A THRIVING ILLINOIS: DESIGN WORK GROUP REPORTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS: DESIGN WORK GROUPS REPORTS

The higher education strategic plan – "A Thriving Illinois" – is the result of a planning process grounded in community engagement. It all began with a series of early focus groups to answer the questions of why a higher education strategic plan is important and what it should accomplish. From there, a survey of a broad group of stakeholders, including educators and staff throughout the P20 system, students, business leaders, community organizations, and others, received nearly 10,000 responses identifying priorities for the strategic plan to address. As the Board outlined three goals built on this input, additional focus groups involving 170 people were held regionally and for specific stakeholder groups to identify opportunities and barriers to achieving the goals. The Board then convened a 37-person Advisory Committee to shepherd the strategy-development process, engaging nine Design Work Groups to develop detailed recommendations.

Design Work Groups were comprised of 200 stakeholders, including Board members of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), institution trustees, presidents, faculty, staff, community organizations, advocates, philanthropy, and other experts. The Design Work Groups focused on the following areas:

- Increasing Financial Aid and Decreasing Student Debt
- Future of Work and Future of Learning
- Meeting the State's Workforce Needs
- State Educator Workforce
- Serving Adults in Higher Education
- Supporting the High School, College, and Career Connection
- Adequate and Equitable Funding
- Managing Costs in the Higher Education System
- Redesign the System to Meet Student Needs and Close Equity Gaps

Design Work Group members met over the course of several months in early 2021 to develop strategies, drawing from insights from research, state and national experts, and evidence-based practices in Illinois and nationally. The Design Work Group members also reviewed feedback from stakeholders, as well as the Advisory Committee and Board. The Design Work Groups vetted their work against the core principles developed by the Board and prioritized strategies, preparing reports that were submitted to the Advisory Committee for final review. Each of the Design Work Group reports are included in this compendium. Collectively, these documents informed the development of the strategic plan, "A Thriving Illinois."

The contributions of the Design Work Group members is greatly appreciated. A list of the Design Work Group members is available at ibhestrategicplan.ibhe.org.

PROBLEM STATEMENT/INTRODUCTION:

Students who come from families with low resources are underserved by Illinois' higher education system. Only 53% of low-income Illinois high school graduates go to college within 6 months of graduating, while 74% of non-low-income students do. Between 2013 and 2018, Illinois enrolled nearly 75,000 fewer low-income undergraduate students, a 26% decrease, compared to a 13% decrease for non-low-income students. In 2018, there were about half as many low-income undergraduate students enrolled (207,000) as there were non-low-income students (412,000). Institutions are less successful in serving low-income students, with fewer being retained and advancing in their programs. Not surprisingly, completion rate gaps between low-income and non-low-income students are stark: in 2018, 71.5% of wealthier students at public four-year institutions completed their programs while only 47.1% of low-income students completed. Further, as we now know, low-income students were disproportionately – and dramatically – impacted by COVID-19, suggesting that without additional intervention, we will see further decreases in enrollment and completion among this population.

Illinois has a strong state-funded need-based grant program, the Monetary Award Program (MAP), providing support for low-income students who apply via the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). In fiscal year (FY) 2002, MAP covered 100% of tuition and fees at Illinois public universities and community colleges. However, over time, the state appropriation has not kept up with rising tuition and fees, creating a gap both in purchasing power and in the number of students who can be served. By FY20, MAP awards dropped to 34% and 36% of tuition and fees at universities and community colleges, respectively, even after an additional $86M infusion to MAP between FY18 and FY20.

In FY20, funds were insufficient to grant MAP awards to an estimated 53,000 eligible students. It is estimated that this number will be less than 23,000 when FY21 ends. Because MAP is awarded on a first-come, first-served basis among those who are financially eligible, students who complete their FAFSA later in the year are at risk of missing out on a grant. These late-applying students are more likely to be independent, have few to no family or individual resources for college, and plan to go to a community college compared to students who receive a grant.
Ensuring that MAP covers the current average cost of tuition and fees at our public institutions and to award every currently eligible student a grant requires an additional $1.2B in funding, for a total of $1.6B annually.

Even with federal and state financial aid, many low-income students are unable to afford college. In FY20, the estimated total cost of attendance (tuition and fees plus living expenses) for an in-state student at a four-year public university in Illinois was just under $30,000. A low-income student who receives the maximum MAP grant, Pell grant, Federal Work Study, and Direct Federal Student loan, without additional scholarships, loans, wages, or family resources, would be $12,000 short in being able to pay for the full cost of attendance. Community college students not living with their parents face average total costs of attendance of just under $17,000, for which the maximum MAP, Pell, and Direct Student Loan still leave the students short by over $3,000.

As a result, many students turn to additional loans to fill the financial gaps between available financial aid and college costs. Illinois has 1.57 million student loan borrowers, with $59.1B outstanding in principal and interest as of March 2020. That represents about 3.8% of the total outstanding student loan debt in the U.S. (Milken Institute).

In addition to providing financial resources, access to good information about college costs and student financial aid that students and families can understand is vital. For example, in its Equity Working Group for Black Student Success Action Plan[1], Chicago State University identified key steps in increasing access to and completion of postsecondary education of students of color, particularly Black students. Those key steps include reaching students, their parents, and families to expand their financial aid awareness; require comprehensive, evidence-based and culturally-relevant financial literacy education for every student to prepare them for post-high school success; and build trust surrounding financial aid and FAFSA applications. Recent legislation and federal changes will simplify

---

[1] Draft Report by Equity Working Group for Black Student Access & Success in IL. Publication forthcoming.

the FAFSA process and increase transparency beginning in 2023, but without deliberate strategies to increase student and family financial literacy, students and families still may not be able to access and use all the public resources available to them.

Meeting student financial need and, to the extent students must rely on debt, ensuring student loans are safe, and providing financial transparency are key components of making college in Illinois affordable.

DRAFT STRATEGIES:

- **Invest $50M each year to double MAP funding over 10 years.** MAP is shown to be effective in helping low-income and minority students enroll in and complete college. Investing in MAP is smart policy. In FY21, the MAP appropriation is $451M. By investing an additional $50M each year, MAP funding should be sufficient to ensure that a student from a family with less than $45,000 annual income could attend community college full-time free of tuition and fees using MAP and Pell grants, with the goal of providing the same coverage to students below that income level at public universities. This annual funding commitment would address the decades-long problem of MAP funds running out before late-applying students, primarily community college students, submit their FAFSAs.

- **Offer MAP grants for year-round study.** Currently, MAP can only be used for fall and spring semester, while Pell can be used year-round. For many students, taking some courses over the summer can keep them on track to degree completion. Recent data also shows that summer programs targeted to students who do not complete 30 credit hours in their first year helps keep them on track to graduation.

- **Work with the Office of the Treasurer to provide low-cost loans to low-income students to cover total cost of attendance.** The data cited above shows the large gap between tuition and fees and the full cost of attending college for students who depend on MAP and Pell. To avoid students relying on high-cost private loans to cover these additional costs, the Treasurer's Office is developing a loan product for students to cover the costs above MAP, Pell, and Direct Student Loans. Agencies should work closely with the Treasurer to ensure students in need of additional financial resources are connected to this program.

- **Implement creative options for 529 savings plans.** The Treasurer's Office provides robust college savings plans through the Bright Start and Bright Directions 529 programs. Research[2] shows that simply the presence of such savings increases the likelihood of underserved children attending college by three times and the likelihood of completing by four times. The Treasurer's Office estimates that an $8M - $10M investment annually could fund the Children's Savings Program -- which provides $50 in a 529 account to each Illinois child at birth (PA 101-0466). An endowment of $100 million could fund the program sustainably. Such an "early scholarship" program could grow into substantial funds for higher education by the child's high school graduation. The state should explore whether the new federal relief funds could be used to seed the Children's Savings Program at birth or in scholarships in early years, turning the one-time funds into a long-term funding stream to support students going forward.

