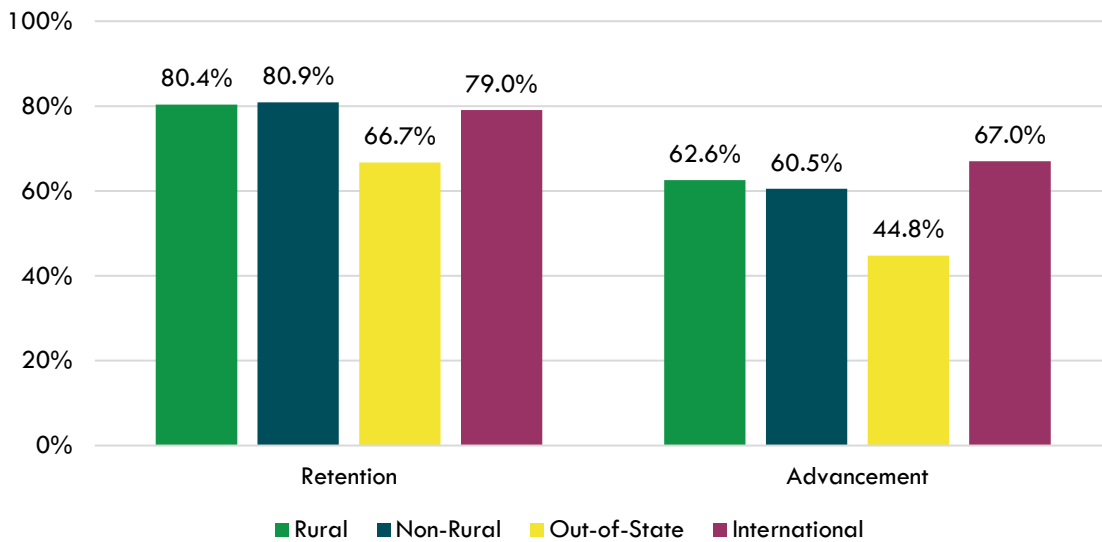
Figure 28: Retention and Class Advancement by Rurality: Full-Time Freshmen



Source: IHEIS Fall Enrollment Collections from 2020-21 and 2021-22

As illustrated in Figure 29, rural transfer students are retained and advanced at Illinois public universities at similar rates as their non-rural counterparts, with slightly higher class advancement rates.

Figure 29: Retention and Class Advancement by Rurality: Transfer Students



Source: IHEIS Fall Enrollment Collections from 2020-21 and 2021-22



[Click here for Fiscal Year 2022 report for the Illinois Community College Board](#)



CHICAGO STATE UNIVERSITY



EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY



Governors State
UNIVERSITY



ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY
Illinois' first public university.



Northern Illinois University



Southern Illinois University
CARBONDALE

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
EDWARDSVILLE



SIU SCHOOL of MEDICINE



UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS CHICAGO

UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS
SPRINGFIELD



UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



Western Illinois
University

As Illinois' only U.S. Department of Education designated four-year Predominantly Black Institution, Chicago State University (CSU) is laser focused on increasing access and success for our state's Black students. This work is particularly urgent given the 34 percent decline in Black student enrollment in higher education in Illinois since 2013. CSU developed the Cougar Commitment, a comprehensive pre-college through career recruitment, enrollment, support, and completion plan to better serve its predominantly Black and low-income student body. Under the last three years of Cougar Commitment, the undergraduate retention and graduation rates have increased.



Pre-College: CSU begins its engagement with its local neighborhood high schools through a dual enrollment program, which includes working with schools on addressing transportation issues for students to participate on campus. Dual Credit is now also offered on-site at one school, where students can take general education courses. CSU offers three summer camps for students to explore future careers in teaching, engineering, and health professions.

Access to College: The Cougar Commitment also focuses on removing barriers that have historically disadvantaged students of color enrolling and persisting in college. CSU eliminated developmental education and became standardized-test optional before the policies were legislatively required. CSU created the *Rise Academy*, which supports first-year retention by providing free tuition, books, and computers for all incoming freshmen, through an early start program as well as holistic support.

