

PROMISE FOR ILLINOIS REVISITED

**A Strategic Plan for the
Illinois Community College Board**

January 2006

Letter from the Governor

PROMISE FOR ILLINOIS REVISITED

**A Strategic Plan for the
Illinois Community College Board**

January 2006

PROMISE FOR ILLINOIS REVISITED

In 2001, the Illinois Community College Board coordinated the development of a strategic plan, **Promise for Illinois**, for the Illinois Community College System. The plan was the product resulting from discussions with thousands of individuals. These discussions occurred across the State of Illinois with community, business and labor leaders, executive branch and legislative leaders, workforce and economic development entities, educational partners, and representatives from all groups within the community college system.

The **Promise** served as a guide for the Board and community college system during the first few years of the new millennium. Five years later, the Board has reviewed the **Promise** and believes much progress has been made in accomplishing the pledges set forth in the document. The basic premises of the original plan still hold true. The Board believes some areas need more emphasis than five years ago while others have moved to the point that, while still important, they need less emphasis. With the **Promise for Illinois Revisited**, the Board sets its direction for the next few years and will use the **Promise Revisited** as its guide in meeting its mission.

Mission

The mission of the Illinois Community College Board, as the state coordinating board, is to administer the Public Community College Act in a manner that maximizes the ability of the community colleges to serve their communities, promotes cooperation within the system, and accommodates those State of Illinois initiatives that are appropriate for community colleges.

The Illinois Community College Board Principles

In carrying out its mission, the Illinois Community College Board affirms its commitment to the “educational development of all persons to the limit of their capacities” as established in the Illinois Constitution. The Board further affirms its commitment to provide leadership and direction to the community college system in ways that maximize local autonomy, but with assurance that each local institution is allowed an equal chance of success. The Board accepts its role as a coordinating agency and believes that, in this role, it is an integral partner with local boards of trustees in providing a framework for successful learning experiences for all residents of Illinois.

The Board commits itself to the following principles in implementing its coordinating responsibilities for the community college system.

- Teachers will take pride in teaching, students in learning, and the focus of all activities within the community college system will be directed toward high quality and excellence.
- Community colleges strive to instill leadership, integrity, humanity, dignity, pride, and caring.
- Experiences of community college students should be directed at developing each individual as an informed, responsible, and contributing citizen.
- No individual is inherently more important than another, and each must be provided an equal opportunity to achieve success.
- The Illinois Community College System has a responsibility to assist communities in identifying and solving problems by providing forums and support for public and productive discussion.
- The Illinois Community College System has a responsibility to promote programs and services to assist high school students and adults in its communities as they encounter transition points in their lives.
- The Illinois Community College System has a responsibility to be accountable, both for its activities and its stewardship of public funds.

Illinois Community College System

In 1965, the Illinois General Assembly established the Illinois Community College Board to create a system of public community colleges that would be within reach of every resident. Forty years later, the Illinois Community College System covers the entire state with 48 colleges in 39 community college districts and one multi-community college center. Community colleges serve more than one million Illinois residents each year in credit and noncredit courses and many more through their public service programs.

Community colleges are similar to each other and yet each college is unique. While this may appear to be a contradiction, it is not. Illinois community colleges share a common mission. They prepare people for college, for transfer to other colleges or universities, and for employment in strong wage jobs that demand high skills. Community colleges also provide adult literacy education that prepares people for the GED, employment, or college. They strengthen their local economies through business assistance and training. They also provide community education programs and services. What makes each college unique is how the college responds to the needs of the communities it serves.

The Illinois Community College System is coordinated by the Illinois Community College Board which is composed of citizens appointed by the Governor. Locally elected boards of trustees set policies that guide their colleges in achieving local and statewide goals.* Within the system, organized groups represent students, faculty, trustees, staff, administrators, and college presidents. All of these groups are actively involved in the decision-making process for the system.

Colleges meet both local and statewide needs for education and workforce development through high-quality, accessible, and cost-effective programs and services.

*The Board of Trustees of the City Colleges of Chicago is appointed by the Mayor of Chicago.

Illinois Community Colleges...