- **Build programs to address challenges of "holds" on student accounts.** The practice of institutions placing a "hold" on a student account because of an outstanding balance has significant equity implications. These "holds," often for relatively small amounts, are designed to incent students to pay an outstanding balance, but instead, by preventing students from re-enrolling, force them to drop out. A hold could also mean the student in the future cannot access a transcript to enroll elsewhere (thus losing credits) or secure employment. A report by IthakaS+R consulting analyzes the extent of the "stranded credit" problem and several actions being undertaken. They also estimate that in Illinois, over 275,000 students have nearly $800M in

---

[2] Terri Friedline, William Elliott, Ilsung Nam. "Small-dollar children's saving accounts and children's college outcomes by race." *Children and Youth Services Review.* Vol. 35, No. 3, March 2013. Pages 548-559.
See also Elliott, W. & Rauscher, E. (2013). From disadvantaged students to college graduates: The role of CSAs (Chapter 4-Brief). In W. Elliott (Ed.), Giving children a financial stake in college: Are CSAs a way to help maximize financial aid dollars? (Biannual Report of the Assets and Education Field). Lawrence, KS: Assets and Education Initiative.

outstanding debt to Illinois institutions, an average of $2,900. These significant consequences can result even if balances are relatively small or the student is close to graduation. Innovative debt forgiveness programs, like Chicago State University's Finish Strong, which includes Cougars Return and micro grant programs or City Colleges of Chicago Fresh Start program, help students get back on track to completing their degree. Another idea under development is to create a clearinghouse so that students attempting to attend a different school could have their transcript released as a result of the institutions connecting through the clearinghouse and making a financial agreement. Innovative solutions exist, and Illinois students should not be locked out of completing their degree due to small outstanding balances.

- **Encourage institutions to provide emergency aid programs and partnerships to support student needs.** Often students face financial pressures beyond planned-for expenses. Even relatively small unanticipated expenses can force students out of school, have them turn to credit card debt and predatory loans, or sacrifice basic needs such as food. Many institutions have established emergency aid programs, but they are inconsistent, and students may not be aware they exist. Institutions should ensure students are aware of such programs. Additionally, formal coordination at the state and institutional level between higher education and state and federal social services programs can help simplify students' access to public programs.

- **Increase information, knowledge, and transparency in accessing and paying for college.** Without equity in and access to transparent knowledge and information about all aspects of college-going, the enrollment and completion gaps cited above – as well as gaps in lifelong economic and physical health – will persist or grow. Therefore, early, intentional, culturally-relevant, and effective communications and outreach that enables students to *know* college costs in advance are vital to achieving equity goals in Illinois. Such communications and outreach should be directed especially toward low-income, first-generation, undocumented, returning adult, foster families and children, and other minoritized students, via school district communication pathways, local partnerships with community organizations, and the state's ISACorps program. ISACorps provides near-peer mentors, supports students in making key college access and finance decisions, and includes information and assistance completing a FAFSA[3], the key to unlocking federal and state aid, and should be continued and expended. Now with new legislation signed by Gov. Pritzker on March 8, 2021, FAFSA[4] completion is a high school graduation requirement. While federal legislation recently passed to simplify the FAFSA also contained provisions to make the total cost of attendance more transparent, more information, knowledge, and transparency is needed to ensure all students are aware of total costs and financial aid.

- **Determine the future of AIM HIGH based on the evaluation of the five-year pilot.** AIM HIGH, a state-funded pilot merit aid program was established by the General Assembly in 2018 and first launched in FY20 for the first cohort of students. Funds are allocated to public universities based on undergraduate enrollment to be awarded as four-year scholarships (for freshmen) or two-year scholarships (for transfer students). Institutions can establish their own merit criteria, but family income must be less than six times the poverty level and institutions must provide matching funds from their own institutional resources to serve more students. The first-year evaluation of the program found that 7,400 students received AIM HIGH scholarships. Sixty-four percent of the scholarships went to students with family incomes below $75,000, including 32% of those with incomes below $30,000. Of the scholarships awarded, 17% went to Black students, 17% went to Latinx students, and 58% of the students receiving scholarships were also Pell eligible. The research literature has found that merit aid programs tend to crowd out funding for need-based aid programs and tend to be less equitable. However, AIM HIGH was established as a pilot program (ending in FY23); therefore, the results of the evaluation should be used to determine whether it should continue.

---

[3] Or the Alternate Application, which allows students access to state financial assistance.
[4] Or completing a waiver.

PROBLEM STATEMENT/INTRODUCTION:

The nature of work and the entire economy is changing as technology, automation, and ubiquitous access to information alter how and where people do their jobs. As a result, the skills and knowledge that students need to be successful are evolving with an increasing focus on connecting ideas, solving problems, and building relationships. Life-long learning is essential as people need to continuously develop skills and knowledge and prepare for multiple career changes over their lifetimes. People are accessing needed learning in higher education, on the job, and through providers (both formal and informal) of focused, just-in-time instruction. These changes mean deliberate action is necessary to ensure that underserved and underrepresented individuals can fully access the opportunities afforded by higher education and the social mobility accompanying jobs of the future. Designing future-ready learning requires an equity focus. **How can institutions of higher education remove obstacles and design systems that respond to student needs to build upon their learning over time and across settings? How can the higher education ecosystem make learning flexibly available, portable, and responsive to changing student needs? How can higher education leverage its research, physical plant, innovation, artistry, and role in community to advance knowledge, entrepreneurship, talent, and civic life?**

STRATEGIES:

- Establish **stronger partnerships between higher education, commercial enterprise, and the independent and public sectors** to leverage colleges and universities as catalysts of innovation and provide students with enhanced learning opportunities.
  - Develop programs of study that align around the work of the future for jobs that do not exist today.
  - Ensure relevance between learning in the classroom and the rapidly changing skill and knowledge needs in the workplace across diverse sectors.
  - Extend the lens of skill and knowledge development beyond 'the next job' and toward 'a dynamic and evolving career.'
  - Meet growing corporate, independent sector, and public sector needs and the needs of the incumbent workforce to regularly upskill through customized learning designed by institutions of higher education in partnership with employers.
  - Identify and develop transferable, adaptable, and flexible skills as technologies, market demands, and social change continue to refresh and reestablish how work is done.
  - Develop students' skills and capacities to learn and work in in-person, hybrid, and virtual settings.
  - Develop structures that support meaningful, high-quality experiential and work-based learning opportunities, internships, and apprenticeships across a variety of sectors.

- Build on and market current **educational delivery innovations** and broaden to new and flexible ways to deliver education **that are student-focused and high-quality**.
  - Network and support institutions to create and embed within degree programs industry-recognized credentials of value that stack and provide learners supported on-ramps and off-ramps to employment and higher education.
  - Support and engage faculty, staff, and administrators within and across institutions.
    - Provide professional development in future-ready learning approaches.
    - Create collaborative synergies and more efficiently use resources for design and implementation.
    - Support innovation with aligned incentives, including recognition through evaluation, promotion, and tenure processes.
  - Build capacity to assess prior learning; validate and count learning from work experience, non-accredited postsecondary institutions and other training providers.
  - Develop competency-based approaches that resolve the tensions between access, quality, and cost by offering underserved learners a self-paced path to completion, all while ensuring learners achieve expected outcomes.
  - Use technologies to enhance the learner experience through:

- Immersive and simulation-based platforms.
- Options for hybrid, adaptive, and self-paced learning.
- On-demand access to technology-enabled advising and student support services that supplement in-person services.
- Student-owned learner records.

