



FISCAL YEAR 2021
ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM
SELECTED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
FOR
UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

FOCUS AREA:
STRATEGIES IN RECRUITING AND RETAINING
UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS ON THEIR
PATHWAY TO COMPLETION

January 2023

Underrepresented Groups Report
Fiscal Year 2021

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INTRODUCTION

Underrepresented college students have been traditionally excluded from full participation in our society and its institutions. Illinois statute defines underrepresented students in higher education as citizens or permanent resident aliens who are minorities, including African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian American, Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Alaskan Native, women, and persons with disabilities. On January 1, 2012, the definition was expanded to include first-generation college students, described as the first in their immediate family to attend an institution of higher education ([Public Act 097-0588](#)). Through the Underrepresented Groups Report, community colleges have an opportunity to report on initiatives and strategies aimed at increasing participation and achievement among minorities, women, individuals with disabilities, and first-generation students. Underrepresented Groups Report production is an important annual statutory responsibility ([Public Act 099-0143](#)) for community colleges and universities. Each community college provides a report detailing current activities and programs aimed at strengthening participation and progress among traditionally underrepresented student populations. Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) staff members summarize the information provided by the individual colleges and forward it to officials from the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) who combine it with responses from the public universities and forward it to the Governor and General Assembly.

This year's report begins with an overview of the demographic characteristics of community college students, completers, and faculty. External comparative information is referenced where available. The next portion of the report explores the current year's focus topics: *Strategies in recruiting and retaining underrepresented groups on their pathway to completion.*

Illinois community colleges are open-access and multi-purpose institutions that seek to prepare both traditional college-age students and nontraditional students for further education and the workforce. A number of student success measures can be applied to community college students. Graduation rates, for example, is a success measure that informs how colleges are performing in their efforts to graduate individuals who begin their studies pursuing a traditional full-time enrollment pattern. The consequence of using the federal formula of calculating graduation rates, which only includes first-time, full-time students who graduate within 150 percent of catalog program time, is that many community college students are excluded from this calculation. As a result, students who continue their studies on a part-time basis, those who transfer to four-year colleges before receiving an associate degree, and those that received courses to directly compete in the workforce before graduation, are not included in the rate. Furthermore, many high school graduates who come from low-income families or are first-generation college goers may encounter life circumstances, such as financial constraints, transportation and childcare needs, which can hinder their goal to graduate within a traditional timeframe. Therefore, incorporated are other student success measures, including advancement rates and adjusted retention rates that more accurately reflect the overall quality of student learning and intellectual involvement; how well integrated students are in campus life; and how effectively a campus delivers what students expect and need based on their specific education goals. Measures of success within this report reflect graduation, transfer, and retention. Summaries of strategies for improving student access, retention, and completion to close the achievement gap and for recruitment and/or marketing efforts to stem enrollment declines for at-risk and/or

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underrepresented groups through services, programs, or initiatives that positively impact student performance at selected community colleges are featured in the second half of this year's report.

KEY FINDINGS

- Over two-fifths (44.4 percent) of students enrolled in Transfer and over one-third (38.2 percent) of students enrolled in CTE programs were members of a minority group.
- Hispanic/Latino students accounted for the largest minority group enrollments in the Transfer program areas (22.7 percent) and also in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs (19.5 percent). African American students made up 11.1 percent of enrollments in Transfer programs and 11.0 percent of enrollments in CTE programs.
- Minority students accounted for 43.4 percent of Transfer graduates, compared to 37.2 percent of all CTE graduates in fiscal year 2021.
- Compared to five years ago, the total number of minority completers increased 4.7 percent.
- Over three out of five minority first-time, full-time students enrolling in Fall 2020 were retained or graduated in Fall 2021 (62.5 percent) compared to about two out of three White students (68.3 percent).
- About every other minority first-time, full-time student enrolled in Fall 2018 at Illinois community colleges graduated, transferred out, or were still enrolled by Summer 2021 (55.1 percent) compared to about two in three White students (68.1 percent).
- Over the past five years the graduation rate of Illinois minority first-time, full-time students who completed within 150 percent of catalog time increased from 19.1 percent (Fall 2014 cohort) to 24.7 percent (Fall 2018 cohort).
- Nearly two out of five students in the Illinois Community College System are first-generation college students.
- During fiscal year 2021, Illinois community colleges served 15,085 students with disabilities (3.7 percent of all credit enrollments).
- Females comprised 57.3 percent of the student population in fiscal year 2021 and accounted for 57.9 percent of all 2021 completions.
- Compared to fiscal year 2020, the number of minority faculty and staff decreased by 8.8 percent in fiscal year 2021.
- Hispanic/Latino faculty members (6.9 percent) are the most underrepresented minority group in comparison to the student population of the same race/ethnicity (22.3 percent).

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- Strategies in recruiting students from underrepresented groups include targeted marketing, equity plans, virtual campus tours, annual recruitment events, outreach to high school students, and incentives such as scholarships, grants, and apprenticeships.
- Strategies in retaining students from underrepresented groups include technology lending programs, remote learning initiatives, financial assistance programs, and support services including advising, tutoring, counseling, mentoring, transfer assistance, resume development, job placement services, transportation, and social and cultural programming.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Illinois Community College System demographic data on credit students are gathered through the Annual Enrollment and Completion Data (A1 & A2) submissions. These data illustrate that Illinois community colleges serve a broad cross-section of the general population. Census data are provided when possible to offer an external reference point for reviewing the enrollment, completion, and staffing data. Additional analyses about the race/ethnicity distribution of community college credit students for selected broad program areas (PCS) are included. Additional sources of data for this report come from Fall Student Enrollment (E1) Data, National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) (Tables 8 & 9), and Annual Faculty, Staff, and Salary (C3) Data (Tables 10 & 11).

Disability Status

During fiscal year 2021, Illinois community colleges served 15,085 students with disabilities (3.7 percent of all credit enrollments). This figure represents the number of individuals (unduplicated) who self-identified their disability status through the Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1) Submission. The majority of students with disabilities (N = 13,317) used supportive services offered by colleges. Only about one in ten students with disabilities (11.7 percent, N = 1,768) did not use supportive services during fiscal year 2021.

Based on the unduplicated count of students with disabilities who self-reported and used supportive services, specific disabilities identified were learning, including ADHD, (54.4 percent of reported disabilities); auditory (2.4 percent); medical, including acquired brain injury and systemic/chronic health problems, (9.0 percent); mobility (2.6 percent); psychological (27.5 percent); visual (1.9 percent); and other, including speech/language impairment, deaf-blind, and developmental, (1.9 percent). There are also students with disabilities who self-identify, but do not actually use the extra services colleges can provide. Based on a duplicated count of student usage, services were provided for 88.3 percent of reported disabilities. Of those services used, based on unduplicated count, more than one-half (54.4 percent) were used by students with learning disabilities, including ADHD ([2021 Student Disability Table](#)).

Census figures show a substantial number of Illinoisans with disabilities. In the 2020 Illinois census estimate, among Illinois' civilian non-institutionalized population, 5.6 percent between 18 and 34 years of age and 10.6 percent between 35 and 64 years of age had a disability. Nearly one fourth (24.1 percent) of the Illinois population age 16 and over with disabilities was employed ([2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#) Table [S1810](#) and [S1811](#)).

Gender

The overall Male/Female distribution of students in the Illinois Community College System typically fluctuates little from year to year. Females comprised 57.3 percent of the student population in fiscal year 2021. The percentage of Male students has averaged 45.4 percent over the past five years. Census data show little change in the proportion of Females in Illinois with 50.9 percent estimated in 2020 versus 51.0 percent in 2010 and 2000 ([ICCB FY 2021 Annual Student Enrollment and Completion Report](#), [U.S. Census 2000 Illinois](#), [U.S. Census 2010](#), [2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#) Table S0101). From 2017 to 2021, the number of Female students completing degree programs increased 0.7 percent, while the number of Female students enrolled in Illinois community college credit courses decreased 21.4 percent ([ICCB FY 2017 and FY 2021 Annual Student Enrollment and Completion Report](#)).

Age

The average age of Illinois community college credit students was 26.4 years in fiscal year 2021, which is a decrease from fiscal year 2020 (27.4). The median age was 21.9 years in fiscal year 2021, which is also lower than the previous year (22.3). According to the 2020 population estimates, the median age of all Illinoisans was estimated to be 38.3 years. The latest census estimates also show that over three-quarters (77.5 percent) of all Illinoisans were 18 years of age or above ([ICCB FY 2021 Annual Student Enrollment and Completion Report](#) and [2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#) Table S0101).

State of Illinois' Race/Ethnicity Distribution

State census data show that Illinois' population was 12.67 million in 2021 compared to 12.81 million in 2020, 12.83 million in 2010, and 12.42 million in 2000 ([U.S. Census 2000 Illinois](#), [U.S. Census 2010](#), enter Illinois, [U.S. Census 2020 Illinois](#), and [2022 Index of Need](#) Table 1). These detailed Illinois census data indicate that the state's population grew 2.0 percent between 2000 and 2021. The state population, however, decreased 1.2 percent between 2010 and 2021, and 1.1 percent between 2020 and 2021. Illinois' 2021 census estimate shows that Whites/Caucasians remained the largest race/ethnicity group. However, minority populations were responsible for Illinois' overall population growth from 2000 to 2021, as the percent of Caucasians decreased from 73.5 percent to 70.3 percent of the population ([U.S. Census 2000 Illinois](#), [U.S. Census 2020 Illinois](#), and [2022 Index of Need](#) Table 1).

The race/ethnicity data collection methodology changed for the 2000 census and changed again for the 2020 census. The 2021 census data, which uses the 2000 race/ethnicity data collection methodology, showed that 2.2 percent of all Illinoisans identified themselves as two or more races. These individuals are included in the "Some Other Race**" column in [Table 1](#). The question on Hispanic/Latino ethnicity was asked independently from an individual's race beginning in 2000 and is reflected in the 2021 data in the table. These duplicated Hispanic/Latino population counts show substantial growth, from 1,530,262 in 2000 to 2,282,133 in 2021 ([U.S. Census 2000 Illinois](#) and [2022 Index of Need](#) Table 1).

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Illinois' largest minority group in 2000 was African American and in 2021 was Hispanic/Latino. Compared to 2000, African American counts in 2021 decreased from 15.1 percent to 14.7 percent, whereas Asian American counts increased from 3.4 percent to 6.2 percent, Native American from 0.2 percent to 0.6 percent, and Hispanic/Latino from 12.3 percent to 18.0 percent.

Table 1
State of Illinois Race/Ethnicity Distribution (Census)

	<i>White/ Caucasian</i>	<i>African American</i>	<i>Asian* American</i>	<i>Native American</i>	<i>Some Other Race**</i>	<i>Hispanic/Latino*** (Duplicated)</i>
2000	73.5%	15.1%	3.4%	0.2%	7.7%	12.3%
2010	71.5%	14.5%	4.6%	0.3%	9.0%	15.8%
2020†	61.4%	14.1%	5.9%	0.8%	17.8%	18.2%
2021	70.3%	14.7%	6.2%	0.6%	8.2%	18.0%

*Includes Pacific Islander

**Includes two or more races

*** Respondents identify their race; they also identify themselves in terms of Latino/Hispanic ethnicity

†The way how Census collected race and ethnicity data changed from the previous collection

SOURCE OF DATA: U. S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 & 2022 Index of Need, Table 1.

Race/Ethnicity Distribution in Community College System Credit Programs

Overall, in fiscal year 2021, minority students accounted for 46.7 percent of the individuals enrolled in credit coursework at Illinois community colleges whose ethnicity was known. Race/ethnicity classifications are aligned with U.S. Department of Education collection and reporting standards. Fiscal year 2021 data show that minority representation was similar to the prior year (fiscal year 2020 = 47.4 percent).

Students identifying themselves as Hispanic/Latino—96,728 in fiscal year 2021—accounted for the largest number of minority enrollments in the Illinois Community College System.

Fiscal year 2021 results are above the five-year average (46.1 percent). Students identifying themselves as Hispanic/Latino students—96,728 in fiscal year 2021—became the largest minority group in 2000 but became the second largest minority group in fiscal year 2012 behind African American students. In fiscal years 2013 through 2021, Hispanic/Latino students were again the largest minority group. African American students—47,608 in fiscal year 2021—constitute the second largest minority group in the latest data. Asian American students—21,235 in fiscal year 2021—constitute the third largest minority group enrolled in the Illinois Community College System. The fiscal year 2021 proportionate representation by Hispanic/Latino students was slightly lower in comparison to the prior year (24.9 percent in fiscal year 2021 versus 25.5 percent in fiscal year 2020). The proportional representation by African American students was also slightly lower in comparison to the prior year (12.2 percent in fiscal year 2021 versus 12.9 percent in fiscal year 2020). Over the longer term—over the past five years—a decrease in the Illinois Community College System's minority enrollments was noted among students identifying themselves as Pacific Islander (-38.5 percent), African American (-34.0 percent), Native American (-24.6 percent), Nonresident Alien (-19.9 percent), Hispanic/Latino (-18.3 percent), Asian American (-17.7 percent), and Two or More Races (-0.7 percent).

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Student race/ethnicity representation varies across broad program areas (PCS). For example, [Table 2](#) contains information about the distribution of Adult Education [Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Adult Secondary Education (ASE)] and English as a Second Language (ESL) enrollments. Minority students accounted for over three-fourths (77.0 percent) of the individuals enrolled in community college Adult Education coursework. In fiscal year 2021, Hispanic/Latino students accounted for over fifty percent of Adult Education enrollments and African American students for nearly one-fifth of those enrollments (51.4 percent and 19.5 percent, respectively). Additionally, minority students accounted for about eight out of every ten (82.2 percent) individuals enrolled in community college ESL coursework during fiscal year 2021. Hispanic/Latino students accounted for nearly three-fifths (59.6 percent) of the community college ESL students, followed by Asian American students (10.8 percent) and African American students (8.2 percent).

Table 2
**Fiscal Year 2021 Minority Students Enrolled in Adult Education
and English as a Second Language Programs**

<i>Program</i>	<i>African American</i>	<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	<i>Asian American</i>	<i>Nonresident Alien</i>	<i>Native American</i>	<i>Pacific Islander</i>	<i>Two or More Races</i>	<i>Minority Subtotal</i>
ABE/ASE %	19.5%	51.4%	3.8%	0.7%	0.3%	0.1%	1.3%	77.0%
Number	4,086	10,762	796	145	58	18	281	16,146
ESL %	8.2%	59.6%	10.8%	3.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	82.2%
Number	873	6,359	1,148	338	13	11	27	8,769

SOURCE OF DATA: ICCB Centralized Data System—Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1) Data

[Table 3](#) provides the distribution of minority students enrolled in the two largest program areas, Transfer and Career and Technical Education (CTE). During fiscal year 2021, minorities comprised over two-fifths (44.4 percent) of Transfer enrollees. An examination of each minority group’s race/ethnicity representation across the Transfer program area indicates that Hispanic/Latino students accounted for the largest minority group enrollments (22.7 percent), followed by African American students (11.1 percent), Asian American students (6.1 percent), students of Two or More Races (3.4 percent), Nonresident Alien students (0.9 percent), Native American students (0.2 percent), and Pacific Islander students (0.1 percent). [Table 3](#) also shows that over one-third of students enrolled in CTE programs were members of a minority group (38.2 percent). Hispanic/Latino students also had the highest representation among minorities in CTE programs and accounted for 19.5 percent of the population. African American students had the second largest CTE program enrollment (11.0 percent), followed by Asian American students (4.2 percent), students of Two or More Races (2.6 percent), Nonresident Alien students (0.5 percent), Native American students (0.3 percent), and Pacific Islander students (0.1 percent).