- Deliver accessible education and training to individuals of all ages and skill levels.
- Charge affordable tuition and fees.
- Enable students to complete degrees, certificates, and classes to meet personal goals.
- Equip students with academic and technical skills for workforce employment.
- Address business needs with customized workforce education and training programs.
- Promote lifelong learning.
- Empower students to live and work in an international economy and a multi-cultural society.
- Support diversity within community and college life.
- Embrace technology as an essential part of education and the economy.
- Eliminate barriers of distance, location, and time through online and other distance-learning opportunities.
- Support homeland security and emergency response efforts.
- Provide cultural opportunities and experiences for the local community.
- Maximize resources and use them effectively and efficiently.
- Collaborate within and among institutions to enhance and expand services and leverage resources.
- Validate results and achievements to the public.

PROMISE FOR ILLINOIS REVISITED

Illinois needs a citizenry composed of individuals who can read, write, compute, communicate, and contribute to society as a whole, as well as to local and global competitiveness. To accomplish this, it needs high-quality, affordable, and accessible education. It needs an education system that accommodates smooth transitions for students as they move among and between levels of education and work. This education system must assist them to be successful in reaching their goals.

THEREFORE:

The Illinois Community College Board pledges to enable Illinois community colleges to:

- Emphasize high quality in all programs, services, and operations.
- Deliver affordable and accessible learning opportunities for all residents of Illinois.
- Address workforce and economic development needs with flexible, responsive, and progressive programs and services.
- Offer rigorous courses, programs, and services designed to enable students to transition from one learning environment and level to another.
- Enhance adult education and literacy programs necessary for individuals and families to achieve high-quality standards of living in Illinois.
- Provide programs and services to assist students succeed in their educational endeavors.

Promise: High Quality

Emphasize high quality in all programs, services, and operations _____

Legislators, business leaders, labor leaders, community-based organization representatives, public school officials, faculty, administrators, and students clearly state that they want Illinois community colleges to emphasize high quality in programs, services, and operations. Communities, individuals, and employers must be confident that the instruction and services they receive from the most comprehensive source of local education and training are of the highest quality and that colleges are diligent and efficient in their operations. Therefore, community colleges must continually engage in evaluation and quality improvement activities.

OBJECTIVES _____

The Illinois Community College Board will work with the Illinois Community College System and adult education providers to strengthen efforts to develop strategies and obtain resources to support the following actions:

- Assure that students in academic, career and technical, remedial, adult education and literacy, continuing education, and noncredit business and industry programs meet national, state, and industry performance standards.
- Aggressively recruit and retain the best faculty and reward exceptional teaching with competitive salaries.
- Ensure that colleges maintain the human and capital capacities to offer the highest quality programs and services possible.
- Maintain small class sizes.
- Strengthen evaluations of the quality and relevancy of all courses, programs, services, and operations and take decisive action to enhance or improve offerings at every opportunity.
- Implement a new program review process that is integrated into other college assessment and accountability functions.
- Provide program events and international educational opportunities to encourage diversity and knowledge of other cultures.

Promise: AFFORDABLE ACCESS

Deliver accessible and affordable learning opportunities for all residents of Illinois _____

Many people do not attend college because of the location of their residence, place of work, family responsibilities, or financial hardships. Community colleges must play a central role in reducing these barriers and expanding lifelong educational opportunities for all individuals. Community colleges offer affordable educational opportunities, and it is imperative that they continue to do so. Likewise, the vast majority of community college students are already employed and need easy access to programs and services that will increase their ability to support themselves, support their families, and enrich their lives. Ready access at convenient times and locations, as well as alternative delivery modes such as online courses and programs, will enable students to pursue these opportunities while meeting other work and family responsibilities.