Transfer students and students who have stopped out have also received attention, with dedicated pathways, transfer guides, and master articulation agreements helping streamline the path for transfer students. The ReUp Initiative provides mentors and student coaches to help students who have stopped out return to school and successfully complete.

Retention & Graduation: Academic supports have been expanded, with tutors assigned to courses and Learning Assistants have been added. Learning Assistants are students who provide support for other students in the previously taken course or a higher-level course, after having taken a course in pedagogy, and work with a faculty mentor. They receive a stipend to pay for the course and hours. A system of early alerts has been implemented, where alerts are reviewed at the four-week, eight-week, and 12-week timeframes, to see, for example, where class attendance may have dropped off. Students have monthly check-ins with academic advisors and in-person and online tutoring is available seven days a week.

Non-academic supports are also provided, including soon to open an on-campus child development center primarily for students; counseling center; wellness center; as well as affinity centers for students to have a sense of belonging. CSU has also focused on meeting students' basic social-emotional needs, adding the Cougar Pantry, Cougar Closet, and providing year-round workshops and events.

Careers: To address documented racial inequities in access to careers, fair wages, and advancement, CSU has worked with corporate partners to create targeted internship opportunities for students, mentorship, and scholarship resources with corporate partners, including Discover Financial Services, Spark Foundry, Leo Burnett, and Groupon. The partnerships are innovative. For example, Discover Financial Services is paying tuition for employees who study at CSU. Hyatt is reserving internships for CSU students who participate in a bootcamp in preparation for the internship. Spark Foundry is teaching a course at CSU that prepares students for internships and other career opportunities.

[Back to Illinois public universities list](#)

Much of EIU's current approach to closing equity gaps comes from lessons learned using Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds to implement and assess new strategies related to the pandemic. EIU funded approximately three dozen programs and found four to be most successful and worthy of continued investment: online tutoring; an expanded Tutoring Center; diversifying the Honors program to promote inclusive excellence; and numerous student mentoring initiatives.



EIU found that students were working more and needed tutoring at different times and so made an online managed peer tutoring platform available nearly 24/7. Students tutor others, creating both employment and professional growth opportunities for peer tutors while supporting academic growth for students using the program.

The Tutoring Center's operations were expanded to include workshops, group studying and group work, as well as supplemental instruction. Additionally, major-based tutoring in the academic departments was added, as was academic coaching and a web-based chatbot. The chatbot intakes comments, questions, and concerns from students and connects them to targeted resources to address basic issues that can be resolved by the student themselves, while simultaneously providing valuable insights to identify students who are at risk so that staff can circle back and provide outreach as needed.

The Honors program was diversified by shifting to test optional (much like EIU's general admissions) and creating more inclusive pathways. Diverse students were intentionally recruited, creating opportunities for students who may not have known about the program or their eligibility otherwise.

Mentoring has played an increasingly critical role in student support services efforts at EIU. Among the various mentoring initiatives, the most expansive and robust is the Freshmen and Transfer Connection Mentorship Program. This program has four goals: 1) to provide a unique experience for incoming freshmen through peer mentorship; 2) to create an inclusive and supportive program and environment that contributes to the success of students and mentors; 3) to help mentors grow to be leaders on campus and post-graduation; and 4) cultivate altruism at EIU. Freshmen student participants must attend one small group meeting (with a free meal) each week and participate in a course designed to help students identify and learn campus resources, learn tips and skills to succeed, and to further develop their community and sense of belonging with fellow freshmen. Transfer student participants are not required to take the foundations course but similarly attend one small group meeting (with a free meal) per week and are primarily assigned to mentors who were also incoming transfer students themselves, where possible.

Freshman and transfer mentors are volunteers who are interviewed, selected and trained at the beginning of the fall semester, followed by monthly supervisory meetings where they are taught the skills to be effective mentors, build community, and support their mentees. Graduate Supervisors, who are students in EIU's counseling program, provide regular support and leadership for their own assigned mentor groups. Supervisors encourage and demonstrate how to maintain healthy boundaries, have tough conversations, and be effective leaders and mentors. Mentors regularly consult with supervisors before making hard decisions. Mentors each have between four to six mentees. Mentors can become peer leaders as part of the University Foundation course in their second year of participation and receive compensation.