- Ensure students have access to **high-quality options** for continuous learning with transparency about whether and how different degrees, credentials, and certificates lead to career and educational advancement as well as personal satisfaction and quality of life.
    - Facilitate transparency about Illinois postsecondary credentials, including degrees, micro-credentials, and badges, through national credential registries.
    - Expand student and stakeholder access to clear information about the earnings potential, social contribution, and quality of life of diverse educational and career pathways across degrees, certificates, and credentials.
    - Monitor and report on the enrollment, completion, employment, and further educational outcomes of individuals in degree, credential, and certificate programs with equity-driven data disaggregation.

METRICS:

The changing nature of work and the economy calls for deliberate attention to ensure that individuals historically undeserved by the higher education system are not left out. In order to ensure persons of color and other underrepresented groups are able to fully access the opportunities afforded by higher education and the social mobility accompanying jobs of the future, deliberate attention must be paid to disaggregating data related to the following indicators.

- **Indicators**
    - Enrollment trends in identified pathways aligned to workforce needs and with attention to equity issues.
    - Credentials developed and produced that are widely accepted as providing value as measured by employer demand and graduate satisfaction.
    - Number of innovative delivery options that are valued by students.
    - Retention and promotion.
    - Employment/job placement aligned with regional and state needs.
    - Economic mobility pre- and post- program completion.
    - Underrepresented individuals in leadership roles.
    - Employers engaged with institutions of higher education.
    - Faculty engaged in professional development, innovation, and program development.

- **Methods**
    - Longitudinal study of student outcomes in terms of employment, housing, residence in state/out of state.
    - Definition of high-quality credentials.
    - Longitudinal study with an annual review of program offerings.
    - Statewide system to measure internships, placements, and engagement with higher education institutions.
    - Track delivery models and student outcomes for each.
    - Follow students that stop out and determine barriers to persistence and re-enrollment.
    - Monitor and report on the enrollment, completion, employment, and further educational outcomes of individuals in degree, credential, and certificate programs with equity-driven data disaggregation.

PROBLEM STATEMENT/INTRODUCTION:

The state's economic development and workforce needs vary by region and by sector. The Governor's Economic Development Plan outlined the foundation for the state's long-term growth while recognizing the need to reduce equity gaps for economically-disadvantaged populations. The plan also highlighted specific growth and focus industries within various regions across the state including:

- Agribusiness and Ag Tech
- Energy
- Information Technology
- Health care and Life Sciences
- Manufacturing
- Transportation and Logistics

The higher education system must be responsive to economic needs. But importantly, the higher education system can also drive the state's economy forward. The Illinois Innovation Network (IIN) is a $500 million state investment in university-based regional hubs that will drive innovation, workforce development, and economic growth, supporting the state's inclusive economic development plan.

The state needs to provide actionable information so that evidence-based decisions can be made about programs and policies at the regional and local levels.

DRAFT STRATEGIES:

- **Align the state's economic development and higher education strategies, ensuring both address historic inequities.** The state's higher education system and economy do not exist in isolation; they must reinforce each other. Already many higher education-business connections happen at local level, as institutions work with their regional communities and businesses to ensure that local needs are being met. These can be part of statewide networks, such as State and Local Workforce Innovation Boards, and others have emerged to meet specific local needs. These regional relationships are essential. As a state, we also need to ensure that we have such strategic partnerships across the state and that we identify and fill in any gaps. We want to ensure that higher education captures both the breadth and depth of industry knowledge in its planning. That means we need to create opportunities for deep industry-specific engagement so that we do not expect one business representative on an advisory board to represent a full industry. We also need a statewide picture to ensure that our higher education system and employer needs remain aligned.
  - Support new and existing regional partnerships between leaders in higher education, business and industry, and the P-20 system, to meet regional economic and societal needs across the state, ensuring alignment in the region.
    - Build on IIN to strengthen regional focus, with a statewide connection.
    - Identify any gaps in regional partnerships to ensure statewide coverage and create opportunities for periodic industry-wide input.
  - Establish a statewide Business Advisory Council to the Illinois Board of Higher Education to ensure on-going state-level employer-higher education connections.
  - Publish actionable information on regional program offerings, graduates, and workforce placement to inform regional partnerships and align with statewide economic development goals.

- **Establish ways to expedite the program approval processes, both locally and at the state-level, to be more responsive to workforce demands.** To be responsive to employer needs, institutions need the ability to quickly design, modify, and launch new academic and vocationally oriented program offerings. Processes at the local and state level should be reviewed to determine if there are unnecessary barriers that can be removed while maintaining academic quality.

- **Strengthen the linkages between higher education and the world of work for students.**

- o Introduce opportunities/career exploration earlier in the P-20 continuum. Expand college and career pathway endorsement systems to give high schools graduates early exposure to key occupational areas.
- o Expand coaching/mentoring programs for traditionally underserved college students for building employment networks that would not exist otherwise.
- o Increase opportunities for career and technical education at both high schools and community colleges, including tighter coordination between the two levels at the regional level.
- o Expand apprenticeship opportunities

PROPOSED METRICS

- Workforce gaps- trends of available unfilled jobs measured at the state and regional levels compared to credential/degree production.
- Enrollments and credential production in aligned/high demand fields.

PROBLEM STATEMENT/INTRODUCTION:

Educator shortages in Illinois exist across educational roles, sectors, levels, and regions. Illinois school districts reported 4,494 unfilled positions in the 2021 school year, an increase of 124 percent from 2,006 in 2017. While vacancies exist in all staffing areas, teaching positions consistently make up most vacancies with Special Education and Bilingual positions experiencing the highest vacancy rates followed by Physical Education, Foreign Languages, and Math (Illinois State Board of Education, 2021). The intensity of the teacher shortage varies across the state but is most severe in rural areas in the Central, Southern, and Northwest regions with an average of 38 percent of respondents reporting a serious problem with teacher shortages in 2018, compared to nine percent in the Suburban Cook/Northeast region (Illinois Association of Regional School Superintendents; Southern Illinois University System; Goshen Education Consulting, 2018). Furthermore, shortages exist in administrative and student support roles. For example, 20 percent of positions in such areas as school psychologist, library/media specialist, social worker, school nurse and speech and language pathologist remained unfilled or filled by an unqualified professional (Illinois Association of Regional School Superintendents; Southern Illinois University System; Goshen Education Consulting, 2018).

The educator shortage is a multifaceted issue that has been thoughtfully studied by researchers, task forces, and advisory groups. Barriers exist for candidates and educators at multiple points in the pipeline including initial recruitment; access to, retention in and completion of preparation programs; and persistence and advancement in the profession. These obstacles disproportionately affect diverse candidates and low-income and rural districts, leading to inequities that ultimately impact students in the same groups and geographic areas. The research is clear that well-prepared educators are the most important in-school factor impacting student learning outcomes, and well-prepared principals set the school climate and culture that, in turn, is a key factor in retaining highly qualified teachers. In response, the Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) Strategic Plan sets a goal that Illinois' diverse student population will have educators who are prepared through multiple pathways and are supported in and celebrated for their effectiveness in providing each and every child a high-quality education that meets their needs. In addition, recent legislation encouraged the Board of Higher Education, in the course of the strategic planning process, to review the barriers to higher education and career advancement experienced by the early childhood workforce and by teachers of color.

Solutions at each point in the educator pipeline, from recruitment to preparation to induction and retention in the field, are needed. Examples of solutions include early recruitment efforts in middle and high schools as part of educator pathways initiatives; scholarships and loan forgiveness initiatives to address the affordability of higher education; and retention efforts such as new teacher mentoring and induction, job-embedded coaching, and teacher leader opportunities. This work examines issues for prospective educators aspiring to enter the profession or current educators seeking to advance their knowledge and skills by accessing educator preparation programs and transferring relevant coursework. Based on 2019 ISBE data showing that there was a total of only 20 fully online options for educator preparation in Illinois across all licensure areas, strategies for leveraging technologies to increase access to courses and programs are highlights. In addition, a 2020 joint report by the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Community College Board outlined several opportunities for improving transfer in Illinois with related strategies highlighted.