OBJECTIVES _____

The Illinois Community College Board will work with the colleges to strengthen efforts to develop strategies and obtain resources to support actions such as:

- Create strategically located education centers to serve more individuals.
- Use technology, including online course delivery, to expand learning opportunities.
- Keep student tuition and fees as low as possible through efforts to minimize cost increases and revenue reductions.
- Increase financial aid opportunities for the neediest students.
- Expand the availability of courses and cooperative programs for preschool through high school students and faculty.
- Support a broad network of Adult Education and Literacy providers, including community colleges, community-based organizations, high school districts, and Regional Offices of Education.
- Use flexible course scheduling to meet the needs of students.
- Provide noncredit educational opportunities to individuals of all ages and skill levels with various delivery systems.
- Review administrative costs to ensure colleges operate as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Promise: COMPETITIVE WORKFORCE

Address workforce and economic development needs with flexible, responsive, and progressive programs _____

A strong, nationally and globally competitive world class workforce is critical for Illinois' economic growth and stability. To accomplish this, employers need employees with high levels of academic and technical competencies. Employers want personnel at all levels who are able to think critically, communicate effectively, and solve problems. Increasingly, employers need individuals with a global perspective, who are customer-focused, adaptable, able to operate cross-functionally, and who have strong business ethics. Community colleges must work with employers and workforce and economic development entities to identify employment and economic needs and to create and implement innovative strategies to address those needs.

OBJECTIVES _____

The Illinois Community College Board will work with colleges and appropriate partners to strengthen strategies and obtain resources for actions such as:

- Expand community college commitment to Illinois' workforce and economic development through productive partnerships with business, industry, education, and government.
- Encourage collaboration between community colleges and regional collaboration with workforce and adult education providers to address local and regional issues.
- Anticipate education and training needs for future jobs and develop flexible programs that meet state and local needs.
- Assure that professional development and education programs meet state and federal licensure, certification, and quality standards and requirements.
- Work with other state agencies, such as the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunities, to address critical skill shortage areas such as homeland security, healthcare, transportation and warehousing, manufacturing, and teacher education.
- Increase linkages with international communities to maximize opportunities for Illinois students and businesses.
- Educate students about changing work requirements and help them make wise education and career choices.
- Continually review programs to ensure that they are current and relevant.
- Expand the use of instructional technology to meet the education and training needs of students and employers for higher levels of training and professional development at remote locations and in the workplace.
- Increase grant opportunities for community colleges and adult education providers to address workforce and economic development issues.

Promise: EFFECTIVE TRANSITIONS

Offer rigorous courses, programs, and services designed to enable students to transition from one learning environment and level to another _____

Community colleges serve as points of transition for most of their students. For the more traditional recent high school graduate and for students availing themselves of opportunity to acquire college credit while still in high school, community colleges are the transition points between secondary and postsecondary education. Frequently, they serve as the transition point between the world of work and postsecondary education for those returning to education after a period of time. Likewise, they serve as a point of transition for those students who are entering the world of work either while still enrolled in college or following completion of their academic studies. Adult education programs in community colleges work to transition GED graduates and students who have developed English language skills into credit coursework. Community colleges also serve an important transitional role for students transferring into and out of other higher education institutions. Increasing numbers of Illinois students are starting their undergraduate educations at community colleges. Over 50 percent of all undergraduate students in Illinois begin their collegiate experiences at community colleges. Many other students transfer to community colleges after starting elsewhere. Partnerships and articulated programs between community colleges, secondary schools, other adult education providers, other higher education institutions, and employers are critical in assisting the student make a successful transition at any of these points.

OBJECTIVES _____

The Illinois Community College Board will work with colleges and appropriate partners to strengthen efforts, develop strategies, and obtain resources to support actions such as:

- Eliminate institutional barriers which inhibit the transfer of courses to all institutions of higher education in the state.
- Promote university-based baccalaureate degree completion programs on community college campuses.
- Partner with local school systems to develop and promote rigorous programs that prepare students for postsecondary education.
- Structure Associate in Applied Science degree programs to allow students to move into baccalaureate programs.
- Implement Associate of Arts in Teaching degrees.
- Implement recommendations of the Illinois Articulation Initiative Study.
- Implement recommendations of the Baccalaureate Access Task Force.
- Enhance the availability and effectiveness of dual credit/dual enrollment offerings to assist students in transitioning into postsecondary education.
- Create effective transitions between adult education instruction, GED high school equivalency achievement, and developmental education and credit coursework for occupational preparation or transfer in community colleges.
- Honor each student's achievements acknowledging variety in academic goals.