Table 3
**Fiscal Year 2021 Minority Students Enrolled in Transfer
and Career and Technical Education Programs**

<i>Program</i>	<i>African American</i>	<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	<i>Asian American</i>	<i>Nonresident Alien</i>	<i>Native American</i>	<i>Pacific Islander</i>	<i>Two or More Races</i>	<i>Minority Subtotal</i>
Transfer %	11.1%	22.7%	6.1%	0.9%	0.2%	0.1%	3.4%	44.4%
Number	25,716	52,519	14,092	1,977	553	192	7,868	102,917
CTE %	11.0%	19.5%	4.2%	0.5%	0.3%	0.1%	2.6%	38.2%
Number	10,885	19,208	4,168	499	277	91	2,526	37,654

SOURCE OF DATA: ICCB Centralized Data System—Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1) Data

First-Generation College Students

Students whose parents did not attend college are at a disadvantage when it comes to postsecondary access. First-generation college students who managed to overcome barriers to access and enroll in postsecondary education remain at a disadvantage with respect to staying enrolled and attaining a degree (Choy, 2001). In 2012, Illinois statute recognized the category of first-generation students as an underrepresented group needing inclusion in the Underrepresented Groups annual report. Table 4 contains comparative data (fiscal year 2017 through fiscal year 2021) on first-generation college student enrollments. Fiscal year 2021 first-generation college student enrollment decreased by 14.2 percent compared to last year and decreased by 27.6 percent compared to fiscal year 2017. The overall enrollments continue to decline. Nearly four out of ten students (38.9 percent) in the Illinois Community College System were first-generation college students in fiscal year 2021.

Nearly four out of ten students in the Illinois Community College System are first-generation college students.

Table 4
**First-Generation College Student Enrollment in the Illinois Community College System
Fiscal Years 2017-2021**

	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	One-Year % Change	Five-Year % Change
First-Generation College Student Enrollment	217,873	207,794	200,555	184,041	157,826	-14.2%	-27.6%
Annual Enrollment	553,174	519,387	500,477	472,478	405,444	-14.2%	-26.7%
Enrollment Rate of First-Gen. College Students	39.4%	40.0%	40.1%	39.0%	38.9%		

SOURCE OF DATA: ICCB Centralized Data System—Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1) Data

Credential Attainment

The following section of the report supplies information about the race/ethnicity characteristics of students who graduated in fiscal year 2021. Table 5 provides a point-in-time or cross-cutting count of the number of degrees and certificates awarded to minority students within the Illinois Community College System during fiscal year 2021. Table 6 provides a comparison of fiscal year

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2017 through fiscal year 2021 completions in the Illinois Community College System by race/ethnicity.

Table 5 shows that during fiscal year 2021, similar numbers of minority graduates completed CTE degrees and certificates (N = 12,009) as Transfer degrees and certificates (N = 11,694). Minority students accounted for 43.4 percent of Transfer graduates, compared to 37.2 percent of all CTE graduates. The majority of the

Minority students accounted for 43.4 percent of Transfer graduates, compared to 37.2 percent of all CTE graduates in fiscal year 2021.

Transfer credentials earned by minorities was Associate in Arts degrees (51.2 percent, N = 5,990), while 29.2 percent (N = 3,419) was the General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) Credentials. Hispanic/Latino students accounted for the largest group of Transfer minority graduates (25.0 percent) followed by African American students (9.1 percent), Asian American students (4.8 percent), students of Two or More Races (3.1 percent), Nonresident Alien students (1.1 percent), Native American students (0.2 percent), and Pacific Islander students (0.1 percent). The fiscal year 2021 proportional representation of the Hispanic/Latino Transfer graduates (25.0 percent) was lower by 0.7 percentage points from the prior year (25.7 percent). Hispanic/Latino students also accounted for the largest minority group for completions in CTE programs (19.6 percent), followed by African American students (10.1 percent), Asian American students (4.1 percent), students of Two or More Races (2.5 percent), Nonresident Alien students (0.5 percent), Native American students (0.3 percent), and Pacific Islander students (0.1 percent). The fiscal year 2021 proportional representation of the Hispanic/Latino CTE program graduates (19.6 percent) was higher by 0.3 percentage points from fiscal year 2020 (19.3 percent).

Table 5
Fiscal Year 2021 Minority Student Completers in
Transfer and Career and Technical Education Programs

<i>Program</i>	<i>African American</i>	<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	<i>Asian American</i>	<i>Nonresident Alien</i>	<i>Native American</i>	<i>Pacific Islander</i>	<i>Two or More Races</i>	<i>Minority Subtotal</i>
Transfer %	9.1%	25.0%	4.8%	1.1%	0.2%	0.1%	3.1%	43.4%
Number	2,455	6,747	1,301	287	57	17	830	11,694
CTE %	10.1%	19.6%	4.1%	0.5%	0.3%	0.1%	2.5%	37.2%
Number	3,272	6,329	1,317	157	81	31	822	12,009

SOURCE OF DATA: ICCB Centralized Data System—Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1 & A2) Data

The number of collegiate-level degrees and certificates awarded to Illinois community college students in fiscal year 2021 totaled 61,783. Two-fifth (40.4 percent) of all degrees and certificates in fiscal year 2021 were awarded to minority students (nonwhite) whose race/ethnicity was known.

Compared to last year, there was an increase in minority completions among students of Two or More Races (10.1 percent), Native American students (9.2 percent), and Nonresident Alien students (1.7 percent). Decreases in completions were noted for Pacific Islander students (-22.2 percent), African American students (-16.4 percent), Hispanic/Latino students (-6.0 percent), and Asian American students (-2.6 percent) since last year. Compared to fiscal year 2017, the total number of minority completers increased 4.7 percent.

Table 6
Student Completers in the Illinois Community College System by Race/Ethnicity
Fiscal Years 2017-2021

<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	One-Year % Change	Five-Year % Change
<i>African American</i>	7,728	7,093	6,951	7,331	6,131	-16.4%	-20.7%
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	11,506	12,145	12,181	14,564	13,684	-6.0%	18.9%
<i>Asian American</i>	2,538	2,521	2,589	2,791	2,719	-2.6%	7.1%
<i>Nonresident Alien</i>	477	462	513	477	485	1.7%	1.7%
<i>Native American</i>	157	197	165	130	142	9.2%	-9.6%
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	72	62	56	63	49	-22.2%	-31.9%
<i>Two or More Races</i>	1,350	1,330	1,464	1,572	1,730	10.1%	28.1%
Minority Subtotal	23,828	23,810	23,919	26,928	24,940	-7.4%	4.7%
<i>Unknown</i>	1,843	1,811	1,626	1,647	1,660	0.8%	-9.9%
<i>White</i>	40,472	39,050	36,697	37,132	35,183	-5.2%	-13.1%

SOURCE OF DATA: ICCB Centralized Data System—Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1 & A2) Data

Table 7 contains trend data (fiscal year 2017 through fiscal year 2021) on student completers by gender. Females accounted for 57.9 percent of all 2021 completions. The number of male completers decreased 13.3 percent, and the number of female completers increased 0.1 percent compared to the previous fiscal year. When compared to fiscal year 2017, the number of male completers decreased 15.1 percent, and the number of female completers increased 0.7 percent.

Table 7
Student Completers in the Illinois Community College System by Gender
Fiscal Years 2017-2021

<i>Gender</i>	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	One-Year % Change	Five-Year % Change
<i>Male</i>	30,590	30,188	29,014	29,954	25,985	-13.3%	-15.1%
<i>Female</i>	35,553	34,483	33,228	35,753	35,798	0.1%	0.7%

SOURCE OF DATA: ICCB Centralized Data System—Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1 & A2) Data

Graduation and Advancement Rate (Graduation/Transfer/Retention) by Race/Ethnicity

Community colleges urge students to complete their associate degrees prior to transferring to a four-year institution. Nationally, research suggests a higher completion rate for those that receive their credential from a two-year college ([Baccalaureate Attainment: A National View of the Postsecondary Outcomes of Students Who Transfer from Two-Year to Four-Year Institutions](#)). Still a substantial number of community college students generate a considerable number of credit hours but then transfer to a four-year institution prior to receiving the associate degree. The federal formula of calculating graduation rates does not include these transfer-outs prior to credential attainment, and thus negatively impacts community college outcomes. The student advancement rate provides a more comprehensive picture of the range of academic outcomes sought by

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community college students than the graduation rate, as it tracks community college students who either graduated, transferred to other higher education institutions, or were still enrolled at the end of the observation period.

Table 8a contains information on number and percent of first-time, full-time students at Illinois community colleges who graduated within three years (150 percent of catalog program time) of entry by race/ethnicity. About one in four minority students from the Fall 2018 cohort graduated by Summer 2021 (24.7 percent) compared to about two in five White students (40.2 percent in Illinois and 39.6 percent nationally according to NCES). Nationally, for cohort year 2018, the graduation rate within 150 percent of catalog program time for all students at public two-year postsecondary institutions was 31.4 percent. This is based on 896 institutions, limited by Sector of institution ([NCES Trend Generator](#)). Illinois has a higher graduation rate for all students at 32.9% compared to the national average. Examining Illinois race/ethnicity subgroups, Nonresident Alien and Asian American students accounted for the highest graduation rate among minority students entering in Fall 2018 (34.7 and 34.6 percent, respectively), followed by Hispanic/Latino students (27.0 percent), students of Two or More Races (26.2 percent), Native American students (25.5 percent), Pacific Islander students (20.8 percent), and African American students (15.4 percent).

Table 8a
First-Time, Full-Time Students Enrolling in Fall and Graduating within Three Years of Entry at Illinois Community Colleges
Fiscal Years 2015-2019

<i>Race/Ethnicity*</i>	Fall 2014 Summer 2017	Fall 2015 Summer 2018	Fall 2016 Summer 2019	Fall 2017 Summer 2020	Fall 2018 Summer 2021
<i>African American</i>	486/ 4,051 12.0%	495/ 3,496 14.2%	492/ 3,456 14.2%	520/ 3,429 15.2%	501/ 3,245 15.4%
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	1,272/ 5,780 22.0%	1,518/ 6,180 24.6%	1,664/ 6,520 25.5%	1,896/ 6,918 27.4%	1,865/ 6,917 27.0%
<i>Asian</i>	282/ 966 29.2%	276/ 1,040 26.5%	308/ 1,072 28.7%	323/ 1,005 32.1%	392/ 1,133 34.6%
<i>Nonresident Alien</i>	42/ 157 26.8%	44/ 172 25.6%	39/ 177 22.0%	64/ 224 28.6%	82/ 236 34.7%
<i>Native American</i>	12/ 64 18.8%	22/ 80 27.5%	21/ 67 31.3%	14/ 58 24.1%	12/ 47 25.5%
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	14/ 44 31.8%	8/ 32 25.0%	10/ 34 29.4%	3/ 22 13.6%	5/ 24 20.8%
<i>Two or More Races</i>	152/ 752 20.2%	179/ 847 21.1%	203/ 866 23.4%	211/ 886 23.8%	252/ 961 26.2%
<i>Minority Subtotal</i>	2,260/ 11,814 19.1%	2,542/ 11,847 21.5%	2,737/ 12,192 22.4%	3,031/ 12,542 24.2%	3,109/ 12,563 24.7%
<i>White</i>	5,510/ 15,537 35.5%	5,734/ 15,183 37.8%	5,679/ 14,803 38.4%	5,838/ 14,605 40.0%	5,702/ 14,179 40.2%

*Race/ethnicity classifications align with U.S. Department of Education collection and reporting standards.
SOURCE OF DATA: ICCB Centralized Data System - Annual Enrollment and Completion Data and IPEDS
Note: Table 8a of the FY 2019-FY 2021 Underrepresented Groups Report aligns with federal reporting for IPEDS. Prior reports used methodology developed by Complete College America (CCA).

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Table 8b contains information on number and percent of first-time, full-time students at Illinois community colleges who graduated, transferred out, or were still enrolled within three years of entry by race/ethnicity. About every other minority student from the Fall 2018 cohort graduated, transferred out, or were still enrolled by Summer 2021 (55.1 percent) compared to about two in three White students (68.1 percent). Asian American students accounted for the highest advancement rate among minority students entering in Fall 2018 (75.5 percent), followed by Nonresident Alien students (63.1 percent), students of Two or More Races (59.0 percent), Pacific Islander students (58.3 percent), Hispanic/Latino students (55.4 percent), Native American students (48.9 percent), and African American students (45.5 percent).

Table 8b
First-Time, Full-Time Students Enrolling in Fall and Graduating, Transferring, or Still Enrolled within Three Years of Entry at Illinois Community Colleges
Fiscal Years 2015-2019

<i>Race/Ethnicity*</i>	Fall 2014 Summer 2017	Fall 2015 Summer 2018	Fall 2016 Summer 2019	Fall 2017 Summer 2020	Fall 2018 Summer 2021
<i>African American</i>	1,789/ 4,051 44.2%	1,634/ 3,496 46.7%	1,616/ 3,456 46.8%	1,539/ 3,429 44.9%	1,475/ 3,245 45.5%
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	3,283/ 5,780 56.8%	3,555/ 6,180 57.5%	3,754/ 6,520 57.6%	3,868/ 6,918 55.9%	3,835/ 6,917 55.4%
<i>Asian</i>	747/ 966 77.3%	782/ 1,040 75.2%	808/ 1,072 75.4%	771/ 1,005 76.7%	855/ 1,133 75.5%
<i>Nonresident Alien</i>	75/ 157 47.8%	86/ 172 50.0%	85/ 177 48.0%	115/ 224 51.3%	149/ 236 63.1%
<i>Native American</i>	32/ 64 50.0%	44/ 80 55.0%	38/ 67 56.7%	28/ 58 48.3%	23/ 47 48.9%
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	26/ 44 59.1%	20/ 32 62.5%	24/ 34 70.6%	17/ 22 77.3%	14/ 24 58.3%
<i>Two or More Races</i>	418/ 752 55.6%	502/ 847 59.3%	509/ 866 58.8%	486/ 886 54.9%	567/ 961 59.0%
Minority Subtotal	6,370/ 11,814 53.9%	6,623/ 11,847 55.9%	6,834/ 12,192 56.1%	6,824/ 12,542 54.4%	6,918/ 12,563 55.1%
<i>White</i>	10,610/ 15,537 68.3%	10,385/ 15,183 68.4%	10,231/ 14,803 69.1%	10,062/ 14,605 68.9%	9,661/ 14,179 68.1%

*Race/ethnicity classifications align with U.S. Department of Education collection and reporting standards.

SOURCE OF DATA: ICCB Centralized Data System—Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1) Data, Fall Enrollment (E1) Data, and National Student Clearinghouse (NSC)

Note: Table 8b of the FY 2019-FY 2021 Underrepresented Groups Report aligns with federal reporting for IPEDS. Prior reports used methodology developed by Complete College America (CCA).

Adjusted Retention Rate (Fall-to-Fall Retention or Graduation) by Race/Ethnicity

The adjusted retention rate metric tracks the number and percentage of entering degree or certificate-seeking undergraduate students who are retained from fall to fall or graduate within one year of entry. This metric reflects a more comprehensive perspective, since a variety of community college certificate programs can be completed within one year. First-year retention is particularly

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important since new students—especially recent high school graduates—need to successfully transition to college and the accompanying elevated academic and personal responsibility expectations.