Strategies outlined below demonstrate how the higher education system can respond to the state's urgent need to address educator shortages, including early childhood educator upskilling needs, and specifically by improving access for rural, working, and place bound individuals.

PRINCIPLES:

The following principles are fundamental to the proposed strategies for improving access for rural, working, and place bound individuals to enter educator preparation programs.

Make the acceptance of previous academic and relevant work experience consistent, seamless, and systematic.

Create options for rural, place-bound, and working adults that allow a student-centered choice between local and virtual coursework and completion.

DRAFT STRATEGIES:

The strategies outlined below will help ensure Illinois has the diverse educator workforce that it needs by increasing the access of rural, place bound, and working adults to educator preparation programs.

- Scale **transfer pathways** for educator preparation wherein students complete courses at a community college and transfer seamlessly to a university. Expand 2+2, 3+1, and dual degree agreements between community colleges and four-year institutions that allow for students to complete baccalaureate-level coursework at community colleges when necessary. Such agreements help students know the courses they need to complete in the first two or three years of their program of study, where they will take those courses, and how those courses will transfer to the partner institution such that they complete the baccalaureate degree on time. To facilitate transfer, the Illinois Articulation Initiative General Education Core Curriculum package should be leveraged, and other flexibilities should be pursued in concert with the Illinois State Board of Education to allow candidates to meet General Education licensure requirements in a consistent manner across institutions.

- **Create personalized paths that allow for flexible progression to completion for individuals with working experience in education and specific content areas.**
  - Leverage prior learning assessment and competency-informed approaches.
  - Grow the use of residency, apprenticeship, and other models that provide candidates with extended classroom experience with guided supervision and coaching.
  - Develop a post-baccalaureate certificate leading to licensure for individuals with baccalaureate degrees. This post-baccalaureate certificate would provide the coursework needed for licensure with the option for individuals to continue coursework leading to a master's degree.
  - Disseminate information, in collaboration with the Illinois State Board of Education, about options currently available to educator preparation programs in creating these more personalized paths and highlight innovative practices.

- Build a **consortium** of institutions to make educator preparation coursework available in targeted areas of need. Institutions, working in a collaborative consortium, can help students access courses across the participating institutions, particularly in cases where the number of students at single institutions is not sufficient to maintain a full class or cohort.

- **Enhance access to educator preparation programs through technology** by:
  - Leveraging tools that allow candidates to practice skills in a virtual, simulated environment before entering a classroom with students;
  - Expanding fully online programs; and
  - Utilizing virtual (remote) supervision.

THE INCUMBENT EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE

The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) maintains a registry of the individuals working in licensed settings. Called the Gateways Registry, this source provides information about the qualifications of individuals currently employed. Whereas this source does not include data about those working in public schools, this is the most comprehensive source of data we have about our incumbent early childhood workforce.

- **Statewide, there are 22,611 <u>teachers</u>, 41 percent of whom are persons of color,** working in licensed center settings.

- o Of the total, 24.8 percent have an associate degree **(5,619)**.
- o Another 5.1 percent have a community college certificate, and 26.7 percent have a high school diploma **(7,189)**.

- There are **18,139 individuals, 53 percent of whom are persons of color, working as <u>assistant teachers</u>** in licensed settings.
  - o Of the total, 11.3 percent **(2,051)** have an associate degree.
  - o Another 4.3 percent have a community college certificate; 69 percent have a high school diploma **(13,278)**.

- In addition, approximately two-thirds of the 12,000 individuals who are family childcare providers in licensed and license exempt settings do not have a college degree (est. 8,000).

- Many who will enter the field in the next three to five years will do so with little to no college coursework.

DRAFT STRATEGIES SPECIFIC TO THE INCUMBENT EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE

- Create a higher education system **consortium** to increase access to a variety of affordable coursework and ensure smooth, high-quality, seamless pathways for students. All public two- and four-year institutions with programs in the field of early childhood education will be required to participate, and private, non-profit institutions will be encouraged to participate.

- Require all four-year public institutions to fully transfer the **Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Early Childhood Education (ECE)**. The AAS in ECE has been considered a terminal degree, and due to curricular differences has not traditionally been transferable to a four-year institution. This has resulted in a barrier to baccalaureate completion for AAS holders.

- Require credit awarded through **Prior Learning Assessment** to be fully transferable at all two- and four-year institutions. This will allow members of the incumbent workforce to be recognized for their hours of professional development and other on-the-job learning.

- Work with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) on **Licensure Requirements** that seem to present barriers to this workforce including:
  - o Allow for student teaching in the child care workplace when an educator with an ISBE professional educator license (PEL) is not on site, provided that institutions of higher education (IHEs) supplement this supervision with additional support from institutional coaches and faculty.
  - o Address the disparate impact of the Early Childhood content test on underrepresented groups in this field in the short term while working in the long term to find a suitable replacement.
  - o Modify general education requirements to give IHEs flexibility to cover a range of applicable content rather than specific content areas.

- Improve and expand **Data Collection and Management** to allow for better tracking of demand for EC teachers in the private sector, how many positions require a PEL, and geographic distribution of educator shortages.

- Provide **Financial Supports for Students**, including tuition and fees, cost of living, payment of financial holds, and support during student teaching to encourage members of the incumbent workforce to continue their education.

- Implement a **State Marketing Campaign** to elevate the teaching profession to attract new educators and to disseminate information to current early childhood care and education workers about the educational programs and financial supports available to them.

- Establish a **Cross-Institutional Navigator Corps** to provide personalized recruitment and assistance with technicalities such as completing the FAFSA, accessing scholarship opportunities, finding and applying to early childhood higher education programs, etc.

- Hire institutional **Program Mentors/Coaches** to provide individualized supports for students to navigate the challenges and opportunities related to higher education and improve overall persistence and completion rates.

PROBLEM STATEMENT/INTRODUCTION:

In Illinois, 28% (324,000) of African Americans over age 25, 16.2% of Latinx (195,000) and 1.2 million white adults have some college and no degree. 42% percent of African Americans over age 25, 64% of Latinx, and 32% of white adults have less than a high school diploma. Adults with higher levels of education earn progressively more over their lifetime than their peers with less education. It is both an equity imperative and an economic imperative that the education system adjusts to the unique needs of adult students to ensure they are not left behind.

How do we meet the unique needs of a) adult students with some college and no degree and b) adults with less than a high school diploma, and c) English Language Learners to ensure they are not left out of the economy?

STRATEGIES:

- Provide students with expanded and flexible learning and support options that will ensure access to and success in higher education
    - Design advising, **outreach,** and counseling specifically for adults. Pursue and provide wrap around student services for adults, including the resources and counseling necessary to navigate the higher education ecosystem.
    - Pursue debt relief strategies to mitigate barriers to enrollment (e.g. debt forgiveness, adult-oriented scholarship programs, etc.).
    - Pursue strategies for re-engaging adults who dropped out and stop out due to non-academic barriers such as financial holds, advising errors, life circumstances, transfer release, pandemic related challenges, etc.
    - Adopt teaching and learning methodologies and practices most appropriate for adult students and professional learning opportunities to deliver quality learning.

- Build meaningful **transfer** articulation between community colleges and universities that account for the unique needs of adult students who may require the flexibility to attend multiple institutions in order to complete their credential.
    - Create connection between prior learning assessments
    - Address financial holds

- Develop **clearer certificate,** degree and career pathways for adults enrolled in adult basic education and high school equivalency (e.g. GED) programs that also address prior learning that may have occurred.

- Assess the capacity and readiness of higher education to best serve the diverse needs of adult population

METRICS:

Accountability measures (disaggregated)
- Percentage of students that have persisted to earn a degree/credentials*
- Number of adults enrolled in credential/degree
- Number of adults completing credential/degree
- Dollar income and whether consistent with student goals (economic mobility measure)

Align with 60 x 25 goal.