Additionally, three specifically targeted mentoring programs are helping improve EIU students' success:

- The iSTEM Mentoring program aims to engage and support underrepresented students in the STEM fields by pairing students with both a peer *and* a faculty mentor.
- The FOCUS program offers one-on-one mentoring, pairing disabled students with peer mentors from the Office of Student Disability Services. The purpose of the FOCUS program is to provide participants with the skills and supports they need to achieve academic success at the college level.
- The S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring Program seeks out underrepresented male students and fosters a climate that will enhance their abilities to overcome challenges that may hinder them from graduating. Beginning in spring 2023, S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring will be coordinating an entire residence hall floor for both academic and social programming – including study nights and Alumni chats.

Further embedding tutoring and mentoring efforts into the individual academic colleges, EIU also established Academic Hubs as spaces of belonging and academic support. Examples of these include the Latino and Spanish-Speaking Academic Hub, Asian & Pacific Islander Hub, and the African American and African Diaspora Hub in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences as well as the Hub for Leadership, Engagement, and Professionalism in the College of Business and Technology.

EIU is also partnering with Lake Land College, the nearby community college, to help students who stopped out of EIU with over 60 credits and a GPA of over 2.0 to get a credential through Lake Land.

Diversifying faculty and staff is EIU's Quality Initiative with the Higher Learning Commission. In fall 2021, EIU released and is currently implementing a strategic plan with 36 initiatives, including new policies, practices, and initiatives to diversify and retain diverse faculty and staff to improve student retention and completion.

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Governors State University continues to enhance its educational mission and support of a diverse student population through targeted attention to the expansion of equity-informed best practices as part of its footprint in Illinois higher education. The University has engaged in a multi-pronged approach to access and equity in its overall vision, its academic programs and in student support/student affairs. Examples from the pandemic and post-pandemic return to operations include expanded access to its counseling and wellness center, including teletherapy and access to domestic violence awareness. Online talking circles were formed in Student Engagement to discuss issues of civil equality and violence. Programs such as GSU4U help address food and housing insecurities and the TRIO Educational Opportunity Center support adult student financial and economic literacy; 24/7 live online tutoring; and academic, career, and personal counseling.



In December 2022, GSU received a \$50,000 IBHE grant focused on supporting students with housing insecurities. Academic guidance with a degree completion focus continues through peer mentors, student success coaches, and social workers. The newly formed First Generation Center is focused on increasing retention and success of first-generation college going minority students and incorporates National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) best practices. In response to the national dialog on underserved and underrepresented male student college completion, GSU established a male success initiative designed to improve college going and college completion rates for men.

At the institutional level, GSU has launched its Social Justice Initiative, which was awarded \$70,000 by the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation in December 2022. The Social Justice Initiative will provide pro-bono legal services, educational and cultural enrichment, and serve as a community resource for programming, training, and continuous learning on issues of social need and social justice. This is one of several initiatives found at GSU addressing social equity which also includes the hiring of a Chief Diversity Officer and additional grants focused, both locally and nationally, in support of work readiness and college readiness. The creation of the Latinx Center advances GSU's commitment to its students in keeping with its MSI Department of Education status.

To enhance persistence and reduce both time to graduation and student debt, GSU also has implemented changes in course structure, adding "co-requisite" supports, such as peer mentors who provide motivation, time management coaching, and other strategies for successful coursework. Graduate assistants provide additional academic support outside the classroom. Courses focus on hands-on, real-life work, along with opportunities to develop and practice competencies. Additionally, in the spring 2022, GSU was invited and joined the prestigious Gardner Institute Curricular Analytics cohort project focused on identifying and addressing barriers to students' completion of academic programs by examining institutional data on student performance and policies and practices for areas of improvement.

To increase faculty diversity, GSU created a 90 Day rolling tracker, developed by the talent acquisition team in the Department of Human Resources, to determine trends surrounding applicant activity at GSU. We track the total number of applicants on a 90-day cycle and how many fall into the categories of: Minority, Female, Veteran, and applicants who identify as having a disability.

The initial implementation of the tracker was rolled out to determine the current state of our applicant pool and develop a future for recruitment activity. Using this data, HR is reviewing the number of diverse applicants comparable to those that are hired as employees at the university.