Table 9 shows adjusted retention rates at Illinois community colleges within one year of entry. Over three out of five minority first-time, full-time students enrolling in Fall 2020 at Illinois community colleges were retained or graduated in Fall 2021 (62.5 percent) compared to about two out of three White students (68.3 percent). Asian American students accounted for the highest fall-to-fall adjusted retention rate among minority students enrolling in Fall 2020 (76.7 percent), followed by Hispanic/Latino students (65.2 percent), Nonresident Alien students (64.8 percent), Pacific Islander students (63.6 percent), students of Two or More Races (60.1 percent), Native American students (59.8 percent), and African American students (48.8 percent).

Table 9
First-Time, Full-Time Students Enrolling in Fall and Being Retained or Graduating within One Year of Entry at Illinois Community Colleges Fiscal Years 2017-2021

<i>Race/ethnicity*</i>	Fall 2016 Fall 2017	Fall 2017 Fall 2018	Fall 2018 Fall 2019	Fall 2019 Fall 2020	Fall 2020 Fall 2021
<i>African American</i>	1,574/ 3,456 45.5%	1,560/ 3,424 45.6%	1,482/ 3,209 46.2%	1,470/ 3,107 47.3%	1,000/ 2,051 48.8%
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	4,484/ 6,514 68.8%	4,673/ 6,898 67.7%	4,535/ 6,764 67.0	4,511/ 7,246 62.3%	3,758/ 5,764 65.2%
<i>Asian</i>	846/ 1,072 78.9%	820/ 1,004 81.7%	853/ 1,096 77.8%	861/ 1,119 76.9%	789/ 1,029 76.7%
<i>Nonresident Alien</i>	110/ 177 62.1%	147/ 224 65.6%	141/ 212 66.5%	167/ 230 72.6%	79/ 122 64.8%
<i>Native American</i>	33/ 67 49.3%	35/ 58 60.3%	27/ 47 57.4%	38/ 69 55.1%	55/ 92 59.8%
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	22/ 34 64.7%	14/ 22 63.6%	18/ 23 78.3%	10/ 16 62.5%	7/ 11 63.6%
<i>Two or More Races</i>	553/ 866 63.9%	532/ 885 60.1%	584/ 946 61.7%	570/ 927 61.5%	479/ 797 60.1%
<i>Minority Subtotal</i>	7,622/ 12,186 62.5%	7,781/ 12,515 62.2%	7,640/ 12,297 62.1%	7,627/ 12,714 60.0%	6,167/ 9,866 62.5%
<i>White</i>	10,323/ 14,798 69.8%	10,284/ 14,592 70.5%	9,754/ 13,920 70.1%	9,643/ 14,143 68.2%	8,765/ 12,833 68.3%

* Race/ethnicity classifications align with U.S. Department of Education collection and reporting standards.
SOURCE OF DATA: ICCB Centralized Data System—Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1) Data, Fall Enrollment (E1) Data, and National Student Clearinghouse (NSC)

Note: Table 9 of the FY 2019-FY 2021 Underrepresented Groups Report aligns with federal reporting for IPEDS. Prior reports used methodology developed by Complete College America (CCA).

Employee Diversity

Faculty, staff, administrators, and board members at each community college accept the responsibility of meeting the needs and demands of the area community and their constituents. To

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thrive in the competitive higher education marketplace, community colleges adopt a strong customer and community focus. Hence, the colleges tend to reflect the communities in which they are located. Interest in creating a diverse environment is common to all colleges across the system. Strengths and opportunities for improvement may differ by locality.

Alger & Carrasco/American Association of University Professors (1997), Humphreys (1999), American Council on Education and American Association of University Professors (2000), Brown-Glaude (2009), and American Association of Community Colleges (2013) found that a diverse faculty promotes a positive learning environment for both minorities and Caucasians.

Table 10
Fiscal Year 2021 Minority Faculty and Staff in Illinois Community Colleges

	<i>Tenured Faculty/ Officials and Managers</i>	<i>Non- tenured Faculty</i>	<i>Professional Staff/ Protective Service Workers</i>	<i>Office and Clerical/Para- professionals</i>	<i>Service Maintenance</i>
<i>African American %</i>	10.9%	7.5%	14.1%	14.0%	22.8%
Number	653	1,010	1,138	491	541
<i>Hispanic/Latino %</i>	5.1%	4.7%	11.7%	14.2%	15.8%
Number	304	627	941	496	374
<i>Asian American %</i>	3.8%	4.1%	3.7%	3.1%	1.3%
Number	229	556	299	109	30
<i>Nonresident Alien %</i>	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.9%
Number	14	40	27	11	22
<i>Native American %</i>	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%
Number	14	30	16	7	9
<i>Pacific Islander %</i>	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
Number	7	7	7	3	4
<i>Two or More Races %</i>	1.0%	0.8%	1.5%	0.9%	0.8%
Number	58	106	124	30	19
<i>Minority Subtotal %</i>	21.4%	17.7%	31.7%	32.8%	42.2%
Number	1,279	2,376	2,552	1,147	999

*Includes revised college figures

SOURCE OF DATA: ICCB Centralized Data System—Annual Faculty, Staff, and Salary (C3) Data and African American/Asian American/Hispanic Employment Plan Reports

Table 10 shows that in fiscal year 2021, minority faculty and staff accounted for 21.4 percent of tenured faculty/officials and managers, 17.7 percent of non-tenured faculty, 31.7 percent of professional staff/protective service workers, 32.8 percent of office and clerical/paraprofessionals, and 42.2 percent of service maintenance employees. Compared to fiscal year 2020, the number of minority faculty and staff decreased by 8.8 percent in fiscal year 2021. The largest decrease in the minority employee count from the previous year was noted for professional staff/protective service workers (-12.2 percent), followed by non-tenured faculty (-9.9 percent), office and clerical/paraprofessionals (-9.5 percent), and service maintenance (-9.0 percent). An increase in the minority employee count from the previous year was noted for tenured faculty/officials and managers (2.3 percent).

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Nationwide, community college faculty members are disproportionately White, and thus students of color are less likely to have the opportunity to engage with faculty members of their own race/ethnicity [[Center for Community College Student Engagement \(2014\)](#)]. In Illinois community colleges, Hispanic/Latino faculty members are the most underrepresented minority group in comparison to the student population of the same race/ethnicity ([Table 11](#)).

Table 11
Proportion of Minority Students and Faculty at Illinois Community Colleges
Fiscal Year 2017 and 2021

2017	Percentage of Student Representation	Percentage of Faculty Representation*	Percentage Point Difference
<i>African American</i>	13.6%	8.0%	-5.6%
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	22.3%	6.9%	-15.4%
<i>Asian American</i>	4.9%	4.1%	-0.8%
<i>Nonresident Alien</i>	0.8%	0.3%	-0.4%
<i>Native American</i>	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
<i>Two or More Races**</i>	2.2%	0.7%	-1.5%
<i>White</i>	55.9%	79.6%	23.7%
2021	Percentage of Student Representation	Percentage of Faculty Representation*	Percentage Point Difference
<i>African American</i>	12.2%	9.2%	-3.1%
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	24.9%	5.1%	-19.7%
<i>Asian American</i>	5.5%	4.3%	-1.1%
<i>Nonresident Alien</i>	0.8%	0.3%	-0.5%
<i>Native American</i>	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
<i>Two or More Races**</i>	3.0%	0.9%	-2.1%
<i>White</i>	53.3%	79.8%	26.5%

Includes only students and faculty whose ethnicity was known.

*Includes Tenured Faculty/Officials and Managers and Non-tenured Faculty

**Race/ethnicity classifications align with U.S. Department of Education collection and reporting standards.

SOURCE OF DATA: ICCB Centralized Data System—Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1) Data, Annual Faculty, Staff, and Salary (C3) Data, and African American/Asian American/Hispanic Employment Plan Reports

Across a five-year period, Hispanic/Latino faculty representation decreased by 1.8 percentage points (6.9 percent in fiscal year 2017 vs. 5.1 percent in fiscal year 2021), while the Hispanic/Latino student representation experienced a sharper increase by 2.6 percentage points (22.3 percent in fiscal year 2017 vs. 24.9 percent in fiscal year 2021). Across the same time frame, African American faculty representation increased by 1.2 percentage points (8.0 percent in fiscal year 2017 vs. 9.2 percent in fiscal year 2021), while the African American student representation decreased by 1.4 percentage points (13.6 percent in fiscal year 2017 vs. 12.2 percent in fiscal year 2021). Asian American faculty and student representation both increased over the period of five years, but the increase was slightly smaller for Asian American faculty (4.1 percent in fiscal year

2017 vs. 4.3 percent in fiscal year 2021) than the increase for Asian American students (4.9 percent in fiscal year 2017 vs. 5.5 percent in fiscal year 2021).

BEST PRACTICES

This following section provides information about best practices from the Illinois Community College System in fiscal year 2021 for improving student recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups on their pathway to completion. Best practices address factors woven into students' experiences that may impact their success and completion, such as coming from a low-income, first-generation, or minority background or having a disability, and provide helpful information about project components and outcomes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the postsecondary education institutions. Declining enrollment and the disruption of the high school to postsecondary pipeline during the pandemic have driven inequalities in learning and created challenges as institutions were forced to move face-to-face instruction online. Illinois community colleges have worked diligently to eliminate equity gaps and minimize disruptions to students. Many of the following best practices address how colleges have dealt with the challenges brought by the pandemic.

STRATEGIES IN RECRUITING UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

Recruitment/Marketing to Increase Enrollment of Underserved Students

Minority students have historically represented 25 to 28 percent of enrollment at **Black Hawk College** (BHC). A marketing initiative was launched at the College in fiscal year 2019 to complement recruitment efforts of minority students due to their declining enrollment. The marketing plan was designed to increase awareness of BHC in minority communities through digitally targeting prospective students and by becoming more involved in these communities through promotional activities, sponsorships, and communication. Research was first conducted to determine geographic areas in the

Black Hawk College designed a marketing plan to increase awareness of the College in minority communities through digitally targeting prospective students and by becoming more involved in these communities through promotional activities, sponsorships, and communication.

district with the largest minority populations of prospective students. Three were identified, each about two miles in diameter. Two neighborhoods contained a large Hispanic/Latino population and a third neighborhood contained a large African American population. Minority employees of the College were consulted about messaging that would be appropriate. This resulted in a campaign that emphasized changing the direction of one's life through education and training. Digital ads were created for the three neighborhoods with links to landing pages that featured content about BHC, its programs and how to get started. With each campaign, impressions, clicks, and visits were captured, and the messaging was tweaked as needed. The third year of this campaign has just been completed. More than 630,000 impressions were delivered in 2021 to the three targeted areas. The click-through rate was 0.14 percent and 37 individuals who opened the advertisement were identified as having visited campus. In addition to the digital campaign, the College's sponsorship

of events and promotions in minority communities increased. This included sponsoring Hispanic Heritage Month, Juneteenth celebrations, NAACP events and numerous other events and activities. While overall enrollment has declined, enrollment of minority students stood at 34 percent in 2021.

*The Equity Plan serves as a roadmap for outlining how **Kennedy-King College** will work toward closing gaps in degree attainment for low-income, first-generation, African American, and Hispanic/Latino students.*

Kennedy-King College (KKC) published an Equity Plan in September 2020 to strengthen student access and retention. The plan serves as a roadmap for outlining how KKC will work toward closing gaps in degree attainment for low-income, first-generation, African American, and Hispanic/Latino students. The Equity Plan complements other institutional efforts that

integrate equity impacts on all strategies across the student life cycle. KKC outlined new strategies to intentionally recruit and market to the growing Hispanic/Latino community and expand support services to the College's existing students. Since the implementation of the Equity Plan, enrollment among Hispanic/Latino students has increased in each respective term. When compared to Fall 2020, KKC's year-over-year enrollment for Fall 2021 saw a 21 percent increase of Hispanic/Latino students. When compared to Spring 2020, KKC's year-over-year enrollment for Spring 2021 saw a 78 percent increase of Hispanic/Latino students. The Equity Plan has also improved student success among Hispanic/Latino students. When compared to Fall 2020 year-over-year course grades for Fall 2021, Hispanic/Latino students saw an 8.04 percent increase in the course pass rate. When compared to Fall 2020 year-over-year course retention for Fall 2021, Hispanic/Latino students saw a 3.24 percent increase in the course retention.

More than three quarters of admissions officials surveyed in August 2021 by [Inside Higher Ed](#) said they assume that some or many students will continue to use videos instead of visiting campuses. **Frontier Community College** (FCC) implemented Virtual Tours in Fall 2020 to eliminate barriers to campus visits, such as time and money, and to give all students the access to tour the College. Campus tours have long been an important part of the college search process, but the cost and time associated with touring campuses in person can be a barrier to many. Virtual experiences broaden access to all students, especially first-generation students and students from low-income backgrounds. In Fall 2020, the College developed a virtual campus tour that allowed prospective students to visit FCC campus from their computers or portable devices. The tour gives information about FCC, the buildings, and some of the different programs the College offers. Potential future opportunities could include personalized tours that are tailored to students' identities and interests, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, virtual tours offered in Spanish, and live virtual tours, which would offer more human interaction and allow for questions and answers. Eighty-two students have taken the virtual tour.

The Hispanic/Latino population at **Joliet Junior College** (JJC) continues to grow, as evidenced by a five-percentage point increase between Fall 2015 enrollment of 24 percent and the Fall 2019 enrollment of 29 percent. The last environmental scan predicted a 6.3 percent increase in The Hispanic/Latino population from 2019-2023. JJC's Office of Multicultural Student Affairs (OMSA) provides tailored outreach and recruitment activities to matriculate Hispanic/Latino students through targeted recruitment and outreach and targeted translation of admissions and

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related documentation. In lieu of traditional outreach, which included high schools, community-based organizations, and churches, due to the pandemic, OMSA conducted special population calling campaigns in fiscal year 2021 to bolster higher matriculation yields for students of color. In addition, OMSA exhibited at the Spanish Community Center for “Dia del Niño” (Day of the Children) on May 1, 2021, once in-person events were able to resume. Another recruitment initiative included the creation of a JJC Spanish Chat (HubSpot) and hotline numbers in an effort to engage and assist with the Spanish-speaking community virtually. In addition, 13 webpages were also translated into Spanish to continue to improve outreach. Among the students called, 687 were Hispanic/Latino. Of these, 187 students registered for the fall semester. Overall, the Fall 2021 term had an increase of 5.9 percent over the Fall 2020 term, at a time when enrollment dropped for the other two top categories of students (White Non-Hispanic and African American Non-Hispanic).

Meet MCC is an annual recruitment event at McHenry County College that was hosted virtually for the first time ever on March 24, 2021, due to COVID-19.

The department of Admissions and Recruitment at **McHenry County College** (MCC) created targeted recruitment/outreach initiatives for at-risk and/or underrepresented groups in 2021 to explore the college experience through MCC annual recruitment event, presentations, virtual sessions, tours, and pop-up visits throughout the community. The goal is to encourage

potential students of all ages to envision themselves as successful college students and provide them with the information and resources they need to remove barriers to entrance. Meet MCC is an annual recruitment event that was hosted virtually for the first time ever on March 24, 2021, due to COVID-19. Utilizing a third-party platform, participants were able to visit with faculty for all programs, attend breakout sessions on services and resources available to students, watch “commercials” for many programs, receive a waiver code for a free application, and chat with staff and other attendees about MCC. In the first 15 days since the event, 253 applications have been completed and processed and 42 potential students have scheduled appointments and tours with a New Student Enrollment Coach. Furthermore, MCC recruitment efforts were expanded to include virtual and off-campus/outdoor opportunities for prospective students in the summer of 2021, during the prime Fall recruitment period, to remove accessibility barriers for those who have previously not been able to get to campus to learn more about programs and services.