PROBLEM STATEMENT/INTRODUCTION:

Many students enrolled in Illinois' public high schools face barriers, particularly when transitioning from high school to college and/or career. This is particularly true for students of color, low-income students, undocumented[5] students and students who are first in their families to go to college. Additional barriers manifest themselves in rural settings as well. Even though Illinois leads the nation in bachelor's degree completions among transfer community college transfer students (53.8 percent) and Illinois public colleges substantially outpace the national average for six-year graduation rates, significant attainment gaps still exist for low-income students and students of color across all metrics. African-American (29.4 percent) and Latinx (19.7 percent) students both earn associate's degrees or higher at a lower rate than White students (46.6 percent). Additionally, fewer low-income students are enrolled, more likely to be placed into developmental education, less likely to participate in early college opportunities (Advanced Placement (AP) – 30.1 low income vs. 69.9 not low income and Dual Credit – 29.4 low income vs. 70.6 not low income), and less likely to be retained, advanced, and completed.

The State's current attainment goal of 60 percent of adults with postsecondary degree or credential by 2025 cannot be met without closing equity gaps in college-going rates; early college access; placement in developmental education; and credential completion and attainment. In the last decade, Illinois has implemented several statewide initiatives to address these issues through the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act (Public Act 99-0674, HB 5729), Dual Credit Quality Act (110 ILCS 27/1), and more recently from the work of the Joint Advisory Council (Senate Joint Resolution 41) and HB2170. These statewide initiatives must continue with attention to support for access to scale. These are important developments, but better transitions between high school and college remain critical.

Further, Illinois has a long-standing issue of high school graduates exiting the state for higher education. Nearly half (47.5 percent) of college-bound public high school graduates who enrolled in a four-institution did so at college and universities out of state. This trend is concerning due to the loss of the talent pipeline and human capital to other states.

The draft strategies outlined below help bolster successes and close persistent equity gaps caused by barriers that students face, as well as addressing the trends in outmigration.

DRAFT STRATEGIES:

- **Support the ongoing learning renewal of students as education emerges from the pandemic and moves beyond.** Students experienced many disruptions to their education and routines as they transitioned to remote learning and remained in remote or hybrid learning environments as a result of the pandemic. It is critical to provide differentiated academic and social and emotional support that students need to mitigate delays as they transition to or continue their postsecondary education. While these strategies are essential to address pandemic-related educational impact, many are practices that should be continued beyond a pandemic response.
  - Leverage resources developed by the Illinois P-20 Council to support social/emotional well-being and learning renewal. These high impact practices were identified to help the education system best direct federal funds provided through relief packages.
  - Provide incentives to institutions of higher education to scale summer bridge programs that support students' academic and socio-emotional transition to college and help them succeed. Summer bridge programs have shown to increase retention and graduation rates.
  - Provide resources to institutions of higher education to extend learning opportunities to mitigate any learning loss and accelerate time to degree, such as offering targeted summer courses to full-time

[5] Added from Public Comment

students who have earned less than 30 credit hours in their prior academic year. To bring such programs to scale additional resources, like extending MAP to summer term, would be required.
- o Invest in and extend the availability of key academic and social/emotional supports that help mitigate against learning loss, including but not limited to tutoring, advising, coaching, career counseling, mental health counseling, assessment of non-cognitive needs, etc. Ensure that these services are available in multiple delivery formats.
- o Examine and evaluate other efforts by institutions of higher education to address student learning needs, identify and share best practices, and scale high impact practices that have been demonstrated to be successful.

Metrics:
- First-to-second and second-to-third year retention rates.
- Graduation rates 4/6 years.
- Completion and transfer rates (community colleges).
- Number of credit hours completed - 1st/2nd year (30 credits by end of summer).
- Success metrics of bridge programs.
- Successful completion of developmental education and success in subsequent enrollments in credit-bearing coursework.

- **Fully implement and evaluate the ongoing work on the high school to college and careers transition and pathways on systems and strategies.** Middle and high school students benefit from targeted and intentional supports that help them develop clear goals for learning and work after 12th grade. A carefully sequenced framework of these supports means students explore career interests, find out what preparation they will need to enter and advance in those careers, and earn strategic-early college credit or industry-recognized credentials while they are in high school. These supports also help students navigate the college-going process and develop the academic skills they need to succeed in college and careers. Extensive work has been undertaken in recent years, with passage of several key pieces of legislation and implementation of policy and practice changes. Postsecondary Workforce Readiness Act (PWR) Public Act 99-0674, was signed into law on July 29, 2016. The Act was amended in 2018 by Public Act 100-0599; Dual Credit Quality Act (110 ILCS 27/1); Senate Joint Resolution Number 41; HB2170]. This work should continue.
  - o Scale the adaptation and adoption of the Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) framework. This framework, which is based in the development of an individualized learning plan, lays out the sequence of experiences throughout high school that support the transition to college and career.
  - o Continue the implementation of transitional math and English, which will reduce remediation rates for students that transition into college (also part of PWR).
  - o Continue the developmental education reform underway as a result of SJR 41 Task Force recommendations and HB2170, the adoption of placement recommendations by the Illinois community college system, and other related legislation. Such efforts should include evidence-based model implementations that allow for expeditious placement into credit-bearing coursework.
  - o Incentivize continued scaling of College and Career Pathway Endorsements (CCPE) through State funding and institutional currency (e.g., Northern Illinois University, College of Education).
  - o Ensure students have exposure to careers/career categories through the expansion of work-based learning opportunities such as internships, apprenticeships, and other experiential learning modalities.
  - o Identify high-impact practices that could be scaled with private funding to better prepare students for entry into postsecondary education. Target select groups as a pilot program (students of color, STEM-related bridge programs, rural students, etc.).

  Metrics:
  - Percentage of students taking developmental education (zero-credit) courses in math and English during their first academic year.
  - Enrollment rates in remedial coursework.
  - First-to-second year retention and 4/6-year graduation rates.

- Number of districts implementing transitional instruction and CCPE.
- Number of students completing CCPE by Endorsement Area.
- Matriculation into postsecondary by CCPE completers.
- Percentage of CCPE.

- **Expand equitable access to, support for, and success in rigorous and strategic early college coursework.** Access to high-quality early college opportunities, such as dual enrollment, dual credit, AP, and IB, gives students the opportunity to earn college credit while in high school and strengthen their path to degree completion with structured student support.
  - Build regional capacity to support students from rural and underserved communities to access early college opportunities and student support through flexible, online, and other delivery options. Prioritize areas currently without equitable access.
  - Provide support to institutions to offer dual credit/enrollment courses.
  - Expand graduate-level learning opportunities that ensure Illinois high school teachers earn the credentials to teach dual credit coursework in their high schools, consistent with the standards required by the institutions, the State, and the Higher Learning Commission. Examine appropriate mechanisms for scaling these efforts (e.g., the Midwestern Higher Education Compact's Graduate Quest program, etc.).
  - Provide funding to four-year institutions to design certificates/programs to address the need.
  - Convene the State Board of Education and Colleges of Education to determine if the Master's in Teaching could be revised to include a pathway for the required 18 credit hours within a discipline for dual credit credentialing (e.g., WI, MN, and IN).

  Metrics:
  - Increase the percentage of high school graduates graduating with early college credit or a career credential (dual credit/enrollment, AP/IB, etc.), earn at least a C in dual credit/enrollment, # earn a 3 in AP test. (Disaggregate all metrics)
  - Increase the yield of students with Dual Credit/Enrollment credits enrolled.
  - Track Dual Credit - IAI coursework
  - Track success of Dual Credit students in the next sequenced course and overall completion rates[6]
  - Increase the percentage of qualified dual credit teachers that hold appropriate credentials (i.e., dual credit endorsements and annual dual credit reporting).
  - Track the degree to which the four-years accept/apply Dual Credit/Enrollment
  - Number of students in various models of developmental education

- **Scale up (or expand) the role of college access and support models.** Navigating the college-going process involves many steps from completing admissions applications to filing the FAFSA for financial aid. Students, particularly those who are first in their families to go to college, need supportive, just-in-time guidance[7]. Near-peer mentoring, transitional coaching, and other support models, like the ISACorps, have been shown to minimize summer melt, and improve matriculation, retention, and completion goals. We must expand students' access to counselors, peer mentors and college transition coaches to positively impact college-going rates.