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ISU has several strategies to close equity gaps, building from its data analysis, focusing on learning renewal and supports needed due to the pandemic, and climate surveys.



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ISU has used climate surveys since 2006. The Climate Equity Plan developed in 2016 has four objectives focused on Inclusive Learning; Recruitment/Retention of Faculty and Staff; Affirming Spaces; and Closing Retention, Persistence, and Completion Gaps. A revised plan will be developed from the inclusion survey completed in fall 2022.

Inclusive learning work includes, for example, a required course for students on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access in U. S. Society and a Framework for Inclusive Teaching Excellence. Faculty Growth Change Teams, college-specific professional development programming, and faculty support to redesign their courses for equity and diversity to create inclusive classroom curricula.

To increase recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and staff, ISU has expanded the number of media features on underrepresented minority and women scholars, and they have added a “search advocate” to support diversity in the faculty and staff recruitment and hiring process. A new Faculty Diversity Enhancement Program designed to attract and retain candidates committed to EDI provides up to \$20,000 annually for three years for faculty hired through this strategic search process. The funds support professional development, graduate assistant funding, summer salary for teaching or research, and other start-up investments. The search committee must have participated in an orientation, a search advocate must be on the committee, and an EDIA statement is required. New faculty are part of the university faculty mentoring network that promotes an environment of support to encourage personal and professional development in teaching, scholarship/career advancement, and person/well-being. In spring 2022, ISU partnered with the [Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education](#) (COACHE) to administer the Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey. Five themes have been identified as priorities to establish action plans and solutions across campus.

The institution opened a multicultural center, has 25 percent of its counselors with diverse identities, and has added an EDI team for media and website review. In addition, ISU has created the SOAR (Supporting Opportunity, Actualization, and Realization) Scholars program, a cohort-based program with wrap-around supports to close retention, persistence, and completion gaps. A Persistence Committee uses case managers in both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to support student success. The committee proactively identifies students potentially at risk of falling behind academically or dropping out of school and provides them help (microgrants) using the Presidential Persistence fund.

The faculty also supports student persistence through the Framework for Inclusive Teaching Excellence. The Center for Integrated Professional Development offers institution-wide programs aligned with the Framework throughout the year, including a summer learning institute, a new faculty orientation, a university-wide teaching and learning symposium, and short courses and programs. In addition, through the EDI Leaders Circle: Pillars of Progress, faculty and staff learn strategies to advance equity and diversity in student admissions, student success, and faculty/staff searches.

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Northeastern Illinois University has launched an array of institutional equity efforts. These include engaging faculty through the Center for Teaching and Learning to review so-called “DFW” courses to identify the root causes of students receiving grades of “D” or “F” or withdrawing. Strategies focus on improving pedagogy where warranted. The institution also established Equity Teams at the college level to close equity gaps at the program level with a rigorous look at the data. Along with this, they are focused on professional development to expand faculty and staff ability to use data. NEIU has also established Equity Dashboards, looks closely at retention data, and is part of the Partnership for College Completion’s Illinois Equity in Attainment (ILEA) initiative.



To address student needs, NEIU has focused on mental health and student sense of belonging. They are giving faculty and staff more tools, including training on cultivating inclusivity and understanding mental health and putting students in touch with academic support services and technology-based resources. The number of full-time counselors has been increased and a peer-to-peer support program using social work majors has been established. To meet students’ other basic needs, NEIU is establishing a social services consortium to connect students to affordable child care, healthy food, housing, and mental health services.

Financial challenges are addressed through scholarships to address stop-out and special circumstances (emergencies). The “NEIU For You” scholarship is a last-dollar program that provides four years of tuition for lower-income students enrolling as first-time, full-time freshmen. Of NEIU’s 500 freshmen, 300 received the scholarship along with a program of academic supports in the most recent year.

NEIU has also established housing scholarships that allow students to live on-campus in an apartment setting. Students can join one of six Living-Learning Communities, including Social Justice, STEM, and Future Teachers, among others. These are shown to improve student engagement, sense of belonging, and success.

NEIU began a Campus Climate Study in 2020 and to date have implemented seven of the ten recommendations, including establishing Equity Diversity and Inclusion vision, mission, goals, and definitions; established a Joy and Wellness series and a 21-day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge.