Moraine Valley Community College and the Housing Authority of Cook County (HACC) combined outreach efforts to inform local HACC residents about opportunities for educational offerings through Moraine Valley. The primary goal was to provide information and host events so that HACC residents could explore the College’s educational options. Whether working toward high school equivalency, starting a career or transfer program, or enrolling in continuing education options, the College wanted to do more to assist HACC residents with information and supports for getting started. A shared goal of both organizations has been to enroll more HACC residents as a mechanism to increase earning potential and help move more local families toward wage-sustaining incomes. Discussion on these efforts started during Spring 2020. Two events were hosted during fiscal year 2021. The HACC provided financial support for application fee waivers and placement testing fees. The HACC was also able to provide laptops, transportation vouchers, and childcare support to residents that enrolled. Moraine Valley’s Marketing and Communications department developed a physical postcard that was sent to all HACC residents who lived within

the College's district. The College also developed an email template that the HACC staff sent to residents with active email accounts. In December 2020, Moraine Valley hosted the first virtual open house for HACC residents. Departments from across the College presented about supports and resources that are made available to students. When residents attending the virtual event were ready to talk about next steps, staff from the Admissions Office were available to assist immediately. Ten residents attended the first event. In April 2021 the college hosted an in-person open house. This event allowed on-the-spot admission, financial aid counseling, academic advising, and support for registering. The HACC staff also hosted a table in the lobby to provide resources. A total of 16 HACC residents attended between these two events.

Recruitment/Marketing Targeting High School Students

The focus of the Apprenticeship Awareness Program (AAP), offered by **College of Lake County's** (CLC) Career and Job Placement Center (CJPC), was to help participants receive information and guidance on how to prepare for careers in Automation, Robotics, and Mechatronics; Computerized Numeric Controls; Cybersecurity; Manufacturing; Automotive Collision Repair; and Horticulture career fields.

*The Apprenticeship Awareness Program offered by **College of Lake County** provides information on how to prepare for careers in Automation, Robotics, and Mechatronics; Computerized Numeric Controls; Cybersecurity; Manufacturing, Automotive Collision Repair; and Horticulture to high school students.*

The participants in the program had the opportunity to learn directly from employers and apprentices as they shared their perspectives on how to become part of the industry in these careers. The CJPC team conducted outreach regarding the AAP to high schools and community agencies in low-income areas, such as Waukegan, North Chicago, Zion, and Round Lake. These were virtual programs for high school seniors at Waukegan High School, and clients/participants at Youth Conservation Corp and Employee Connections. The schools and agencies were selected for the first AAP because of past relationships and involvement with CLC and general knowledge of the demographics of the areas where the schools and agencies are located. The CLC AAP was launched in the fall of 2020. It was designed to consist of five, 15-hour long sessions that included career and academic planning, virtual employer site visits, and an apprenticeship panel. Students received \$250 stipend upon completion of daily written assignments and daily attendance. Fifty-five percent of participants were African American, and 45 percent were Hispanic/Latino. All 56 students who attended the program showed interest in the apprenticeship program. CJPC will continue to offer the program.

Dawson Technical Institute (DTI) of **Kennedy-King College** has implemented efforts in June 2018 to increase the number of minorities in the construction industry. As the job and industry outlook grows, the demand for skilled labor increases as well. DTI works with high schools directly to market and inform students on the benefits of short-term programming in construction. The campus houses a Hispanic summer program that educates students on energy focused careers such as the Overhead Electrical Line Worker. The program has instituted grants to assist with removing financial and resource barriers often associated with attending training. In addition, DTI reaches out to organizations, institutions, and other partners to provide tours and referral prospecting to those underrepresented in the construction trades for opportunities to learn about training at Kennedy-King College. Intentional strategies to recruit Hispanic/Latino and African

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American students have been implemented and are key to growing enrollment and completion in workforce programs. Since Dawson Technical Institute's strategic focus on the recruitment and retention of Hispanic/Latino students there has been a year-over-year increase of Hispanic/Latino students, with a 23.5 percent year-over-year increase comparing Fall 2020 and Fall 2021, and a 159.7 percent year-over-year increase comparing Spring 2021 and Spring 2022.

As part of the [Governor's Emergency Educational Relief \(GEER\) Grant](#), **Parkland College** was

Parkland College's GEER Up Program provided up to \$2,500 in financial support for eligible high school students to pay for tuition, fees, and books.

awarded \$387,586 in September 2020, and set out to design a program, called GEER Up, to market the availability of high-demand programs to diverse students, provide access to early college courses by underrepresented student groups, and provide targeted student support services during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to these awareness activities and student supports, the College recognized an emerging need for access to early college courses. In response to this need, Parkland's GEER Up program provided up to \$2,500 in financial support for eligible high school students to pay for tuition, fees, and books. Additionally, students needing access to technology were assigned a laptop so they could complete their college coursework. The program was open to current high school students (age 15-18) who enrolled in at least three credit hours plus one of the First Year Experience courses and who were either first-generation college students, or from underrepresented racial or ethnic groups, or qualified for free or reduced lunch. In addition to engaging with K-12 partners and counselors for student outreach, Parkland forged new partnerships with the Champaign County Housing Authority's YouthBuild Program and Education for Employment Office #330 Early College and Career Academy participants. Both programs referred students to enroll in GEER Up. The program served 69 students in the Fall 2021 semester, 37 who were participants of the Early College and Career Academy (ECCA), generating 476 credit hours. In total, the program has served 110 students over three semesters with approximately 60 percent qualifying for free and reduced lunch. The program has generated a total of 743 credit hours. Twenty-six participants have utilized the loanable laptop technology.

Rend Lake College has designated a recruitment/student success specialist in August 2021 to actively recruit in the area high schools. The specialist assists with new student enrollment information, application completion, program information, and scholarship information and any other questions a potential student may have. Students are invited to attend information sessions on their high school campus to learn about topics such as what it takes to apply for admission, how to apply for FAFSA, how to apply for RLC Foundation Scholarships, how to take free interest/assessment tests if they are undecided on a career, and program information on specific career clusters. The college plans to measure success by future enrollment of high school students.

Southeastern Illinois College (SIC) launched the Accelerated College Experience (A.C.E.) program in the fall of 2021 to help the district's high school students prepare for college. The program aims to motivate students to go further and to have a competitive advantage in college admissions and scholarship applications, test preparation, and communication training. A.C.E. seeks to bridge high school education and college education, connecting with high school seniors before they graduate to encourage recruitment. This is also useful in discovering untapped talent among underprivileged groups who may not have otherwise considered continuing education after

high school. The A.C.E. program also includes weekly volunteer service events, which helps immerse local students in their community while enhancing their college applications. The program is still new and has not generated enough data for quantitative analysis, but qualitative research on this initiative is overwhelmingly positive. Students who participated in A.C.E. indicated a strong satisfaction with the program's effectiveness, noting that the community service was significantly useful for college applications. Furthermore, students indicated a five-out-of-five satisfaction rate for the community service program in student evaluations. Targeting underrepresented groups in this way is helpful in recruiting and retaining at-risk students.

The Principal of East Aurora High School partnered with **Waubonsee Community College's** East Aurora High School Admissions Advisor to require every senior to submit a new student application to Waubonsee. The goal was to increase the number of students who transitioned from high school to college. East Aurora High School is one of Waubonsee's top feeder high schools and has the largest percentage of Hispanic/Latino students from the high schools in the district (83 percent). This new initiative was implemented for the senior class of 2021. Recruitment events and a focus on collecting applications happened throughout the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters. The Admissions Advisor for East Aurora High School is bilingual and frequently conducts visits to the high school. During the 2020-2021 school year, advisors pivoted much of the typical in-person visits to virtual programming to assist students with completing their new student applications forms. Submitted online applications are uploaded to Salesforce, an electronic Customer Relationship Management System (CRM). All applicants are assigned to the advisor for case management. Salesforce pushes out automatic email communications and tasks for the Admissions Advisor on a regular cadence. Advisors conduct weekly phone outreach based on movement (conversions) in the enrollment funnel. The number of applications jumped from 291 applications last fall to 688 applications this fall. Fall registration grew from 146 to 201.

Dual Credit Courses

Malcolm X College (MXC) and the City Colleges of Chicago System are dedicated to creating opportunities for high school juniors and seniors to earn college credit prior to graduating high school. This can reduce both the amount of time and money needed to complete a two-year or four-year degree. In addition, students that earn college credit in high school are more likely to graduate high school and continue through college. While Early College has been a part of programming at MXC since 2006, efforts led by the Office of Instruction to establish more partnerships with minority-serving Chicago high schools has led to increased enrollment of African American and Hispanic/Latino students in the Early College program. Funded activities through the Predominantly Black Institutions (PBI) Grant, including the IAAM (I am an African American Male) mentorship program, have also aided in recruiting and retaining students of color into the Early College program at MXC. The persistence rate of students in the Early College program was 77 percent for Fall and Spring for fiscal year 2021, with the goal of next fiscal year set for 80 percent. Course success of MXC Early College students that persisted through the program was 95 percent, two percent higher than regularly enrolled students' course success rates for the same time period. African American and Hispanic/Latino student enrollment in the Early College program increased

Earning college credit prior to graduating high school reduces both the amount of time and money needed to complete a two-year or four-year degree.

from fiscal year 2020 to fiscal year 2021 by 33 percent and 13 percent, respectively. All minority student enrollment in MXC Early College during that same time increased by 32 percent.

From Pilots to Aviation Mechanics, one of the aviation industry's greatest challenges for future operations and growth is the lack of a qualified workforce. The demand for aviation mechanics is being driven by projected new aircraft delivery over the next twenty years as well as an aging workforce. Labor market data shows strong demand for Aviation Maintenance Technicians, according to Economic Modeling Specialists Intl (EMSI) in the first quarter of 2021, with 321 average annual openings in Cook County and with projected growth of nine percent over the next ten years. Aviation Maintenance Technicians earn entry-level wages of \$16.25/hour or \$33,794 annually and median wages of \$35.38/hour or \$73,586 annually (Emsi Q1 2021 Data Set). A new Aviation Maintenance Technician program at **Olive-Harvey College's** Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics Center in Pullman, Illinois, is a stackable credential career pathway. It meets the industry resurgence through COVID-19 pandemic. The Aviation Maintenance Technician program provides the foundational knowledge of general aircraft for beginning students. With a hands-on approach to learning, students acquire essential mathematics, physics, tool usage, maintenance operations, and general electricity current and emerging aviation maintenance technologies. To test the new program, the College is offering exclusive registration through the Office of Early College for the inaugural class of current Chicago Public Schools' high school students with junior year status. The students have the opportunity to earn a basic certificate credential for free at the conclusion of the senior year. The program will allow student completers to enter the workforce as a certified professional and/or transfer to a four-year institution. The new program provides underrepresented students with the opportunity to advance their education and improve social mobility. In its inaugural pilot, the College is projecting an enrollment of fifty students for academic years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023.

*A new Aviation Maintenance Technician Program at **Olive-Harvey College's** Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics Center in Pullman, Illinois, is a stackable credential career pathway that is open to current Chicago Public Schools' high school juniors.*

Kaskaskia College (KC) has collaborated with area high schools to offer the College Now program. The College Now program is a unique and innovative solution to the dual credit losses suffered by juniors and seniors because of dual credit cuts at district high schools. The program was piloted during the Fall 2020 semester. Members of KC staff, faculty, and high school administrators and guidance counselors have come together each semester to plan a regional schedule of classes offering college credit to area high school students by attending classes along with college students. The KC Foundation has funded this initiative. Students are responsible only for textbook costs and course lab fees. This gives high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to take classes tuition free. The program has grown from a small initial group involving eight students and 24 credit hours to include 34 students and 106 credit hours, all in Career and Technical Education programs designed to help students earn their degree as quickly as possible and be ready to join the workforce.

The Dual Credit Access Incentive was approved by the **Lake Land College** Board of Trustees and implemented in Fall 2020. The initiative, which is a collaboration between Lake Land College and in-district K-12 institutions, provides equitable access to dual credit courses to all eligible high

school students by allowing high school districts to apply for a waiver of the dual credit fee for students who qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. Students are referred through their high school Dual Credit Coordinator and are accepted into the program through the Dual Credit Program office. Upon referral and acceptance into the program, the cost of the student Dual Credit Program fee of \$18.42 per credit hour is waived to the school. The school, in turn, waives that amount to the student. In the academic year 2020-2021, the program served 161 students in the fall and 200 students in the spring. The academic year 2021-2022 is on a similar track with 175 students referred to the program. As awareness of the program develops, the Dual Credit Program expects to see 64-99 new students enroll per semester. On average, dual credit students take 8.2 credit hours. It is expected that this program will increase access to higher education and increase the likelihood that students taking these courses will continue their higher education.

*For equity outreach, **Heartland Community College** added an Associate Director to the Early College Opportunities team to help guide and sustain efforts for underserved students to access, navigate, and leverage early college opportunities while they are in high school.*

Heartland Community College (HCC) has experienced significant and sustained growth in the number of students enrolling in and successfully completing dual credit courses through the HCC College NOW program; additionally, the College has been working with Early College partners to expand through two initiatives: Success

Education Expansion and Corporate Sponsorships. For equity outreach, HCC added an Associate Director to the Early College Opportunities (ECO) team, in January of 2021, to help guide and sustain efforts for underserved students to access, navigate, and leverage early college opportunities while they are in high school. Furthermore, HCC Success Education course offerings have been expanded in the high schools, as that curriculum has been aligned with the Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) guidelines established by the Illinois State Board of Education. HCC has also hosted Success Education Summits explaining the philosophy and objectives of the Success Education courses. Additionally, the ECO team works with corporate partners, such as Country Financial and State Farm, who serve as financial sponsors and mentors to well-deserving students from underserved populations who also demonstrate financial need. As a result of these ongoing efforts, the College has seen an increase in the number of students from underrepresented groups engaged in an academic or career pipeline with HCC. There has also been an increase in students from underserved groups taking Success Education Courses over the last two years.

In the spring of 2021, **Wabash Valley College (WVC)** implemented a guided process to implement Quantitative Literacy and Statistics with four area high schools for the development of Transitional Math (TM) Curriculum through a curriculum partnership. The goal was to partner with area high school faculty to ensure more underrepresented students are eligible for college-level mathematics coursework before they enroll at WVC. Another goal was to develop TM Portability to ensure easy transition into one of WVC's Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. After local meetings with stakeholders, an action plan was developed to provide high school seniors a pathway to refresh their math skills and qualify for college-level coursework. Data shows underrepresented groups are more likely to be underqualified or unqualified for college-level mathematics. This affects CTE students disproportionately because they often lack the confidence to enroll in transfer-level math coursework. WVC worked with faculty to develop a

course and submitted the required documents to Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) for Transitional Math Portability for Mt. Carmel, Edwards County, Lawrenceville, and Grayville high schools. WVC provided TM instructor manuals and TM student textbooks and helped faculty map the competencies to the units of the textbook. College mathematics faculty have also provided support for assessment and methodologies to high school faculty. ICCB approved WVC's TM curriculum for fiscal year 2022. The curriculum structure WVC helped develop with area high school faculty is rigorous and high quality and allows faculty to focus on teaching and student success by having outcomes mapped. Assessment data will be used to track the success rates in WVC gateway mathematics courses such as MTH 1104 Quantitative Reasoning and MTH 1131 Introduction to Statistics.

Scholarships

The Supporting Emerging Educator Development (S.E.E.D.) scholarship seeks to increase the pipeline of educators in Chicago from underrepresented backgrounds.