  Metrics:
  - Increase the FAFSA completion rates.
  - Increase the number of students applying to college (Disaggregated data)
  - Monitor the FAFSA verification related to summer melt[8]

---

[6] Public Comment - Quality issue for faculty regarding dual credit. Consider early college with a priority for experiences with full-time faculty on college campuses and limiting dual credit coursework.

[7] Public Comment - Need for this support was expressed in a few public comments.

[8] Additional Public Comment - Need to assist students on the steps toward applying for college and Summer Melt.

- ▪ Track the number of students who accept and do not matriculate (Summer Melt)[9]

- **Develop and incentivize strategies to address outmigration patterns and encourage high school graduates to enroll in the Illinois higher education system.** Outmigration data shows that of all public high school graduates in 2017, one out of five (20.3 percent) signed up for classes at out-of-state colleges and universities. Illinois ranks 49 out of 50 in net migration making outmigration rate much higher than the national average.
  - o Advertise state aid and support programs and leverage existing state supports regarding transportation, childcare, books, and WIOA funding.

  Metrics:
  - ▪ Reduce the outmigration of high school students enrolling in postsecondary education in other states (Fall 2018 – 19,905).
  - ▪ Number of students completing CCPE who enroll in Illinois public institutions.
  - ▪ Number of public and private institutions offering incentives for CCPE completers.
  - ▪ Number of employed persons (Employment measures across occupations)
    - o Employment outcomes at 3, 6, 10-year marks
  - ▪ Retention of employees and remain in IL.
  - ▪ High school students stay in IL/Leave and return back.

---

[9] Elevated from Public Comment.

PROBLEM STATEMENT/INTRODUCTION:

For years, funding for higher education in Illinois has not been connected to the goals we have for student success and the state's system of public and private institutions that supports it. Public universities for decades have been funded through an across-the-board approach (i.e. the same percentage decrease or increase from the prior year for all institutions). While community colleges receive state funding through a formula, it has been underfunded for years. Neither approach acknowledges the changing needs of our students and our economy nor accounts for the socio-economic status of students, their family circumstances, or financial capacity to pay tuition. The funding system does not recognize the resources needed to support the varying ways higher education institutions serve the state. And there are no measures of accountability for taxpayer dollars.

Both university and community college funding approaches have exacerbated inequities, shifted costs to tuition (or property taxes) and led to increasing the amount of debt students take on. As student and workforce needs have changed, the state funding system simply has not kept up.

To address these challenges, Illinois needs an equitable, stable higher education funding system that provides sufficient (i.e. adequate or full) funding and meets the principles laid out below.

DRAFT PRINCIPLES: An, equitable, sufficient, and stable funding system would

- **Provide equitable funding so that students can receive the best educational experience and succeed at whichever institution they attend.** Illinois needs a funding system for higher education that supports equitable access, progression, and timely completion and accounts for the robust student support services (counseling, advising, wellness, bridge, mental health and child care supports, to name a few) that help students get to and through completion. Students should have equitable access to institutions, and institutions should have resources necessary to provide students the supports that enable them to succeed. Inequitable resources resulting from over-reliance on property taxes must also be recognized and addressed.

- **Support a thriving postsecondary system that enriches the state and residents.** Illinois depends on higher education to preserve, expand, and transmit knowledge, offer solutions to society's challenges, serve as a civic partner, produce well-educated residents, and enrich life. Research at our institutions expands our understanding of the social and physical world, enhances the health and well-being of our residents, and drives innovation and economic development in our communities. Educating students in the humanities and arts support the whole student and ensures that the leaders of the future better understand the human condition. Institutions are vibrant anchors of communities. In short, the postsecondary system enables students to better build knowledge, create wealth, and be civically engaged. Illinois' higher education funding system should support these values and goals.

- **Fund institutions sufficiently to achieve state, institutional, and individual student goals.** Illinois must provide sufficient (i.e. adequate or full) funding necessary to achieve the state goals set out in the higher education Strategic Plan, for each institution to fulfill its mission, and to support students in achieving their goals. For the higher education system to deliver on these expectations, we must ensure that institutions are funded to do so.

- **Ensure affordability for all students.** The funding system should ensure that students can start or complete college and access a career of their interest *without excessive student debt*. This means tuition must be affordable. To do so, the funding system must recognize the interrelationship among federal student aid, state funding for public universities and community colleges, state need-based (MAP grants) and other student aid, tuition, local property taxes, and capital appropriations. Our funding system should ensure that college is affordable even for the most vulnerable students in the state.

- **Recognize institutional uniqueness.** A value of the state's higher education system is its diversity of colleges and universities, each with different missions, yet all working in concert to serve the state. This calls for a funding system that recognizes these different missions, accounts for variation in institutional portfolios that serve the state (e.g. returning adult students, first-generation students, graduate and professional training, health care provision, research, community engagement).

- **Provide predictability, stability, and limited volatility.** Students and families need predictability to plan for college. Institutions need predictability and stability to build and maintain programs and services that effectively support students. Funding should not dramatically fluctuate from year to year and the funding pattern should provide plenty of time for short- and long-range planning.

- **Ensure no institution loses funding.** In an environment where institutions are insufficiently funded, the funding system should build toward sufficient funding without reducing current state appropriations to any institution.

- **Reinforce accountability.** The Higher Education Strategic Plan includes an accountability plan, with a set of measures to ensure that the state is making progress toward the goals of closing equity gaps, increasing attainment to meet the state's talent needs, and improving affordability. The funding system should reinforce this accountability.

- **Support a collaborative higher education system.** Students are well served by having access to a rich higher education ecosystem that provides multiple ways to enter, transfer, and successfully exit the system throughout their career (and life). The funding system should reinforce the interconnectedness of the higher education system and support student success within and across institutions, especially as new, innovative networks, collaborations, partnerships, and consortia are developed.

- **Encourage partnerships outside higher education.** Partnerships are vital to a strong higher education ecosystem. The higher education system should seek to build partnerships, such as with businesses, non-profits, the philanthropic community, the federal government, and regional, national, and international collaborations that have a vested interest in a flourishing higher education system in Illinois. The goal is to reinforce support for this crucial public good in the state.

- **Articulate rationale for public support.** More should be done to better articulate the rationale for public support of higher education. A transparent funding system should point the system toward meeting the state, institutional, and individual student goals. A funding system that fulfills these principles should provide the rationale for public support.

PROBLEM STATEMENT/INTRODUCTION:

Operating costs for higher education continue to increase. In FY20, public universities reported spending over $1.1B on institutional support and physical plant. While much of that includes personnel costs, universities spent $341M on contractual services and $64M on student health services. Similarly, in FY 18 community colleges spent $995M on operations/maintenance and institutional support from all funds, and $96M on contractual services from the operating funds. Many operational activities, including, for example, procurement, human resources, and retirement are governed by state policy and therefore require similar processes across institutions. Similarly, certain software and other goods and services are used by multiple institutions.

Some systems are in place, such as the Illinois Public Higher Education Cooperative, which allows member public universities and community colleges to take advantage of joint purchasing power. The South Metropolitan Higher Education Consortium, provides joint purchasing and shared support for faculty development, IT disaster recovery, and other services for a consortium of 11 community colleges, public universities, and private colleges and universities in Chicago's south suburbs.

Still, Illinois can do more to reduce institutional costs and increase efficiency through the strategies outlined below.