The Climate Study also pointed to training for equity in faculty search and screening, which is now mandatory. NEIU is also using data to identify departments/units to prioritize diverse hiring.

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NIU is a unique institution with high research activity that strives to reach students historically underrepresented in higher education. Its research mission addresses complex societal problems with an equity and social justice lens. NIU leadership has been a national voice for equitable federal research grant funding.



NIU has taken notable steps since 2018 to achieve equity and affordability, including eliminated out-of-state tuition, established the Huskie Pledge of last-dollar scholarships for eligible students, implemented test-free merit scholarships, eliminated admission fees, and implemented test-free admission.

With a focus on increasing affordability, NIU has increased institutional aid each year since 2017. Merit awards are provided to 80 percent of freshmen, 67 percent of whom are students of color. Merit scholarships are provided for four years to provide students financial stability.

NIU has been a leader in Equity Plan development, as part of the Partnership for College Completion's Illinois Equity in Attainment (ILEA) initiative, with an integrated Equity Plan and Strategic Enrollment Management plan. They have focused on addressing mental health and social emotional needs of students and creating a sense of belonging and engagement. They have worked with students on financial assistance and partnered with non-profit Braven to help with career development and connection. The Center for Student Assistance helps identify needs and connect students to services on campus or in the community to promote and support their success. Text services and a chat bot on web pages for admissions and financial aid help students access information. A proactive communications campaign embeds three themes essential for student success – go to class; connect with something outside of class; don't be afraid to ask for help. Holistic advising for first year students has been expanded, as has more support for transfer students.

NIU has also invested in and built on campus climate surveys to better understand the student experience. On a two-year cycle they administer the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access survey to all NIU employees and students. They also participate in the *Great Colleges to Work For* survey, distributed to all employees annually. Results of the surveys, such as the need for resources to support DEI efforts at the college/department level, while recognizing the strong leadership commitment to DEI, inform university goals and action plans in subsequent years.

To diversify faculty and staff, NIU has focused on the full employee lifecycle. They are working to expand the pipeline of diverse talent, supporting DEI post-graduate fellowships, are active participants in the IBHE Diversifying Faculty in Illinois program and help sponsor the annual DFI Fellows Conference. They conduct implicit bias training for all search committees and advertise positions in diverse publications. They provide mentoring for all faculty, with a particular focus on those from diverse backgrounds. They remove barriers to ensure equitable review during tenure and promotion evaluations of faculty. And, as noted above, they use climate surveys to ensure diverse faculty and staff are supported.

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SIUC has implemented a number of innovative approaches to equity and student success. For students starting out, SIUC has implemented a Future Scholars Summer Bridge program to ease the transition from high school to college for students who are admitted conditionally (below 2.75 GPA). Students are registered for seven hours in the summer session and have assigned advisors, counselors, tutors, and mentors throughout the summer. In addition, SIUC offers an Exploratory Studies program for undeclared freshman students who are admitted below typical admission standards. This program also offers wrap around support services during their first year and serves to provide direction on selecting a major. Launched in the fall of 2022, the first-year experience, or “university 101” student success project is a mandatory program that includes intrusive advising and established pathways to degree completion. SIUC utilizes a “Student Athlete Academic Support Model,” using the analogy to student athletes who are recruited early to college, and once they arrive have mandatory coaches/advisors who make sure they are attending class, obtaining weekly grade checks, and referring at-risk students for early intervention.



Dual credit/early college are important ways to reach students. SIUC has partnerships with local high schools and community colleges to offer students an associate degree, along with obtaining their high school diploma, and then completing a bachelor’s degree after two additional years at SIUC.

SIUC is focused on using data and predictive analytics to address enrollment, retention, and completion gaps, and has made data transparent and accessible throughout the campus. Business intelligence tools (ex. Slate, EAB, Degree Works) help analyze progress. Each unit has a unit effectiveness plan, strategic action steps, and assessment measures to track progress. The school has acknowledged the importance of focusing on retaining incoming freshman and returning sophomores. Data suggest there is also a need to ensure the successful progression and completion of rising juniors and seniors. Institutional evidence revealed that students “stop out” during this stage of their academic careers due to financial reasons. The entire university is looking at ways to better retain, persist, and graduate students at all levels.