Harry S Truman College, together with the other City Colleges of Chicago (CCC), launched the Supporting Emerging Educator Development (S.E.E.D.) scholarship in Fall 2021. The S.E.E.D. scholarship seeks to increase the pipeline of educators in Chicago from underrepresented backgrounds. It targets Chicago Public Schools (CPS) graduates and

includes undocumented students and students from CPS charter schools. By focusing on these groups, the scholarship program will not only diversify the educator talent pipeline, but also increase the number of students of color earning a credential. A scholarship of up to \$3,000 is provided to cover tuition, books, class materials, and other necessities. The program also includes individual wrap-around support services tailored to each student. There are two tracks: Teach Chicago Tomorrow and Emerging Educators. The Teach Chicago track, only available to full-time students, is a transfer partnership between CCC and Illinois State University (ISU). Students enrolled in this track will take classes that start at CCC and continue to ISU. Students in this track will earn associate and bachelor's degrees in four years. The Emerging Educators track, available to both full-time and part-time students, allows students to earn their associate degree in an Education Pathway in three years. This track is ideal for part-time students who may need more time to complete. Both tracks include a six-week summer bootcamp (with a summer stipend provided) that prepares students for the academic year with ongoing supports and check-ins throughout the year. For the first academic year, the program has recruited 38 participants, with a goal of recruiting 100 students per academic year. For the academic year 2021-2022, the S.E.E.D. scholarship program had a fall-to-spring retention rate of 75 percent. At least 85 percent of students are on-track to earning their credential within the set-time frame. Finally, 95 percent of students have completed their career pathway plans. The program is highly diverse with more than 53 percent of students identifying as Hispanic/Latino and another 28 percent identifying as African American.

College of DuPage (COD) implemented the COD Succeeds Scholarship in Fall 2019 as a reaction to the COVID pandemic that has brought financial uncertainty to more families than ever before, drawing more community college students into a "grey zone" between full Pell eligibility and tuition affordability. The COD Succeeds Scholarship is designed to provide scholarship support to underrepresented students who, by prior income eligibility alone, may not have otherwise qualified

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for other financial assistance awards. Priority is given to first-generation, minority, and veteran students, and awards are made through an application process emphasizing need. The COD Succeeds scholarships have become a helping hand to enable struggling students to overcome financial barriers, focus on academic success, and become productive members of their communities. Since Fall 2019, COD Succeeds funding has been awarded to 344 students in a broad range of intended programs of study. Student success and persistence across a three-semester awardee population (Fall 2019, Spring 2020, and Fall 2021 cohorts) has generally been strong. As of late Fall 2021, 22 percent of awardees had completed a degree or certificate, 39.5 percent were still enrolled (as might be expected within a less than two-year timeframe), and only 29.5 percent had status unknown.

To help retain first-generation, low-income students through financial and technology support, **John Wood Community College** implemented the Pathfinder Scholarship Program in January 2021. Fifty first-generation, low-income students received \$1,000 for tuition or books and 30 laptops were borrowed by students for the Spring 2021 semester. In addition, students in the Pathfinder Scholarship program were asked to meet twice a month with instructors during the Spring 2021 semester to improve retention. Academic advisors had a total of four to ten meetings with their engaged scholarship recipients. Ninety percent of students received a C or better in total courses. Thirty-four students returned for Fall 2021.

Parkland Science Scholars is a new program supported by a five-year grant from the National Science Foundation that seeks to address low retention, graduation, and summer drop-out rates for low-income students in the natural sciences.

Parkland Science Scholars is supported by a five-year grant from the National Science Foundation and seeks to address **Parkland College's** low retention, graduation, and summer drop-out rates for low-income students in the natural sciences. The program utilizes a combination of five strategies to address the academic performance of the participants--faculty mentoring, peer mentoring, summer research opportunities, club participation, and a Science Scholars seminar course.

By utilizing these strategies combined with scholarships (160 semester-long scholarships), the project will empower a total of 40 full-time, low-income students to work towards graduation and transfer to a four-year university. Participants meet with their faculty mentor at least eight times each semester and twice during the summer. They also interact with STEM graduate students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Second-year participants mentor first-year participants. Students learn how to apply to National Science Foundation Research Experiences for Undergraduate programs. Each semester participants are enrolled in one-credit hour course together. This course serves as a mechanism for creating community and facilitating peer-mentoring as well as an introduction to research and careers in science, a preparation for the students' summer research experiences, and a preparation for transfer. Parkland Science Scholars seeks to have 40 participants minimally reach a spring-to-fall retention rate of 90 percent, fall-to-fall retention rate of 85 percent, and 150 percent-time graduation/transfer rate of 75 percent. Additionally, Parkland Science Scholars seeks to have a minority student participation rate of 40 percent. The first cohort of 10 Parkland Science Scholars students started in August 2021 and will continue through Spring 2026. The fall-to-spring retention rate was 100 percent. Eighty percent of participants are first-generation college students, 20 percent are students with disabilities, 60

percent are nontraditional age students, and 10 percent are students from underrepresented minorities.

Workforce Development

South Suburban College (SSC) has received a second award of \$1.2 million for the Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) grant for the following objectives: (1) 200 participants from District 510 are enrolled in the project of which 60 percent are African American; (2) 80 percent of project participants are awarded Career Certificates with one year of project enrollment; (3) 100 percent of project participants are provided employment assistance; (4) 100 percent of participants identify two or more financial or educational barriers that have been removed as a result of project engagement; and (5) 100 percent of participants engaged in comprehensive student support services. To achieve these objectives the project has adopted a case management model with wrap-around services/activities to support students from recruitment through employment. Recognizing the various pathways to employment in high-demand careers, this project focused on employment sectors that have identified workforce gaps in Nursing, Patient Care Technician, Contact Tracing Community Health Worker, Solar Photovoltaic Installer, Forklift Operator, and Barber Technician. The majority of the objectives have been met or exceeded.

The goal of the Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) is to accelerate the time for the participants to enter and succeed in postsecondary education/training programs that lead to full-time employment in high skilled, high wage, and in-demand occupations paying at least 30 percent above the regional living wage or be on a pathway to a family sustaining wage.

Malcolm X College's (MXC) Project MPACT is a Workforce Equity Initiative, implemented in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021, targeting African American students who reside in eight community areas on Chicago's West Side, recruiting up to 195 students in seven MXC career programs—Community Health Worker, Emergency Medical Technician, Cybersecurity, Swift Coding, Personal Fitness Trainer, Phlebotomy, and Sterile Processing. This program consists of a comprehensive integrated experience incorporating career planning (exploration), preparation (classroom, clinical, and co-curricular experiences), and development (ongoing professional learning). Project participants are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in their chosen career paths. MXC removed all financial barriers to completion. Participants received first dollar scholarships to cover tuition costs as well as stipends and reimbursements for uniforms, background checks, and drug tests required by programs and clinical sites. MPACT students received assistance for transportation and vouchers to cover book and school supply purchases. MXC created sustainability and infrastructure improvements for programs and served 218 individuals in fiscal year 2021, which exceeded the project's initial goal of 195 students. These MPACT participants saw nearly a 20 percent increase in pass rates in their programs.

Kaskaskia College is a first-year recipient of the Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) grant through the Illinois Community College Board. The grant period is from November 1, 2020, through March 31, 2022. An application was recently approved to continue the program through December 31, 2022. The purpose of the grant is to create, support, or expand short-term (year or less) workforce

training opportunities in high-need communities focused on specific sectors with identified workforce gaps. The targeted population must include African American participants representing a minimum of 60 percent of the population served by the grant. To meet the objectives of the grant, three staff members, including a Project Lead, a Coach, and a Recruiter, were hired to carry out the goals. The role of the Coach is to oversee the student caseload and to provide wrap-around student services, as well as act as the advisor for choosing programs and enrolling in courses. The Recruiter is responsible for recruiting students into the programs and working closely with the college's recruitment office and the WEI Coach. Recruitment began in March 2020, and to date, 63 students have enrolled in the program. A goal of the WEI program is that students are making a wage that is 30 percent above the living wage for Kaskaskia's area which is \$16.60. Staff have partnered with several area community organizations including the Committee on Reducing Racial Disparity in Employment (CORRDE), the Centralia Youth Center, and the Restore, Reinvest and Renew Grant Committee in Centralia, Illinois. Several presentations for promotion of and recruitment into the program were made at local events as well as churches and high schools.

Wilbur Wright College implemented Wright JobHire, a Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI), in fiscal year 2020. To qualify, potential students must reside in one of four zip codes, be 18-45 years old, have a high school diploma or high school equivalency degree, and have no prior debts with the City Colleges of Chicago. Participating students enroll in a free, short-term program (lasting no longer than two semesters) that prepares them for employment in a high-demand field. Wright JobHire allows the College to provide full tuition coverage for qualified students admitted into one of the following fields of study: CNC Machining, Cybersecurity, Networking, Web Development, Criminal Justice, Cannabis Processing Technician, and Solar Panel Installation. Wright JobHire set the goal of 150 participants in its most recent quarter; to date the College has enrolled 137 (91 percent to goal). Of the current participants (N = 137) 67 self-identify as African American or Multiracial. These numbers represent 48 percent of the enrolled participants, and the College continues to be intentional about actively recruiting African American students to meet the 60 percent minimum goal. Sixty-two students completed, which represents 68 percent of the goal. Employment data captured at the end of the semester shows 41 completers employed. Wright continues to grow its program, recently adding a new employer, as well as working to expand the number of programs eligible under the WEI grant.

The purpose of the Open Door, Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) implemented at **Lincoln Land Community College** (LLCC) in November 2020, is to train individuals in occupations leading to immediate employment including Basic Nurse Assistant, Pharmacy Tech, Dental Assistant, Truck Driver Training, Welding, and HVAC. WEI, funded through an Illinois Community College Board grant, aims to serve 150 low-income students, 75 percent of whom must be African American. The WEI will provide short-term, post-secondary education/training programs designed to help participants gain employment in high-wage and in-demand occupations. The strategy for helping students includes removing barriers that otherwise will inhibit their ability and determination to complete the program. WEI students receive free tuition; books and supplies; uniform and program materials; background check, drug screening, and immunization fee assistance; paid for credentialing and licensing test; transportation and childcare assistance; \$10 per class and tutoring hour stipend; tutoring; LLCC outstanding tuition balance waiver; loanable technology support; career and employment support; essential skills training; and referrals, food, housing, legal, and instructional support. WEI staff also meet with each student regularly to discuss the potential

barriers stated on their application as well as their Career Coach assessment. This information is instrumental to staff when completing the students' Personal Development Plan (PDP). The PDP outlines the students' short-term and long-term personal, academic, and career goals. This is also an opportunity for staff to engage with students to build a rapport and establish a strong relationship that can assist in student retention. After graduation/program completion students are contacted monthly through mail, email or a phone call for follow-up to keep up-to-date on their employment. Out of the 701 applicants, 368 completed the application process, and 239 have been enrolled. Eighty-one percent of participants are African American. Seventy percent have completed or are on target to complete on or before the end of the funding cycle, and 92 percent are employed.

Highland Community College developed a part-time nursing pathway with the goal to serve nontraditional students with the outcome of increasing the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) pass rates. This pathway was aimed to meet the needs of students who may be single working parents or second degree-seeking students. It allows students to work during the day and attend classes in the late afternoon or early evening. It gives students more time to complete the program by dividing the curriculum in order for the students to take fewer classes in the traditional semester format. The part-time pathway was first offered in Spring 2016, with its first graduating class in Spring 2018. Students have provided feedback that this pathway allows for a better personal, professional, and educational balance, allowing them time to work and provide for their families while earning a degree that will allow for career advancement. Regardless of pathway, students have continued access to faculty members, tutors, and student services on campus. Whether full-time or part-time, the students are taught by the same faculty. Faculty adapt their schedules to the students, allowing for continuity of education and continued support in and out of the classroom. In addition, some part-time, evening nursing students have utilized the CCAMPIS (Child Care Access Means Parents in School) childcare program located on campus. The CCAMPIS provider extended the service hours to accommodate this group of students.

Highland Community College developed a part-time nursing pathway with the goal to serve nontraditional students who may be single working parents or second degree-seeking students.

Working with fifteen local unions, the Highway Construction Careers Training Program, which was implemented in September 2007 at **Lincoln Land Community College**, provides a much needed avenue into union apprenticeships. The target population for this program includes women, minorities, ex-offenders, and hard-to-serve populations, such as the long-term unemployed. The program is set up to allow students to complete 450 hours of training in a four-month period and transition into employment. The selective admissions process includes drug screens before and during the program. The Program Coordinator works with the students to overcome barriers that would impede success, including learning disabilities, transportation, childcare and housing issues. All students receive National Certifications in CPR/First Aid, Forklift, OSHA 10, Aerial/Scissor Lift, Flagger, Asbestos, and Lead Based Paint Removal. Qualified Students also receive CDL training. Students are given stipends to assist with cost during training and are provided tools and boots as well as reimbursement of union application fees. After graduation from the program students are contacted monthly through mail, email, or a phone call to keep them up to date on new employment opportunities. Out of 38 students who started the program, 36 students completed

the program (95 percent). Sixteen students were African American Males, and eleven students were Females. Sixteen students had a felony background. Thirty-four students are employed in a training related industry, and 23 of those students are in a union/union apprenticeship program.

*The 3CP Program offered at **Moraine Valley Community College** is part of the Scholarship for Service program to prepare highly qualified cybersecurity professionals to meet the nation's cybersecurity workforce needs.*

The purpose of the IT Security Specialist 3CP CyberCorp Program offered at **Moraine Valley Community College** is to prepare highly qualified cybersecurity professionals to meet the nation's cybersecurity workforce needs. This initiative is a federally funded program that Moraine Valley was awarded in

October 2018 with three other community college programs across the nation. The 3CP program is part of the Scholarship for Service (SFS) program to help increase the number of accomplished graduates into the national cyber workforce. As participants of this program, all scholars are awarded \$25,000 subsistence to attend school full-time. This scholarship includes all tuition, books, supplies, and the cost of applicable industry certification exams. The program also includes funding for academic coaching and program administration. Before students are paid each month, individual academic progress is verified by connecting with college instructors and requesting an academic report on each awardee. This process allows intervention to promote academic success since all participants are required to maintain a 3.0 GPA and attend weekly mentoring events. The scholars participate in two federal job fair events each year. Graduates must participate in a summer internship and serve in a federal information security related position for at least two years after graduation. These experiences have included the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Argonne National Laboratory, and Cyber Infrastructure and Security Agency (CSIA). The program at Moraine Valley has targeted recruitment toward women, minority, and US military veterans/family members. The grant funded eight students, including four scholarships for women/minority students. One candidate is in her last semester in the program. Two candidates have now successfully completed the program with one already being placed in a federal job. All students have maintained a 3.5 GPA or above.

The Industrial Job Skills Training (IJST) Program at **Richland Community College** was designed to meet the needs of the local manufacturing industry struggling to hire and retain employees for entry-level manufacturing jobs. The IJST program was implemented in September 2018 and incorporates both skills training (welding, machining, hand tools, blueprint reading, forklift and crane, OSHA, and first aid/CPR) and essential work skills such as timeliness, communication, and teamwork. Individuals are given demerit points for tardiness, unprofessional appearance, absences, no call/no show, unallowed cell phone usage, and possible safety violations. Individuals are given a random drug screen near the end of the program, which provides them time to burn previous drugs out of their systems, but if they fail the drug screen they are removed from the program. During the final two weeks of the program, local employers are invited to campus to conduct interviews. Richland has completed 14 community cohorts of this training along with two cohorts that focused on serving individuals who were in the local Crossings Healthcare Facility for detoxification and recovery. Almost 70 percent of the participants have felony records. Since the implementation of the program, seventy of eighty-two completers have received employment at above Illinois minimum wage. Most recent data for July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021, include thirty-eight completers out of fifty-one enrolled with a 92 percent employment rate for those who completed the trainings during that time. Richland is in the process of hiring a Coordinator for this

program and a companion construction training to expand job-seeker opportunities. Recently, the training was updated to prepare individuals to test for the SME's Certified Manufacturing Associate (CMfgA).