DRAFT STRATEGIES:

- **Pilot and if successful, expand shared administrative services.** Higher education institutions share many similar administrative functions and there are opportunities to shift routine functions to a statewide or regional group to free up local staff for more strategic work or to invest savings in student-facing services. Several areas should be considered:
  - **Routine human resource functions governed by state entities.** Public universities are all part of the State Universities Civil Service System and share the same state-administered benefit plans. Both public universities and community colleges are part of the State Universities Retirement System. Each institution has established its own human resources and benefits staff that manage the processes required by these state systems and serve as resources to local employees. By shifting these routine functions to a statewide or regional group, local human resources professionals could be freed up for more strategic human resources work.
  - **"Mutual Aid" Agreement.** The South Metropolitan Higher Education Consortium provides an intriguing model. The Consortium's mutual aid agreement covers support in the event of natural disasters, communicable disease outbreak, or the like. The member institutions step in to provide needed resources such as IT support, facility resources, classroom space, supplies or counseling and media support to the impacted institution.
  - **Shared IT Services.** The SMHEC group also provides institutions an opportunity to share costs related to major and expensive IT services, such a disaster recovery, compliance, and security audits. The services provided through these joint efforts are more robust than any individual institution could afford to secure.

- **Expand joint purchasing.** The Illinois Public Higher Education Consortium (IPHEC) serves institutions across the state by providing joint procurement efforts. Currently, IPHEC procures $400M of goods and services annually on behalf of public universities and community colleges. Still, there are tremendous opportunities to expand and reduce cost, particularly if upfront commitments and quantities can be secured and for highly consistent commodities. The SMHEC jointly purchases electricity, saving 6 members $221,000 in FY 20. Other opportunities exist for community colleges that can purchase from the state's Central Management Services contracts.

  Another option to consider is a statewide student health insurance pool/purchase. Each institution procures its own student health insurance plans. However, the student risk profile varies across the state, with some institutions serving a younger student body and others serving older adults. There is also variation in the

health outcomes of the communities different institutions serve. As a result, students pay disparate rates for health insurance based on their institutional peers. A broader risk pool would both increase negotiating power and spread cost across the state.

POTENTIAL METRICS:

- Shared Services savings: Spend on Service/FTE reduces over time
- Joint Procurement savings: Reduction in spend on same procurements

PROBLEM STATEMENT/INTRODUCTION:

Data show equity gaps throughout the educational path for too many students. We want a system designed to meet the needs and leads to the success of underserved and historically underrepresented students. Under this design, student-centered focus is the guide, with particular attention paid to Black, Latinx, Asian-American, Low-Income, first-generation, rural, working adult students, students leaving foster care, students with disabilities, immigrants/undocumented students, justice-involved students, indigenous students, LGBTQ students, and veteran students, recognizing the intersectionality of these identities.

The draft strategies outlined below incorporate data-driven and best practices that help to address the persistent equity gaps in higher education.

The strategies below generally focus on the <u>non-financial</u> supports required to close equity gaps. Financial strategies are covered elsewhere in the full report.

DRAFT STRATEGIES:

Framework 1: Policies

- **Ensure students and institutions are properly supported to succeed; focus both on first-time and transfer students.** Targeted approaches to remove barriers and increase access, progression and completion for Black, Latinx and other historically underrepresented students require changes in policies, practices, and funding systems.
    o Leverage resources to ensure equitable access to dual credit and dual enrollment for Black and Latinx students.
    o Increase MAP funding to match the level of student need and ensure adequate funding for Black and Latinx students. The report by the Chicago State University Equity Working Group Action Plan, using Illinois Student Assistance Commission data, provide that over the past 20 years, MAP funding has declined. In 2020, grants covered only 34% of tuition and fees at public universities and 36% at community colleges.[10]
    o Review admission and course placement practices, including direct admission policies, developmental education structures, requirements for placement tests, to identify existing policies that impede access and limit opportunities for Black, Latinx and other underrepresented students. This will help to achieve parity in educational outcomes and equitable participation of students in higher education.
    o Examine transfer pathways for different groups of students. Disaggregated data should be used to evaluate transfer pathways to see how the gaps are distributed. Also, review transfer issues that may have been exacerbated by COVID-19.
    o Continue support of Illinois Interactive Report Cards administered by the Northern Illinois University, Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Community College Board, and the Illinois Board of Higher Education for data analysis and development of school improvement tools and other similar tools. These tools include equity profiles that can contribute to understanding the educational outcomes of underrepresented students and historically disadvantaged students in higher education.

- **Establish institution-level equity plans to close access, progression, and completion gaps.** Making equity a core aspect of postsecondary planning at the institutional level is critical for reducing disparities in education and achieving a more equitable educational outcome for underrepresented students and historically disadvantaged Black and Latinx students. Equity plans should outline each institution's specific

---

[10] Draft Report by Equity Working Group for Black Student Access & Success in IL Higher Education. Basic ISAC Program Data, Illinois Student Assistance Commission, February 2020, https://www.isac.org/e-library/research-policy-analysis/documents/2019-Basic-ISAC-Program-Data.pdf

steps to close equity gaps in access, progression, and timely completion. This should include a review of existing policies and practices to determine which exacerbate and which support closing equity gaps, including funding models, financial aid, and strategies, remedial programs or structured pathways.[11]

- **Support the P-20 Council's creation of equity targets within the statewide postsecondary attainment goal.** Illinois currently has a goal the 60% of adults will have a postsecondary degree or credential by the year 2025. As the data shows, Illinois has significant gaps in attainment levels across race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status, yet the State goal does not measure nor drive toward increased attainment for Black, Latinx, or other marginalized groups. The P-20 Council is working toward embedding equity targets in the attainment goals and the strategies in this Strategic Plan sets a path for higher education to achieve the equity targets. Equity goals and targets should be explicit and clearly provide institutional focused framework for addressing the gap.

Metrics:
- Track enrollment, progression and completion rates and the gaps between White students and Black and Latinx college students.
- Track Transfer student's progression and completion rates and the gaps between White students for Black and Latinx college students.
- Report the access and completion level of Black and Latinx students in early college.
- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion rates for Black and Latinx students.
- Percentage of Black and Latinx students accessing MAP funding and disaggregated data on unmet needs.

Framework 2: Professional Development and Talent Management

- **Implement equity-focused professional development for campus administrators, faculty, and staff.** Imbedding equity-based professional development, organized as a continuous process helps institutions achieve equity. Professional development should be targeted to achieve equity and inclusion and include cultural competency training that has a trauma-informed lens, a focus on intersectionality. The training and practice changes should lead to transformative change in serving underrepresented students, including all those outlined in our equity focus, above.

Metrics:
- Number of institutions that are actively conducting professional development for their faculty, staff and administration.
- Use the Climate and Culture survey to measure changing attitudes and practices in the workplace.
- **Implement equitable talent management that supports recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, staff, administrators, ensures staff reflects diversity of student body, and provide equitable salaries.** Equity-focused talent management requires providing support for development and career management that is inclusive and takes into account equitable opportunities for groups that have been historically excluded. **See also strategies to increase faculty, staff, and administrators of color, below.**
  - Implement policies to recruit and retain a diverse employee mix.
  - Implement and support career pathway opportunities to increase faculty, staff, and administrator diversity and promote equity. Career pathways programs should be inclusive and recognize different groups' disadvantage in leadership positions to ensure opportunities are extended to them in an equitable manner.
  - Provide a healthy work environment that recognizes faculty, staff, and administrators' contributions and ensures equitable compensation.

Metrics:
Track staff retention to evaluate support for talent management.