SIUC staff is more diverse than it has been in the history of the university. Hires over the last two years among administrators and staff have yielded more women and minorities from underrepresented populations. SIUC has launched new funding to better support the hiring among diverse faculty members from underrepresented populations as well and utilize the Vice Chancellor for Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion’s office to set goals across the colleges and schools to ensure they meet targets within their strategic plan, Imagine SIU 2030. At the end of each fiscal year, colleges and schools produce a report card on achievements and outcomes.

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SIUE has a strong focus on student retention, with a particular emphasis on the impact of the pandemic. Because students have exhibited less help-seeking behavior, SIUE has done more to reach out to students. They are currently assessing the entire campus advising ecosystem and attaching student supports directly to the classroom, such as tutoring. They are looking closely at competency in first year courses and providing faculty development on the new co-requisite model. This new model was executed to replace the traditional developmental education because institutional findings revealed the traditional model was a major contributor to attrition.



SIUE has also established and expanded the Black Scholar Experience to help support Black students and close retention and completion gaps. The program includes an orientation for students and their families; placing students as a cohort in first-year courses, which are taught by African American faculty, and intensifying advising.

SIUE has also prioritized what they call the “democratization of data,” making actionable intelligence available throughout the campus community. Too often, they have found, campus constituents are not aware of the equity gaps among students. Therefore, awareness is essential to successfully implement strategies.

Diversity of faculty and staff is an area of focus. SIUE is establishing a baseline and setting a numerical target to increase diversity. Research shows that all students learning outcomes improve when diversity is represented in front of the classroom. Each search committee has a “diversity advocate” who has gone through a training program to help ensure each committee can center diversity. SIUE has made strategic investments in cluster hiring: a successful strategy to recruit and hire multiple diverse candidates as a cohort.

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While many high impact practices have been implemented to close equity gaps and create a sense of belonging on the individual campuses, the Campus Climate Survey was conducted system-wide and included the School of Medicine. The SIU System completed the confidential and anonymous survey for all students and employees in spring 2022. In addition to gathering robust quantitative data, the survey received a thousand comments. Summaries and recommendations were used to lead meaningful campus discussions and identify aligned strategies from the university strategic plan. The survey results also provided topics for the ongoing institution-wide “Conversations of Understanding” around antiracism, diversity, equity, and inclusion.



The system has also focused on recruiting and retaining diverse faculty and staff members. Advertising is inclusive with respect to race and gender and search committee representatives are diverse. System leaders have begun regularly attending the Institute on Teaching and Mentoring conference held by the Southern Regional Education Board. The conference brings together diverse scholars and doctoral candidates for networking and mentoring. SIU was the only institution to have a system president and university chancellor at the event actively recruiting candidates. The system has also implemented “stay interviews” to check-in with faculty and staff and encourage retention.

The SIU System was the only university system in the country to receive the 2022 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity award, in part, because of its successful recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and staff members and commitment to anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion for all students, faculty, and staff.

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UIC, through Access 2030, has three goals: 1) increase the percent of Black undergraduates within the incoming cohort of first-year and transfer students to 13.5 percent by 2030, reflective of population trends in Illinois; 2) close retention equity gaps for underrepresented minority students and 3) increase the number of Black tenure and non-tenure track faculty to 13.5 percent.



UIC offers a robust, tuition-free summer program to support students' academic and social-emotional transition from high school to college. The UIC Summer College provides an opportunity for incoming students to meet other students, to interact with staff and instructors on campus, and to brush up on areas of study. The program for incoming freshmen allows students to spend three or six weeks on the UIC campus before the regular academic year starts. In addition to orienting students and introducing them to Success Centers, students participate in math, writing, chemistry, or music theory workshops to help them enter credit-bearing coursework, increase retention and completion.

Students who participate in Summer College identify better with campus, are not as overwhelmed, and are better prepared for the start of their college career. Of the students enrolled in Summer College, roughly 68 percent are Pell eligible, 61 percent are first-generation, and 64 percent are underrepresented minority students. In 2021, approximately 350 students attended Summer College. Students who attend Summer College display higher metrics of success than do those who are eligible but opt not to attend.