The objective of The Highway Construction Careers Program (HCCTP) at **Southwestern Illinois College** is to increase minority, female, and other underrepresented group participation in union trades. The program was instituted in April 2010 and is designed to serve students from St. Clair County and surrounding communities. The focused union trades are Carpenters, Iron Workers, Laborers, Painters, and Operating Engineers. The primary goals of the program are providing fundamentals to students desiring a career in the trades, building and maintaining external partnerships with targeted communities to help facilitate student transition into the workforce, engaging in outreach activities to positively impact enrollment growth, and maintaining student retention. The program provides an opportunity to obtain hands-on experience in a mentoring environment that allows for professional growth. It also affords individuals with past offenses the opportunity to receive a second chance. Students receive paid attendance stipends, individual coaching, and a variety of career resources to include career fairs, resume preparation, and online job portals. There was a total of 43 students enrolled into the program for the targeted year. Twelve percent of enrolled students were women who all successfully completed the program. Eighty-four percent of enrolled students were minorities. Out of these students, 71 percent completed the program.

The Still I Rise project at **Olive-Harvey College** (OHC), both a Predominately Black Institution and emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution, provides opportunity for education and social mobility to marginalized individuals with prior violence involvement. In keeping with the commitment of investing in the community, OHC is taking a holistic restorative approach in developing the Still I Rise project. By partnering with the City of Chicago, OHC endeavors to prevent violence and decrease cases of recidivism by providing access to educational and financial opportunities in the thriving cannabis industry. The Still I Rise project employs transformative wraparound services—directly driving recruitment, retention, and completion. The initiative centers on the inclusion of individuals with limited or no access to well-paying, sustainable career opportunities due to prior legal barriers. Students are provided with transportation and academic support; mentoring, empowerment, resume development, interviewing, soft skills, and job retention; four-week work-based learning opportunity within the cannabis industry; expungement services; participation stipend; and job placement services. The program was piloted in the summer of 2021, and fully launched in January 2022. As related to race/ethnicity, 96 percent of the participants identify as African American—with 89 percent identifying as Male and 11 percent as Female. The majority of the participants are nontraditional college-aged students, while 40 percent are of traditional college age—25 years or younger. During the pilot the Still I Rise project yielded a completion rate of 63 percent sans the complete package of support. With the full support deployed, the Still I Rise project will increase in completion and show significant job placement rates.

The Weekend Warriors Program in Manufacturing Engineering Technology is a partnership between **Richard J. Daley College** (Daley College) and the Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) that provides the opportunity to address violence in the southwest side of Chicago. The Weekend Warriors program is an intensive violence reduction program designed to engage individuals who have had encounters with the criminal justice system. The program is structured to deliver an intensive advanced manufacturing curriculum and career-focused activities during

the weekends and proactively addresses incidents of high violence, which usually take place on weekends. At the end of the program students earn a basic certificate in advanced manufacturing. Education elements led by Daley College include welding, blueprint reading, materials and robotics as well as foundation skill development in math, writing and computer literacy. Critical elements of the success of this program led by IMAN staff include participant recruitment, case management, coordination, counseling, transportation, meals and supplies as well as artistic and musical therapy programming. The first cohort of this program ran in the summer of 2019 with 12 students. Based on a formative assessment, it has undergone some programmatic changes to best address the needs of program participants. The second iteration of this program was conducted in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 with 14 and 12 students, respectively.

The purpose of the **Southwestern Illinois College** Youth Employment and Support Services (YESS) program is to provide minorities, females, and other underrepresented groups with educational and employment services. The program serves students from St. Clair County and surrounding communities. The focus of the program is to provide hands-on experience and mentoring as well as to assist students with identifying a successful path, build and maintain external partnerships with targeted communities to help facilitate student transition into the workforce, and engage in outreach activities to positively impact enrollment growth. Participants are provided professional clothing for interviews and job placement. Gas cards are provided to assist participants with transportation. They also receive checks in the amount of \$100 for obtaining their high school equivalency. Due to the targeted population, the program's success can be measured by the number of participants who achieve their high school equivalency, enroll in higher education, or obtain stable employment. Of the 25 students who were successfully enrolled in the program for the targeted year, the program had an overall success rate of 100 percent.

STRATEGIES IN RETAINING UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS ON THEIR PATHWAY TO COMPLETION

Technology Lending Program/Loan Library

With the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in Spring 2020, **Danville Area Community College** (DACC) identified the emerging need for reliable technology as all courses were moved from in-person to online and on-campus computer labs were limited or closed. To address student need, retention, and overall success, DACC utilized COVID-19 federal funds to purchase equipment for students to borrow while they were enrolled in classes. From the overwhelming demand and success of the initial pilot in Spring 2020, the Technology Equipment Loan Program (TELP) was formally introduced to all students in Summer and Fall 2020. The College quickly recognized the fact that, with or without a pandemic, TELP is needed to help minimize the performance gaps between underserved and under resourced students and the general student population. TELP supports students by giving them access to technology such as laptops, webcams, headsets, and personal Wi-Fi devices for reliable Internet service at no cost to the student. Over 300 students have utilized TELP, borrowing 389 pieces of equipment.

*The Technology Equipment Loan Program at **Danville Area Community College** helps minimize the performance gaps between underserved and under resourced students and the general student population.*

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Forty-five percent of the students were from underrepresented ethnic groups in the community. This number is more than double the percentage of the overall minority populations enrolled. Seventy-eight percent of the students had some financial need, and 70 percent were first-generation college students. Fewer students dropped classes in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 compared to Spring 2020.

Prior to COVID-19, **Heartland Community College** students without computer and Internet access had to utilize one of the computer labs on campus or in the community to complete homework, access online courses, and other online College activity. When all courses were moved online in March 2020, the College started a technology loan program of Chromebooks and hotspots. Since that time, the College has formalized the loaning program and is supporting the program which will continue to serve students at Heartland beyond the pandemic. Faculty and staff know to send students in need to Success Connections coaches. Students request the loan via an application created by Heartland's IT department, and the application is routed to the Success Connections department for approval. The IT department prepares the device(s) for loan, monitors their return, and maintains the equipment. The loaning of devices initially allowed students to continue their studies without much interruption. The College was able to process and loan over 100 devices during that first semester to both credit students and adult education students. The College loaned 148 devices to students during the fall of 2020 and another 67 devices to students (students who had a device in Fall 2020 were allowed to extend their loan into the Spring semester as long as they were enrolled in classes).

Lincoln Trail College provided additional supports for low-income students during the COVID-19 pandemic by increasing the range of the College's Wi-Fi network; providing a technology check-out program; increasing communication between faculty, students, and the retention coordinator; and connecting students with the financial aid office.

In the spring of 2020, the Illinois Governor instituted work-from-home conditions and **Lincoln Trail College** (LTC) moved courses to a primarily virtual format. In rural settings such as LTC's, the students were specifically impacted by access. For students to be successful in a virtual format, there are many needs that must be met. LTC provided additional supports for low-income students during the COVID-19 pandemic by increasing the range of the College's Wi-Fi network; providing a

technology check-out program; increasing communication between faculty, students, and the retention coordinator; and connecting students with the financial aid office. This retention practice began in the spring of 2020 and continues at this time. LTC provided access for students by making available a new laptop checkout program with 12 computers during the academic year 2020-2021. Wi-Fi bandwidth was expanded by 100MB on LTC campus, and external access points were added to make sure Wi-Fi could be accessed more broadly across campus. LTC maintained improved communication through progress reporting for the academic year 2020-2021 in comparison to pre-COVID-19 numbers (159 percent increase from the academic year 2019-2020). LTC was also able to assist students with more financial costs during the COVID-19 pandemic. An increase of \$250,000 of aid was awarded during the academic year 2020-2021. The number of students awarded financial aid was increased by six percent from the academic year 2019-2020 to academic year 2020-2021.

John A. Logan College created a loan library to remove barriers for students in July 2020. The cost of materials, supplies, books, and technology often prohibits students from staying on their path to completing a course or program. Creating a library of resources allows students to continue moving forward in their class or program without the financial burden and provides them with the course material needed on the first day of classes. The loan library consists of books, uniforms, toolkits, general lab materials for various courses, computers, stethoscopes, and cosmetology kits. These items can be checked out for a day, week, or the entire semester. The loan checkout process is quick and easy for students. Computers are the newest addition to the library, which was a great benefit during the coronavirus pandemic. The Perkins grant served 5,112 students (duplicated count) in fiscal year 2021. The loan library served 30 students. The College continues to make classroom visits to ensure students know available resources when they need help with class materials and supplies.

In the spring of 2020, **Lewis and Clark Community College** was forced to move classes to remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For many students, not only was the transition from face-to-face instruction to remote learning stressful, but the lack of technology and/or the loss of employment or reduction in work hours would cause students higher levels of distress. In a response to technology challenges brought about by the pandemic, the College used Perkins Grant funds to purchase 20 laptop computers for loan to Career and Technical Education (CTE) students via the Perkins Student Support Project. Likewise, the Perkins Project purchased some webcams to loan to CTE students who had laptops or home computers without web cameras needed for remote learning. Also, in fiscal year 2021, in response to the pandemic, the College wrote into its Perkins Grant Application an initiative that would permit CTE students who were negatively impacted by COVID-19, by the loss of job, loss of hours/wages, or parental or spousal loss of job/hours, to be eligible for Perkins Project services. This initiative was approved by ICCB for fiscal year 2021. Beginning in the Fall 2020 semester, the Perkins Project was able to loan CTE students, who were negatively impacted by COVID-19 through loss of employment or reduction of hours, required career-specific textbooks/eBooks, provide some required career-specific supplies/materials, and/or loan them a laptop or webcam, even though they were technically not considered economically disadvantaged since they were not receiving financial aid based on need or receiving Public Assistance in their name.

In the spring of 2020 when the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic forced colleges and universities to shift classes and services remotely, students' access to critically important on-campus resources was drastically reduced or became temporarily unavailable. In order to successfully retain students and to ensure they complete their semester **Morton College** started the free laptop program in the fall of 2020 and continues to offer it. The college used CARES funds to purchase laptops to issue to students immediately.

*The laptop program at **Morton College** is not a rental for one specific semester, rather students are able to own the laptop for their entire college journey, if they meet requirements to keep the laptop.*

Students enrolled in the Fall 2020, Spring 2021, and Summer 2021 semesters were able to qualify for the free laptop program. The qualifications were to enroll in a minimum of three credit hours for the semester in which they were applying and complete a simple application. The program is unique as the laptop program is not a rental for one specific semester, rather students are able to own the laptop for their entire college journey, if they meet requirements to keep the laptop

(maintain an overall 2.0 grade point average, and enroll in the upcoming semester, unless students were graduating). Students were able to pick up a laptop from the college or curbside a week prior to the start of classes. The laptop initiative issued a total of 407 laptops to students in fiscal year 2021, serving a large group of underrepresented students. Seventy-eight percent of laptop recipients were Hispanic/Latino, and eight percent were African American. Further evidence shows that students who received a laptop were 20 percentage points more likely to be retained from Fall 2020 to Spring 2021. Students approved for a laptop had an 88 percent retention rate compared to a 68 percent college-wide retention rate.

Remote Learning Initiatives

In the fall of 2020, college campuses around the country were trying to navigate how to best handle the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Wabash Valley College** attempted to mitigate the spread by moving to remote learning from Thanksgiving through the end of the Fall semester. The Academic

*To ease the transition to online learning in the fall of 2020, **Wabash Valley College** organized an event called **Survivor: Remote Learning Edition**.*

Success Center realized this would be a difficult transition for many of the students in the underrepresented groups. Therefore, an event called *Survivor: Remote Learning Edition* was organized for November 4, 2020, to give students a quick but informative overview of the best and easiest ways to stay on top of their assignments once the move to completely online learning was made. The event was advertised on social media and via fliers around campus, with the incentive of being entered into a drawing for various prizes if students were to attend. Subject matter experts were consulted in the areas of research, learning management systems (LMS), file transferring, and study habits. Each expert contributed PowerPoint slides and presented their material to the 50 students in attendance. The students were then given a handout with a contact number for the Academic Success Center as well as a link to access the recording of the presentation online, in the event they needed to revisit how to do something while working remotely. According to the testimonies of faculty and students the presentation was helpful and informative. Faculty reported that students seemed to do well finishing up the semester online. The Academic Success Center was satisfied with the positive feedback from the event.

The purpose of Rapid Registration, which was implemented from July through September 2020 at **Prairie State College**, was to provide students with additional options to receive services while still maintaining the safety of students and staff during the early days of pandemic when the college was operating virtually. Rapid Registration also allowed students to receive services from multiple departments in a single location, either a drive through service, which allowed students to receive services from their vehicle, or a walk-in service, which operated on an appointment basis. Students received services from the Advising, Business, Enrollment, and Financial Aid offices. Staff assisting students at both the drive-through and walk-in venues utilized personal protective equipment, hand sanitizer, and wipes to disinfect surfaces. Managers were directed to rotate staff members working in the area to decrease exposure to the elements and to the general environment. A total of 2,793 services were provided to students, far exceeding the college's goal of providing 807 services. Based on survey results, 96 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the services, and 96 percent indicated having accomplished their intended purpose. The

College accomplished a 20.65 percent increase in headcount and a 22.85 percent increase in credit-hour enrollment during this time, due to Rapid Registration and other initiatives.

In response to the pandemic in Spring 2020, **Harold Washington College (HWC)**, like many higher education institutions across the country, quickly shifted in-person courses to remote courses. Students who were comfortable with the traditional classroom experience were now struggling to adapt to remote courses and navigate distance learning technology. In a pulse survey administered to students at the end of Spring 2020 by Hanover Research on behalf of City Colleges of Chicago, 54 percent of HWC students that responded indicated they had never taken an online/remote course prior to Spring 2020. Furthermore, the majority of HWC students felt less motivated to study for their online/remote courses (66 percent). Consequently, HWC received a grant from the Education Equity Fund that allowed to plan a platform called an Online Academic Support Center (“The Loop”), with the goal of providing all new incoming students, as part of their First Year Experience, resources on how to navigate distance learning technology. The platform was implemented in Fall 2021. The original goals and intended outcomes were achieved; however, some adjustments were made to the original plan due to the evolving needs of HWC students, and to the accessibility of resources. The original goal was to focus on academic support, which was later expanded to include all student services. Another aspect of the original plan that also evolved over time was the peer mentor component. It was scaled down to focus on students enrolled in developmental education courses who needed additional support in the virtual environment, and it proved to be highly successful. The College plans on gathering data through surveys and focus groups to better understand how successful the project is and what additional resources are needed to meet students’ expectations.