---

[11] Making-Equity-Part-of-Your-State's-Postsecondary-Planning_Final_Web.pdf (usc.edu)

- Track and report diversity of new hires, demographics of total workforce; set goal to increase diversity of workforce.
- Track and report compensation packages for existing and new hires

Framework 3: Data-Informed Practices

- **Embed equity impact analysis and an equity lens in all decision-making, including using disaggregated data and ensuring that decision makers have access to that data.** Students of color and other historically underserved students face barriers in higher education and the lack of adequate support system limits opportunities for them to progress and complete higher education. Only by interrogating disaggregated data at multiple levels can the state and institutions understand the points of intervention on whether solutions are working. The framework set to mitigate the barriers in access, progression and completion for Black and Latinx students and other underrepresented groups should view inequity as a structural problem and provide systemic and student-focused approaches to solve the problem. One tool is an equity impact analysis, which ensures decisions are made after an analysis of its impact on underserved or minoritized groups.

- **Review, refine, and implement "higher ed on-track" predictive tool and other institutionally-appropriate screening tools as a way to identify appropriate support and interventions that lead to student success.** The University of Illinois-Chicago analyzed a series of indicators to develop a predictive tool, like the "Freshman On-Track" in wide use in the K-12 system, that with a few simple, accessible indicators could predict whether a first-semester college freshmen is likely to graduate within 6 years. By intervening with the right supports when such indicators occur, the student's graduation trajectory could be changed. The tool should be validated at other institutions and if validated placed in wider use. This predictive tool should be coupled with other tools (e.g. non-cognitive need surveys for students to complete upon entering) to ensure students receive appropriate services.

Metrics:
- Percent of Institutions implementing the "higher ed on-track" predictive tool.
- Effectiveness (Percent increases/decreases) of the tool to help improve retention and graduation rates of Black and Latinx students.
- Measure if Colleges and Universities and Higher Education Agencies have conducted a race equity impact assessment for all policies and decision making.

Framework 4: Student Support

- **Implement and scale successful hybrid learning models, including flexible scheduling, flexible delivery methods of instruction, online, and accelerated learning opportunities.**
  - o Review and ensure equity is embedded across curriculum and course delivery methods.
  - o Develop and extend training that targets effective faculty teaching strategies to diverse groups of students.
  - o Evaluate existing hybrid teaching models using disaggregated data to ensure equitable access and success is achieved.

Metrics:
- Enrollment gaps in hybrid learning for Black and Latinx students.
- Use disaggregated data to evaluate success rates of Black and Latinx students, and students with disabilities who take hybrid learning programs.
- **Support systematic implementation of evidence-informed student support practices, especially in light of COVID and the disparate impact it has had on low-income families and families of color, across support areas.** The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the conditions of students that are already experiencing financial difficulty and learning loss that put them at risk of dropping out and not completing

higher education. Implementation of programs and policies to support students will help to improve student success.

- o Bridge programming and other wrap-around student services should be prioritized. Summer workshops and bridge programs require significant investment but can have significant impact for retention and graduation. The Illinois Bridge Program for Underrepresented Students Act, 110 ILCS 170, creates a standard for state institutions to create bridge programs, but is not currently funded.
- o Support proactive and comprehensive advising, first-year experience, experiential learning, summer bridge, developmental education, professional, support for students with disabilities.
- o Establish professional development system that ensures that staff, administrators, and instructors are equipped with the skills to support students with disabilities.[12]
- o Review financial policies, including polices on financial holds, financial literacy, emergency financial assistance that may contribute to barriers in progression for underrepresented students.
- o Review existing programs and identify high impact programs such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, including Computer Science (STEM) field, service learning, learning community, research with faculty, writing-intensive courses, and internship and field experiences[13] that serve the needs of first-time and transfer Black and Latinx students.
- o Ensure Black and Latinx student participation in high impact practices. High impact practices can include service learning, learning community, research with faculty, writing-intensive courses, and internship and field experiences.[14] These programs have been found to contribute to the success of student learning and retention according to the National Survey of Student Engagement. There are significant gaps in participation in high impact programs for underrepresented students.
- o Review student participation in high impact programs and provide support for Black and Latinx students to engage in the program. High impact programs benefit historically underserved students and can make a difference in their learning experience.[15] Duke University implemented Summer Research Experience for Underrepresented Minority Students; a program targeted at increasing the participation of minority students in graduate programs by providing research experience during summer to underrepresented minority undergraduate students. Each student receives financial support and housing and provided faculty research mentor.[16]

Metrics:
- Measure the implementation and effectiveness (improvement on retention and graduation rates) of Bridge programs for Black, Latinx and underrepresented groups.
- Number of high impact programs implemented.
- Effectiveness (Percent retained and graduated improvements) of the high impact practices on Black and Latinx and other underrepresented groups.

Framework 5: Climate/Culture

- **Implement campus climate surveys based on evidence informed practices.** Institutional level data provides specific information on the experience of different groups of students.
  - o Implement evidence informed campus climate survey every three years to track the needs of students and publish report to improve accountability.

---

[12] Improving College and Career Readiness for Students with Disabilities.pdf (ccrscenter.org)
[13] High-Impact Practices: Survey Instruments: NSSE: Evidence-Based Improvement in Higher Education: Indiana University
High-Impact Educational Practices | Association of American Colleges & Universities (aacu.org)
High Impact Practices and Historically Underrepresented Minority Students - Center for Engaged Learning
[14] High-Impact Practices: Survey Instruments: NSSE: Evidence-Based Improvement in Higher Education: Indiana University
High-Impact Educational Practices | Association of American Colleges & Universities (aacu.org)
High Impact Practices and Historically Underrepresented Minority Students - Center for Engaged Learning
https://www.villanovau.com/resources/bi/predictive-analytics-higher-education/
[15] High-Impact Practices | Association of American Colleges & Universities (aacu.org)
[16] Summer Research Experience for Underrepresented Minority Students @ CMU | Duke Psychology & Neuroscience
https://medium.com/reup-education/predictive-analytics-for-good-in-higher-education-a16ef7053c2
https://www.dashboard.csuprojects.org/rethinkingthegap/Historically-Underserved-Student-Factor-Model.pdf
https://www.hedsconsortium.org/heds-diversity-equity-campus-climate-survey/

o Analyze and apply information gained from survey to ensure that action-focused plan to improve the experience of historically underserved or underrepresented students are implemented.

Metrics:
- Percent of higher education institutions that are using and publishing the campus climate survey.
- Year to year improvements of campus climate.
- **Increase faculty/staff/administrators/trustees of color.** There are significant gaps in representation of faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees of color in higher education.
    - o Establish framework for imbedding equity in the hiring and retaining of faculty, staff promotions, and distribution of resources to ensure equitable representation. The University of Southern California has a training program on faculty hiring practices, that relates to issues of microaggression that occurs in a job advertisement and in the review of CVs. Faculty hiring at the University also requires appointment and inclusion of a faculty diversity recruitment liaison in the search committees.[17]
    - o Implement and continue support for legislation and programs targeted at increasing support for faculty of color. The Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois Program (DFI) established in 2004 is designed to increase the number of minority full-time tenure track faculty and staff at Illinois' two- and four-year, public and private colleges and universities.
    - o Implement cluster hiring programs, a research-based initiative that fosters faculty retention and diversity. Cluster hiring, much like the "Posse" program for students, means institutions bring on faculty of color in a cohort to provide shared experiences and support.
    - o Support pipeline programs that identify promising scholars from diverse background to support their development earlier on, such as supporting graduate students and post-doctoral fellows of color or with disabilities during their graduate education.

Metrics:
- Current Breakdown of faculty by Race/Ethnicity.
- Compare Student and Teacher percentage gaps between White and Underrepresented Groups.
- Track pipeline programs to monitor success.
- Report diversity of faculty, staff, administrators, Trustees of color.
- Landscape scan of current climate surveys deployed across public postsecondary institutions.

---

[17] Diversity & Inclusion | USC Faculty Portal
https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/Increasing-Equity-Online-Blended-Learning-2020-508.pdf