Student Success Centers provide academic support to all students, including those in Summer College, and were created to address the needs and opportunities for each group of students. In addition to student support, Success Centers house undergraduate research and external fellowships. To better coordinate and integrate services, all student services and student life is under one leader, who is responsible for the entire student pipeline from recruitment to career placement. This allows a holistic focus on students; academic, cultural, and mental health needs as a way of addressing retention gaps and graduation rates. Strategies such as providing financial aid information earlier during the admission process help students understand how they will afford college. UIC is also addressing housing need, especially for Black students who need greater access to affordable housing on campus.

UIC and the Student Success Center have several community partners that assist in removing barriers and ensuring student success. One of the most recent partnerships is with Hope Chicago, a nonprofit organization seeking to reduce economic and social inequity by funding postsecondary scholarships and non-tuition costs for Chicago Public Schools graduates and adult family members. As part of the first cohort, UIC's Student Success Centers currently support 109 Hope Chicago students through orientation, tutoring, advising, coaching and targeted programmatic and academic support.

The Bridge to Faculty program is an important component of diversifying the faculty to create a better sense of belonging for students. This post-doctoral to tenure-track faculty program provides a two-year post-doctoral opportunity, after which fellows may transition to tenure-track positions. Departments hiring these faculty must have an intentional plan for how to support and retain these new faculty. As part of this deliberate development, fellows participate in cohort programming, engage in an extensive orientation and several workshops work with a mentoring team, and do limited teaching in their first two years to provide more time for research. Three cohorts of fellows have been hired through the program to date, with a 100 percent retention rate for the first cohort (ten fellows) and an estimated 77 percent retention for the second cohort (22 fellows).

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Access 2030 goals for the University of Illinois Springfield are to increase underrepresented minority and rural enrollment by 20 percent within three years and to increase the retention of the same students by six percent within three years, and to increase faculty diversity to improve support of underrepresented minority students.



Serving underrepresented minority and rural students is part of UIS's Strategic Enrollment Management plan. Key performance indicators include:

- 1) Improving admission and acceptance rate of underrepresented minority and rural students across central and southern Illinois through the addition of admissions counselors with expertise in addressing the needs of underrepresented and minority students.
- 2) Partner with Hope Chicago and increase recruitment through building stronger high school and community college partnerships.
- 3) Building a "Smart Start" program in partnership with the local school district #186 to offer a dual-enrollment course for college credit at no charge to the students. This program allows underrepresented minority student to learn more about college readiness and UIS.
- 4) The STARS (Students Transitioning for Academic Retention and Success) is provided each summer as a two-week bridge program. Students take courses in math and composition, receive enhanced academic support services, peer mentors, and seminars on successful transition strategies. Students also are provided campus resources, like the library, financial aid, and student life.

UIS is also implementing revised curricular practices, such as redesigning courses with high "DFW" equity gaps; providing targeted advising support for high-risk first-year students who are not participating in a living/learning community in the residence hall; and adopting an early alert system at week four for English and math courses to identify struggling students.

Community resources have been identified to help support students basic needs such as housing, food insecurity, and mental health. A food pantry has been made available to assist students who experience food insecurity on campus. A technology borrowing program, including laptops and WIFI hotspots, has been established.

UIS has committed to increasing diverse faculty hiring. To this end, Academic Affairs has added search committee training for diverse hiring and retention of faculty; intentional marketing in diverse venues to attract applicants; as well as using cluster hiring. In 2018, a diverse doctoral fellows program was implemented to recruit and support diverse faculty hiring.

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For Urbana-Champaign, Access 2030 calls for closing the undergraduate gap of underrepresented minorities by 2030, while also increasing the number of underrepresented minorities graduating by 50 percent.



UIUC has an emphasis on access and affordability, consistent with its land-grant mission. As noted above, spending on financial aid has increased substantially. Along with institutional aid, UIUC offers Illinois Commitment, where students from families with incomes below \$67,100 pay no tuition and fees. Approximately 30 percent of the entering class is part of the Illinois Commitment. UIUC has also joined Hope Chicago in covering the full cost of attendance for students from each of the five Chicago Public School partner high schools. The investment includes academic and social support for the Hope Chicago scholars during their time on campus.