Emergency Financial Assistance/Financial Relief Initiatives

The purpose of the Higher Education Emergency Relief (HEERF) Call Campaign, which was launched during the Fall 2021 semester, was to remove obstacles to enrollment at **Elgin Community College (ECC)** by using Spring 2021 HEERF funds as well as a proactive outreach to encourage students to continue their education. As ECC is a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), the Campaign helped a high percentage of students from underrepresented populations to persist toward degree completion. Representatives from Student Financial Services, Admissions and Recruitment, and the Student Success Center connected with students to convey the impact of the elimination of their existing student balances and educated students on their next steps to address registration, Financial Aid, or Academic Advising questions. Once HEERF funds were applied to existing student balances accrued during the COVID-19 pandemic, ECC added a supplemental goal of extending outreach to help students understand the impact of the HEERF funding. The financial relief—while often quite significant with the highest individual total of \$5,144—was only one benefit the campaign provided. Other benefits included providing impacted students a pathway toward completion of their educational degree/program, information on resources and services available to re-enroll, and targeted, one-to-one outreach that educated students about the elimination of their accrued balances. The HEERF Call Campaign provided financial relief and eliminated a financial barrier to enrollment for 719

*The Higher Education Emergency Relief (HEERF) Call Campaign at **Elgin Community College** provided financial relief and eliminated a financial barrier to enrollment for 719 students.*

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students. Of those students, 112 identified as African American, and 294 identified as Hispanic/Latino, together representing 57 percent of the students benefiting from the elimination of their existing student balances. Of those students enrolled in the Spring 2022 semester, 60 students blocked by a financial barrier were able to enroll for the Spring 2022 semester. Of those students, 11 identified as African American and 26 identified as Hispanic/Latino; thus, over 61 percent of these students were from underrepresented populations.

Morton College implemented the Student Emergency Fund (SEF) in the beginning of Fall 2018. The fund aims to assist students facing unforeseen emergency situations with financial assistance to ensure economic barriers do not jeopardize their ability to successfully complete their education. Emergency funds are provided in the form of grants that do not have to be repaid to assist with non-academic needs such as food, childcare, clothing, car repairs, books, housing, transportation and more. Ultimately, the goal of the program is to prevent students from leaving college and help them complete or graduate from their program of study. Students complete an online application, short essay and submit documentation (if necessary). Applications are reviewed by a committee composed of staff and faculty. The grant typically ranges from \$100-\$500 and is issued in check form directly to the student. Students may only receive the fund once during their Morton College studies, unless further emergencies arise. The fund has now entered its fourth year providing equitable access to students who are facing extreme financial challenges. It has served close to 300 students and issued over \$56,000. In fiscal year 2021, a total of 40 students received the student emergency fund issuing a grand total of \$14,642. A total of 73 percent of student recipients were female with an overall retention rate of 89 percent from the fall-to-spring semester, 19 percentage points higher than the college average for all female students (70 percent). The racial/ethnic background of recipients was 80 percent Latino/a and 13 percent African American. Hispanic/Latino and African American student recipients had an overall retention rate of 86 percent.

Kishwaukee College implemented strategies to reduce the cost of instructional materials during the Spring 2020 and Summer 2020 terms. Library Services worked with the Kishwaukee College Foundation (KCF) to pilot an incentive program for faculty to adopt or create Open Education Resources (OER) for their classes, eliminating the cost of textbooks to students. The Foundation provided an

*To address financial barriers to attendance, **Kishwaukee College** committed to incentivizing faculty to adopt or develop Open Education Resources (OER) and to scaling the current Career and Technical Education Textbook Loan Program into an Instructional Materials Loan Program.*

Innovation Grant of \$20,000 to provide stipends to cover the costs of training and OER development to faculty members. Through an application process, nine faculty members were chosen and provided with an introduction workshop describing the timeline to accomplish the steps and activities involved in implementing OERs into courses, as well as information about OER access available through the state Library consortium. All selected faculty agreed to use OER in their courses in the 2021-2022 academic year, to contribute created content as open access, and to disseminate what they learned with other faculty by providing a presentation, a webpage, a video, or other innovative channels. In addition, combining KCF and American Relief Act funding sources, the Career and Technical Education Textbook Loan program expanded to include required books for all transfer courses, scientific and graphing calculators required for STEM courses, and

at-home science microscopes to support online science courses. A duplicate set of materials was purchased to house in the Tutoring Services Center for use during tutoring and academic support workshops. In fiscal year 2021, 952 students were loaned instructional materials for a financial cost reduction to students of \$842,866. In the same time frame, 1,514 students were served with Open Educational Resources for a financial cost reduction to students of \$74,012.

In 2020, Congress passed a stimulus bill that provided nearly \$4.3 billion in flexible education relief aid for states through the Governors Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund. Initiation of GEER funding for **Rock Valley College** students was first implemented in April of 2020 in preparation for the summer and fall semesters. Students that met the criteria of one of the following categories—low-income, underserved students, and first-generation college student—received an emergency grant in the amount of \$150 to assist with the incurred remote learning expenses. Additional fund usage stemmed throughout the year of 2020 and into 2021 with a focus on student debt management and past due balances imposed on a select student population due to the negative monetary effects of the coronavirus. The allocation of GEER Funds allowed the college to develop an implementation plan permitting faculty and campus staff the ability to continue to provide a quality educational experience to the Rock Valley Student population, while also maintaining a positive force in the community during a time of uncertainty. The College managed to maintain enrollment levels competitive with other community colleges in both the state and nation. Instructors and students were able to adapt quickly to a new and unaccustomed learning environment while still managing to provide and receive the intended educational experience. Students that were forced to discontinue their educational aspirations on account of financial hardship were given a second chance to return to school to pursue their goals.

McHenry County College (MCC) created financial assistance programs to help support students facing economic hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. MCC has been committed to providing eligible students with the financial resources necessary to cover their essential needs to ensure they can stay enrolled and be successful. Those essential needs have included tuition and fees, course materials or books, technology costs, housing, transportation, and/or childcare. Financial scholarship awards were made available to help MCC students continue their education despite the economic challenges. Students have been able to receive one grant award per semester. These services were centralized in Student Affairs to ensure MCC could holistically assist underrepresented, first-generation, and low-income students. Through various marketing campaigns, referrals, and connections across campus, students learned about this financial opportunity. A total of 1,161 students received a \$1,000 Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) II Purple Pride Relief award. Furthermore, 226 students received \$500 of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER) Purple Pride Relief award. These same students received an additional \$500 award of HEERF II Purple Pride Relief funds for a total distribution of \$1,000 to ensure all students would receive an award in the amount of \$1,000 for the Spring 2021 semester.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, **Sauk Valley Community College** (SVCC) made the decision to move all the courses to a virtual format. This meant that many students would have issues completing online coursework or attending synchronous lectures due to a lack of reliable Internet access or an appropriate computer or tablet. IT services, the SVCC Foundation, and the Learning Commons have all played a role in distributing important technology and financial

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resources to students during the pandemic. These services were first implemented during the spring of 2020 at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and have continued through fiscal year 2021 and will continue as long as funding is available. About 10 to 15 percent of enrolled students borrow a laptop during any given term. The SVCC Foundation awarded \$9,289 dollars to students in fiscal year 2021 for assistance with Internet and technology access. Additionally, through an Ellucian grant, \$20,000 was offered to 40 students who were impacted by the pandemic. Finally, cash payments were provided to all enrolled students. In fiscal year 2021 alone more than \$600,000 in cash payments were provided to more than 800 students. Through a series of surveys students indicated that they had been using the virtual services at roughly the same rate as they had been prior to the pandemic and that many of them would continue to utilize virtual and synchronous services post-pandemic.

The Foundation Student Emergency Hardship Fund (EHF) was established at **Spoon River College** (SRC) in the spring of 2020 in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic and is intended to assist students with emergency needs and any unanticipated financial barriers to student success. This fund has over 110 donors and is bolstered by SRC Foundation unrestricted funds and statewide hardship funds. The EHF is intended to fund solutions to hardships that create barriers to students' ability to complete their coursework or their degree/certificate at SRC. The intention is to fund hardships that are true emergencies and not ones that arise from poor planning or "every day" expenses. To date, the SRC Foundation has been able to award nearly 70 students over \$25,000. Requests have been made due to everything from lost jobs/income, to scheduling mishaps, to medical bills, to deaths in family, to transportation problems, or to childcare issues. The SRC Foundation continues to see requests come in almost weekly, and they anticipate that this fund will be here to stay well after the pandemic is over.

Project Success is an initiative designed by the U.S. Department of Education to help minority-serving institutions improve student success and institutional outcomes by removing unforeseen financial obstacles.

South Suburban College (SSC) received a \$37,000 grant through a partnership with Educational Credit Management Corporation (ECMC) for its participation in Project Success Emergency Aid program. Project Success is an initiative designed by the U.S. Department of Education to help minority-serving institutions

improve student success and institutional outcomes. The goal of the program is to provide support toward student persistence and degree completion by removing unforeseen financial obstacles. The college is required to assign staff, including a designated primary point of contact, to work with ECMC to implement and administer the program. The college will administer the funds and provide eligible students facing short-term, nonrecurring emergencies with an award of emergency aid up to \$500 to remedy the situation. The student requesting the aid will complete an online application and submit supporting documentation of the emergency. The college will use a pre-determined list of criteria to approve or deny a student's request. Emergency aid can be used for housing/rent, utilities, childcare, transportation, food, and/or medical/dental. It cannot be used towards tuition, fees, books, supplies or prior balances. The program has awarded 50 percent of the grant funds in support to 55 students. Over 80 percent of the recipients are African American.

TRIO Student Support Services

The goal of the [TRIO Student Support Services \(SSS\) Program](#) funded by the U.S. Department of Education is to help first-generation, low-income students, and students with disabilities graduate and transfer to a four-year institution. The TRIO

The goal of the TRIO Student Support Services Program is to help first-generation, low-income students, and students with disabilities graduate or transfer to a four-year institution.

SSS program also works to foster an institutional climate supportive of students traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education, including ESL students, homeless children and youth, youth in foster care, or other disconnected students. Program participants receive supports through advising, tutoring, transfer assistance, financial aid assistance, and social and cultural programming. The program connects students who often struggle to successfully complete college with the learning skills and financial resources to achieve a college degree. TRIO helps students build social networks, provides mentoring, facilitates successful transfer to four-year universities, and empowers students to succeed in college and beyond.

The TRIO SSS grant began at **Carl Sandburg College** in August 1997. The Sandburg TRIO SSS program is currently in its sixth grant cycle; the College was awarded a five-year grant that began in the Fall 2020 semester and will close in August 2025. In the fall of 2020, the program enhanced its intensive advising services to combat the disconnection first-generation and low-income students often face, but which was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. These meetings allow program staff to inform participants of various pathway options as well as transfer agreements with four-year partner institutions. Participants also plan out the required classes for their degree path with their advisor, so they have the knowledge of course expectations and length of time for degree completion and can utilize their financial aid funds in a responsible manner. Financial literacy is discussed during the program participant intake meeting. Education on financial aid requirements and financing resources are conducted in one-on-one meetings with program staff. Outreach is made at the beginning of each semester to review participants' financial aid award letters and to assist with options for any outstanding balance. The program also assists with FAFSA/scholarship applications. Peer mentors provide support to new and academically at-risk participants. Mentors assist with study skills and strategies, time management, campus involvement, and communication. Due to the pandemic, the program held virtual monthly workshops focused on communication, stress management, goal setting, and budgeting. The program also hosted a virtual First-Generation Celebration Day speaker on the importance of grit and resilience. All program participants have access to Virtual Job Shadow (VJS), an online career assessment, exploration, and skill building tool. The most recent Sandburg TRIO SSS program annual report for the 2020-2021 academic year showed that the persistence rate and good academic standing rate were both 76 percent, the four-year graduation rate was 66 percent, and the graduation and transfer rate was 54 percent for the TRIO SSS program participants.

The TRIO Program has been at **Harry S Truman College** since 2005. Truman is a Hispanic-Serving Institution. The student population is 13 percent Asian, 21 percent African American, 40 percent Hispanic/Latino, 20 percent White, and 2 percent other/multi-racial. To be eligible for the program, students must be a citizen or national of the United States or meet the residency requirement for federal student financial assistance; be enrolled at Truman or accepted for

enrollment for the next academic semester; have a need for academic support, as determined by the College, in order to successfully pursue a post-secondary educational program; and be either low-income, a first-generation college student, or a student with disabilities. Benefits of the program include a calculator and laptop loaner program and student-led textbook exchange. TRIO offers a Student Ambassador Program in which continuing TRIO participants serve as peer mentors who help other TRIO students with classes and provide student success tips. The TRIO program has been used as an effective recruiting tool in recent years to encourage students from low-income Chicago neighborhoods to enroll at Truman. The 2020-2021 active TRIO cohort had an 85 percent rate of fall-to-fall persistence, 90 percent maintained good academic standing, 71 percent graduated, and 61 percent graduated and transferred to a four-year institution.

Although low-income high school graduates have already overcome many obstacles to college enrollment, they may fail to enroll in college resulting in a phenomenon called “summer melt.” The **Highland Community College** Upward Bound TRIO Project implemented a summer advising program for high school graduates that includes college adjustment activities to increase students’ on-time college enrollment in the fall semester after high school graduation to address “summer melt.” Each year the course runs from late spring/early summer of the student’s high school graduation year. Upward Bound students receive intensive economic and college literacy services. Assistance with completing the final steps required to matriculate are focused on placement testing, housing, medical insurance, financial aid, and course registration. Most of the counseling sessions are focused on financial aid issues. Students also receive intensive tutoring and academic instruction and standardized test and college entrance exam preparation. Admissions, financial aid, and financial literacy instruction is embedded in the program. Social, Emotional, Academic, and Career Development (SEACD) programming is also integrated into the program.

The TRIO SSS grant at **Illinois Central College** (ICC) was renewed in August 2020 for another five-year cycle spanning from 2020-2025. ICC TRIO’s Student Support Services (SSS) objective is to serve as a one-stop resource to provide support for first-generation, low-income, and/or students with disabilities to complete a degree or credential in 150 percent of the expected time or less. The success of TRIO SSS at ICC is rooted in many of the program’s integral elements. TRIO SSS utilizes a case management model where Academic Advisors carry a

While the TRIO SSS Program at Illinois Central College has consistently met the established goals and program objectives, it is notable that COVID-19 setbacks and shifts to remote and hybrid support have not negatively impacted the progress.

manageable caseload of 75 students. In addition to providing traditional academic advising and course selection, TRIO SSS Advisors stay with these students for the duration of their time at ICC. Initial onboarding for TRIO SSS utilizes ICC’s Career Coach programming to help determine the most viable pathways for participants. At the top of each semester, advisors work with students to create and update Educational Action Plans (EAP) which detail incremental and stackable goals and potential obstacles—both personal and academic. “Graduation Mapping” is also a key component in helping students select courses and adhering to a designated timeline. EAPs are reviewed on a 4-week basis for immediate interventions and updated comprehensively on a 16-week rotation to celebrate measurable gains and recalibrate plans when necessary. Peer mentoring via academic tutoring is also a key component of TRIO SSS’s academic success and credential

completion. TRIO SSS utilizes program participants as paid student workers/tutors to provide peer-to-peer academic support and mentoring. Due to this strong plan of operation and implementation steeped in Response to Intervention (RtI), TRIO SSS continues to meet and exceed objectives with successful outcomes. While the TRIO SSS Program has consistently met the established goals and program objectives, it is notable that COVID-19 setbacks and shifts to remote and hybrid support have not negatively impacted the progress. For the 250 students it is funded to serve annually, TRIO SSS at ICC has secured the following outcomes: an 80 percent fall-to-fall persistence rate—exceeding the Department of Education’s target rate of 65 percent, and 86 percent of participants are in good academic standing—exceeding the Department of Education’s target rate of 80 percent. Even during Spring 2020 and 2021, TRIO SSS exceeded the Department of Education’s target graduation rates by 14 percent.

