



State of Illinois Receives Lumina Foundation Grant to Boost Employment Outcomes for African-American Students

Illinois Community Colleges will use funding to strengthen connections between Workforce Equity Initiative students and local employers

SPRINGFIELD - (May 4, 2022) – The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) announced today a \$745,200 grant from Lumina Foundation to further the mission of Illinois Community Colleges to improve employment outcomes for African-American and other minority students throughout the state.

The ICCB will use the grant and leverage existing agency resources to strengthen the connection of Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) students to employment opportunities within their communities as part of Lumina’s Employment Connection Project (ECP).

“I’m pleased to see the Lumina Foundation recognize the role of Illinois’ Workforce Equity Initiative in opening up new opportunities for Illinois residents to build great careers,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “Since its founding, the WEI has enrolled over 5,000 students across 100 high-demand training programs, operating with a focus on historically underinvested Black and Brown communities. Lumina’s grant will enhance the program’s ability to help students transform their credentials into careers, and I’m incredibly grateful for the Foundation’s partnership.”

Illinois’ 18 community colleges with WEI programs will use employment mentors to work with students and connect them to job opportunities within the community. Mentors will also help students with essential employability skills activities including workforce preparation, resume writing, mock interviews, and other activities to support a student’s successful transition to employment.

“To date, more than 5,000 students have enrolled in WEI programs with nearly 75 percent being African-American. There is no doubt this grant will help our students succeed and will contribute toward Lumina’s overall goal of 6.5 million credentialed students by 2025,” **said ICCB Executive Director Brian Durham**.

“We are very glad to support this critical work that’s being done with the WEI programs and look forward to Illinois becoming a state model in streamlining the path from credentials to employment,” **said Lumina’s Strategy Officer Georgia Reagan.**

The ICCB will also use grant funding to strengthen its ability to obtain and track individual job attainment and retention in high-demand jobs that pay 30 percent above the regional living wage. Using this data will help shape better job placement outcomes for more students in the future.

About the Illinois Community College Board

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) is the state coordinating organization for the Illinois Community College System—the third largest in the country and the leading public workforce development trainer in the state. The ICCB has statutory responsibility for administering state and federal grants to community college districts and adult education providers and managing high school equivalency testing for Illinois. Illinois community colleges serve over 600,000 residents each year in credit, noncredit, and continuing education courses. Illinois is home to 48 colleges in 39 community college districts that provide high-quality, accessible, cost-effective educational opportunities to the entire state.

About Lumina Foundation

Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation in Indianapolis that is committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all. Lumina envisions a system that is easy to navigate, delivers fair results, and meets the nation’s need for talent through a broad range of credentials.

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