Bridge programs are also central to closing gaps for students who have come from under-resourced high schools and backgrounds. UIUC offers the Illinois Scholars program, a four-week summer residential program for students who are first in their families to attend college, from low-income families, underrepresented minorities, or from counties with low college-going rates. The program prepares students to transition academically and socially to college and provides co-curricular support throughout all four years of college.

Nationally, UIUC is part of the Power by Publics initiative of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU), which brings together 125 institutions to scale student success efforts. UIUC is looking specifically at so-called “weed-out” courses, which have high rates of grades “D” or “F” or high levels of students withdrawing (“W”). Once these courses are identified, then strategies are developed to change the patterns.

In addition to efforts made at the central campus level, the decentralized nature of the institution fosters innovation and investments at the individual college level. For example, multiple colleges house student centers designed to nurture student success; most academic units host an embedded counselor to offer mental health services in close proximity to the student in need; several colleges offer independent bridge programs for incoming first-year students; and many colleges have implemented early alert systems to identify students in academic crisis and provide tutoring options to help students manage through their crises.

Faculty diversity has been communicated clearly by the university as a top priority – and this priority is reflected in fiscal and operational practices. All departments are required to create clearly defined diversity goals in annual hiring plans and these plans are the basis for university approval of new searches/hires each year. The Targets of Opportunity Program (TOP) offers central campus salary support to departments/colleges to augment their ability to hire candidates from underrepresented backgrounds who are discovered during the units regular annual search/hiring cycles. Funding in this program is also available to allow units to make a second hire on a search in cases where units identify two highly qualified candidates for a position, one of whom may further our campus diversity goals. Last year’s investment of \$2.2 million supported 30 new hires. Importantly, the university has adjusted the promotion and tenure process to embed diversity/equity considerations at the core of one of the most fundamental operations – awarding lifetime tenure to faculty. UIUC believes it is the first public university in the country to formally institute the evaluation of candidate contributions to diversity, equity and inclusion into the wholistic promotion and tenure process.

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WIU has implemented a multi-part strategy to address equity, with a particular focus on retention strategies. WIU implemented a high-touch first-year advising program, with three to five appointments per semester for all students and eight appointments per semester for students conditionally admitted through the Reach program. Students begin engaging with their academic advisor in the spring and throughout the summer before starting classes in the fall. Students stay engaged throughout the summer during their onboarding process with peer support and frequent staff interaction.



Students, faculty, staff, and loved ones aware of any student facing any issues can submit a care referral via the Leatherneck Care Referral Program. A coordinated effort between multiple offices ensures follow up for students with any questions or challenges they might have, including mental health, academic performance, among others. Communication has been central to WIU's new approach. They have implemented and aggressively use technology, including EdSights, a proactive and reactive chatbot allowing students to ask questions and engage with WIU 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Insight from the program allows personalized and direct outreach to occur to ensure students receive helpful and timely information about valuable resources and support offered by the institution. Western has found that students are more responsive to text messaging and have implemented an interactive texting throughout outreach campaigns like the Leatherneck Lookout program which is comprised of direct phone outreach during critical points in the semester. WIU's resources website is updated frequently based on the questions received from the chatbot.

WIU has developed an early intervention program that starts with mapping student connections and how involved they are in campus activities, resource use, and staff interactions. This begins when they on-board students with a program focused on belonging, growth mindset, and academic health. They target activities within the first 4 days, 4 weeks, and 4 months of enrollment with best practices showing that a student's first five weeks as the most critical for success. Direct outreach and intervention occur for all students identified as being at-risk.

WIU has also established a new office for Justice, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity and has established an Anti-Racism Taskforce. The JIDE office, the taskforce, and The Multicultural Center are committed to improving student success for historically underrepresented students. These entities will create the campus diversity plan and ensure respect for and acknowledgement of cultural identities, life experiences and the different ways of making meaning. Having safe spaces, programming that reflects the wide range of cultures, especially their own and multiple opportunities to see that their concerns and issues matter and are addressed and respected, plays a part in the overall sense of equity and fairness and belonging.

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