Promise: ENHANCED ADULT EDUCATION

Enhance Adult Education and Literacy programs necessary for individuals and families to have high quality standards of living in Illinois _____

Economic and demographic changes are dramatically increasing the need for adult education, literacy, and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. Millions of Illinois residents lack the level of literacy skills they need to obtain good jobs, perform well on the job, and to function well in an increasingly complex society. There is a direct correlation between higher literacy levels and higher income, remaining employed, children's success in school, and individual and family health. Large numbers of immigrants have come to this country seeking education, work, and a higher quality of life, yet many do not have the English literacy or technical skills they need to realize their goals. To address the scope and diversity of need for adult education and literacy skills takes community colleges, public schools, community-based organizations, and others working together to provide the education and services needed by a wide diversity of adult learners.

OBJECTIVES _____

The Illinois Community College Board will work with the adult education community to strengthen efforts to develop strategies and obtain resources to support the following actions:

- Implement a funding process that more accurately reflects statewide need while maintaining a network of multiple service providers, the diversity of provider types, and services to all geographic areas of Illinois.
- Maximize state and federal resources to assure there is adequate and stable funding that will facilitate program quality and growth.
- Utilize the expertise of the current system of diverse providers, stakeholders, and state leadership in developing policies and procedures that will be responsive to the emerging needs of adult basic, adult secondary, and ESL students.
- Promote the use of data for program quality and improvement, determining program success, building learner success in meeting individual goals including secondary completions, transition to postsecondary education or training, and obtaining employment.
- Continue Illinois' participation in national leadership projects that promote quality, accountability, research-based practices, and provide adult education programs with access to state-of-the-art technology to expand service options and instructional delivery methods to students.
- Increase access to ESL and citizenship instruction to meet the need of persons moving to the United States, new citizens, and employers who increasingly rely on foreign-speaking workers.
- Establish effective administration of the GED Testing Program, working with Regional Offices of Education, test administrators, and adult educators to identify and address needed improvements.
- Continue the development and dissemination of innovations in adult education instruction.
- Increase awareness of, and involvement in, collaborative workforce and economic development initiatives at the local, regional, and state level.
- Increase grant opportunities to support adult education.

Promise: SERVICES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Provide programs and services to assist students succeed in their educational endeavors _____

Demographic shifts and increasing societal demands are challenging states and the nation to prepare educated individuals from among all residents. Community colleges take pride in playing a pivotal role in educating and training a broad cross section of the population. They provide additional opportunities for individuals who face educational, social, physical, or learning barriers to participate and succeed in postsecondary education. This is in the best interest of these individuals and society as a whole. As with many of areas of concern, it is critical that the Board and the colleges work with other entities to make certain that the needs of these students are met in the most positive and cost-effective manner.

OBJECTIVES _____

The Illinois Community College Board will work with colleges and appropriate partners to strengthen efforts to develop strategies and obtain resources to support actions such as:

- Provide academically underprepared students with effective remedial/developmental programs.
- Work with secondary schools to strengthen academic preparation for all students.
- Help secure adequate financial aid dollars for all who need them and advocate in favor of state and federal policies that do not disproportionately impact the financial aid available to traditional and nontraditional community college students.
- Work to secure funds for colleges to provide strategies, programs, and technologies that assist students facing barriers to accessing educational opportunities and achieving success.
- Provide services, assistance, and accommodations to all students who face physical or educational barriers to learning.
- Provide effective services to assist students to successfully transition from community colleges into baccalaureate degree-granting institutions or employment.
- Coordinate efforts to assist colleges and college students following natural disasters.

Conclusions

With the **Promise for Illinois Revisited**, the Illinois Community College Board renews its pledge to vigorously pursue its promises to the people of Illinois. The Board is dedicated to emphasizing high quality in all programs, services, and operations; delivering affordable and accessible learning opportunities for all residents of Illinois; addressing workforce and economic development needs with flexible, responsive, and progressive programs; offering rigorous courses, programs, and services designed to enable students to transition from one learning environment and level to another; expanding adult education and literacy programs necessary for individuals and families to have high-quality work and life in Illinois; and providing programs and services to assist all students to succeed in their educational endeavors. Furthermore, the Board and system are committed to measuring and reporting the results of their efforts in order to keep the people of Illinois informed about the quality of programs and services, to ensure the wise use of resources, and to foster efforts to continuously improve programs, services, and outcomes.

**Illinois Community College Board
Board Member - Student Member - President/CEO Bios**