Southeastern Illinois College’s (SIC) TRIO SSS Program works with underrepresented groups (such as low-income students, students with disabilities, and first-generation students) to encourage academic development and assist students with basic college requirements as they progress towards degree completion. TRIO SSS aspires to enhance retention rates of its participants and to facilitate their transition into higher education. The current iteration of TRIO SSS began at SIC in 2012. TRIO SSS works one-on-one with underrepresented groups to assist and support them by connecting students with tutors, mental health facilitators, and other campus resources as needed. Students apply for the program when they matriculate, and they remain in it until they graduate. These students will work with specialized advisors who guide them through the rigors of college life and counsel them on their path to success. As many students from underrepresented groups are attending college for the first time, this guidance is especially helpful. Educators who work to maintain and facilitate TRIO SSS indicated strong satisfaction with the program’s effectiveness, noting that the initiative helps to compensate for some of the structural disadvantages (income, educational background, etc.) facing this demographic. Participants graduated at a rate of 41 percent after three years, compared to 21 percent of similarly situated first-time freshmen.

The mission of **Spoon River College** (SRC) TRIO SSS is to provide students with academic support and personal guidance in successfully completing a program of study at the college and additional assistance in transitioning to a four-year college or university. The TRIO SSS program was initially funded and implemented in September of 2010 at SRC Macomb Campus. TRIO SSS provides a variety of support services that contribute to student success, including supplemental instruction in math and the sciences, peer tutoring, academic advising, transfer assistance, transfer campus visits, cultural trips, financial aid and scholarship assistance, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion assistance, career exploration, academic and personal enrichment workshops, financial literacy workshops, technology assistance, laptop lending, textbook lending library, and a scholarship program with \$5,000 in scholarship funds awarded annually. All services are provided to the student at no cost after acceptance to the program. In 2020, the grant funding expanded to serve students attending any SRC site. This expansion of grant funding came as a result of greater student need, as 72 percent of the College’s students were eligible for services at that time. The program serves 140 first-generation, low-income, and students with disabilities annually. The program has served 887 Spoon River College students over the lifetime of the grant and has met or exceeded its retention and academic standing goals each year. During the 2020-21 academic year, the TRIO SSS program had 82 percent of its students

persisting from fall 2020 to fall 2021, surpassing the initial goal of 48 percent persistence. The 2020-21 persistence rate also showed an increase from the 2015-16 academic year persistence rate of 72 percent. Furthermore, 96 percent of TRIO SSS students were in good academic standing at the close of the project year. This exceeded the initial goal of 78 percent being in good academic standing at the close of the project year. In comparison, the 2020-21 rate of 96 percent was an increase over the 2015-16 rate of 86 percent of students in good academic standing at the close of the project year. The TRIO SSS program has proven to be an effective model for increasing the number of SRC graduates, particularly among underrepresented groups.

Support Services and Initiatives for Minority Students

Kankakee Community College (KCC) seeks to dismantle inequities that create barriers to academic and social success and strive to cultivate a safe, diverse, and inclusive campus that will be recognized as a progressive leader and champion of social justice within its community. In 2019, KCC hired a full-time employee to oversee Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives and engagements. In 2020 renovations were completed for the KCC Center for EDI, the hub for cross-cultural education, affirmation, celebration, and an ever-growing network of resources and support. Furthermore, the President's Diversity Council has been enacted, which comprises approximately ten internal and 30 external partners who meet quarterly to promote communication and collaboration among community leaders and college personnel to inform and improve KCC's efforts related to EDI. Finally, in the fiscal year 2021, college staff created a diverse hiring training module to train all hiring committees across KCC. The training is designed to help staff understand the search process itself, and the steps needed to yield a successful search, the purpose of search committees, and their responsibilities as a member of the committee. They focus not on who would be a "good fit" but rather who would be a "good addition" to the department/division, and they learn how to avoid and overcome unconscious bias. Approximately 90 search committee members have completed and passed the training to date. These employees have taken part in close to 30 searches. A diverse applicant was selected in approximately 45 percent of those searches. As of November 2021, KCC has seen approximately a four percent increase in hiring for the African American and Hispanic/Latino employee demographic groups.

Research indicates that students who have educators of the same race or ethnicity are more likely to look to those teachers as role models and report greater effort in school and an increased sense of belonging. A study published in *The American Economic Review* studied community college classrooms and found that performance gaps of minority students can close by 20 percent to 50 percent if faculty more closely resemble students.

To strengthen communication, build connections and provide answers to college questions for the families, influencers, and supporters of Hispanic/Latino students, **Harper College** implemented the PASO program in June 2019. PASO is designed to form a welcoming community to engage and support students through the college experience. The program also attempts to reinforce the value of a college education and the role that family members play in supporting their students' transition to college. Students are able to opt into the program through the Harper application by providing family or influencer information. Family members then receive invitations to PASO events and programming. As a response to a survey to prospective participants, PASO

implemented bilingual financial aid and scholarship events, panel discussions with faculty, staff, and academic advisors, and opportunities for new or prospective students and their families to connect with current Hispanic/Latino students. Each event is designed to provide greater insight into navigating the college and its processes, build community, and connect students to resources and support. In 2020 events were shifted to a remote offering due to COVID-19. PASO has served over 550 families since its inception through events, programming, and delivery of content. Enrollment data from the academic year 2020 indicated a positive impact on Hispanic/Latino enrollment as overall new student enrollment in the Hispanic/Latino populations increased by 12 percent from the academic year 2019. Despite a 12 percent loss in the enrollment of Hispanic/Latino students in the academic year 2021, most likely due to COVID-19, students who had their influencers attend a PASO event enrolled for Fall 2021 at a higher rate (61 percent) than Hispanic/Latino students whose influencer did not attend (45 percent).

Men of Distinction (MOD) and Women of Character (WOC) are organizations that are focused primarily on building relationships with first- and second-year students to help them become successful throughout their college experience. They continually strengthen bonds between students, develop leaders through community service, and increase cultural awareness. **Carl Sandburg College** implemented the MOD and WOC programs in the 2014-2015 academic year. Membership is open during the first three weeks of each semester to any currently enrolled student. Members must also be enrolled in a minimum of nine credit hours at the time of membership and should be focused on successfully completing the program in which they are enrolled. They are expected to actively participate in group activities which include study hours, peer mentoring, community service, and participation in campus events. MOD and WOC have a dedicated advisor who meets regularly with members to provide one-on-one mentoring and monitor each member's academic standing throughout the semester. If the GPA drops below a 2.0, the advisor meets with the student and develops an individualized plan for academic recovery, including prescribed study time, tutoring, and other resources. The advisor also gets written permission from members to contact other support people in their life, including parents and guardians, to inform them when their student is charting off a course. One of the major successes of the MOD and WOC programs are the groups' ability to provide cohesiveness and teambuilding among its members through volunteer work and community service. One of the core tenets of the groups is to promote cultural awareness, and these volunteer efforts involve service to diverse groups in the community such as voter registration drives, drive-up coat giveaways, or weekly youth mentoring visits at local junior high schools. The MOD and WOC programs have demonstrated success through the persistence, retention, and graduation of its members. For example, in fiscal year 2021, 80.5 percent of MOD and WOC students were retained from fall-to-fall.

Results of a recent Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) for the Illinois Eastern Community Colleges (IECC) District provided valuable information about student demographics, student performance, and labor market alignment for both the IECC District and the local industry surrounding **Lincoln Trail College** (LTC). The College anticipates serving an increasing number of minority students. Currently, the District's Career and Technical Education (CTE) completion rates are high; however, there is a racial equity gap with African American, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic/Latino students experiencing lower completion rates in high-demand CTE programs. Furthermore, the CLNA also reveals that nearly 48 percent of the District's CTE students are economically disadvantaged, as defined by Pell eligibility. Additionally, 10-17

percent of LTC students live at or below the poverty level. Consequently, LTC implemented its first Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee in Spring 2021 to identify support services for minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. The other three goals are to promote diverse hiring practices; identify, offer, and promote intentional and effective professional development and training opportunities regarding diversity topics; and conduct a civil rights assessment of the College. The membership of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee includes staff from Retention, Tutoring, Faculty, Athletics, TRIO, Upward Bound, International Studies, and other staff positions. In its first year, the Committee accomplished two goals: 1) it began conducting a Civil Rights Self-Assessment, as provided by ICCB and ICSPS, to identify areas of improvement and to recommend modifications to policies, procedures, and practices, and 2) it met with a panel of students about their experiences as minority members of the campus and community. The Committee preliminarily identified weaknesses in language support services for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, representative diversity in marketing materials, and enrollment of minority students in CTE programs. The Committee will make recommendations to improve these indicators in the 2021-22 academic year. Furthermore, the student focus group identified both positive and negative experiences of minority students on campus and in local communities. An outcome of this focus group is that the Committee is recommending and will help establish learning communities for various population groups.

The Avanza Transitional Bilingual Learning Community Program at Wilbur Wright College is a program for incoming first-year students bilingual in Spanish.

The Avanza Transitional Bilingual Learning Community Program at **Wilbur Wright College** is a program for incoming first-year students bilingual in Spanish. The purpose of Avanza is to provide a seamless transition for a small cohort (15-20 students) of recent high school graduates for one academic year while engaging with faculty members and an assigned advisor that will be able

to communicate with the students that are also bilingual in Spanish. Avanza students are provided with academic and social resources, courses, and workshops. The first cohort of Avanza students began at Wilbur Wright College in the fall of 2021, though planning work for the program began in 2020. Courses are taught by bilingual Spanish-English instructors who provide assistance in Spanish while bolstering students' English-language skills. In Fall 2021, the courses selected were developmental English, college-level math (optional), and a College Success Seminar. In Spring 2022, students were offered English 101 Composition and Span 214 Readings in Spanish Literature. Those who did not place into English 101 were supported in finding an appropriate English course. The success of the Avanza program is evidenced by the program retention rate of 83 percent, which is higher than the College's fall-to-spring retention rate of 70 percent and the City Colleges of Chicago's overall fall-to-spring retention rate of 63 percent.

Transforming and Inspiring Undergraduate Men Pursuing Higher Education (TRIUMPH) is a grant-funded program at **Triton College**, which empowers males of color by providing increased academic, personal, and professional support through mentoring and other services since the spring of 2014. The goals of this minority male retention program include 1) connecting minority male students with minority male mentors; 2) helping minority male students realize and expand their potential, despite perceived social and cultural barriers; 3) creating a collegial environment to develop a sense of trust and mutual encouragement; and 4) ensuring the retention and completion of participating minority male students at Triton College. TRIUMPH also assists minority male

students with transferring to a four-year institution or gaining employment in alignment with their academic and career aspirations. In the summer of 2018 Triton was awarded a private grant to help expand the TRIUMPH program to other surrounding community colleges so that they could increase the impact on minority male students. Elgin Community College, Waubensee Community College and Kennedy-King College have active TRIUMPH programs on their campuses that use the same mission and goals to impact and inspire even more minority males. Program planning has expanded to ensure scholars were being exposed to more cultural and transfer college opportunities. Scholars were able to participate in a summer program that included an out-of-state college tour and activities that enhanced their social, emotional, and critical thinking skills and cultural awareness. As of today, approximately 200 males at Triton College and 350 males among all of the partnering schools since June 2019 have participated in the program since its inception. TRIUMPH at Triton College has successfully graduated more than 73 scholars. During the pandemic, the TRIUMPH program was able to loan laptops to students to help them continue their academic journey. The students were able to benefit from many resources provided from TRIUMPH such as gift cards, job placement, and mentoring and leadership opportunities within the program.

Support Services and Initiatives for First-Year Students

Harper College implemented Harper Launch in July 2020 to help first-generation, underrepresented, and/or low-income students overcome barriers to enrollment and success by providing proactive support at entry to the college. The program's goals include helping students develop an academic identity and sense of belonging, proactively engaging students with the advising case-management model, and enrolling students in their developmental math and English

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coursework in their first semester. The core of the program is a customized three credit-hour First Year Seminar course that connects incoming students to resources that assist them in successfully navigating academic and campus life. In order to overcome financial and technology barriers, the cost of the course was free for students, and they each received a Chromebook. Students were also intrusively introduced to the academic advising case-management model with mandatory career-development and educational-planning in place. The program has served 157 students since its inception in 2020. The program is currently being scaled to provide cultural and academic identity development activities and wraparound resources for all students enrolling in First Year Seminar, beginning in Spring 2022.

The **Olney Central College (OCC)** Title III Advising Specialist developed and implemented a holistic student intervention plan to provide degree planning, advising, and early alerts to increase student retention. Through the Advisors Council and internal recommendations, OCC began planning activities during fiscal year 2021 that coincided with a Department of Education Title III Creating Pathways to Opportunity Grant. The Title III Advising Specialist began planning based on grant objectives. The academic advising and scheduling/registration services were redesigned. Advising check lists were created based on the six phases of the Appreciative Advising Framework. Appreciative Advising is the intentional collaborative practice of asking generative,

open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experiences and achieve their dreams, goals, and potentials. The first-year experience class (Pathways to Success) and the Freshman Orientation were redesigned to incorporate advising strategies and resources. Students now learn about accepting self-responsibility, discovering self-motivation, mastering self-management, employing interdependence, gaining self-awareness, adopting life-long learning and critical thinking, developing emotional intelligence, and believing in themselves. OCC staff participated in Appreciative Advising and On-course Success principles trainings. To date, 1,852 students have utilized online registration at OCC, 249 students have participated in the revised first-year experience course, and 391 students have completed the redesigned Freshman Orientation.

The purpose of the **College of Lake County (CLC)** Group Onboarding for Personalized Success Planning for New and Transfer Students practice was to improve the number of new and transfer students that may be onboarded as part of the new Lancer Success Framework for student success. The Group Onboarding process affords the College of Lake County (CLC) College and Career Navigator (CCN) an opportunity to follow up with a large caseload of students, which helps to move students forward in the process to advisement. The target for fiscal year 2021 was set to 42 percent of students to onboard to CLC. This program was designed to serve all students from Lake County high schools with a focus in underserved Lake County areas, such as Waukegan, North Chicago, Round Lake, and Zion. The CCN is a team of 16 people working with prospective and current CLC students to help establish a relationship that fosters a sense of belonging, adds to their college awareness, and builds their college knowledge/career exploration. The personalized success planning by CCN includes getting students started with their admission application, walking them through the Student Center, reviewing proficiencies and pre-requisites needed for courses/programs of interest, walking students through the Financial Aid process and resources, sharing information regarding orientation and advisement, and walking them through the whole process of registration and payment for courses. Due to COVID-19, Virtual Group Onboarding was introduced, using the Zoom platform to create virtual rooms. During fiscal year 2021, the CCN program was fully launched. There were 10,710 prospective CLC students who applied to CLC. Out of these students, 40 percent of students enrolled in CLC courses during Fall 2020, which was two percentage points below the target goal. Forty-eight percent of students onboarded during Spring 2021.

The Student Online Orientation was originally implemented at **Richland Community College** in Spring 2009 for online and hybrid students but became mandatory for all students taking credit courses in Fall 2013. Expansion of faculty use of Canvas, Richland's Learning Management System, occurred in the Fall 2018 semester. The COVID-19 pandemic changed how all faculty developed their courses for delivery online. The Canvas Student Orientation, a self-paced mobile-friendly orientation, provided in a Canvas course and utilizing multiple modalities, provides students with the information needed to use Canvas successfully. The learning materials include ADA compliant webpages, handouts, links to guides, and videos. The orientation currently includes the technical requirements for Canvas; contact information for direct student support; the basics of navigating Canvas and Canvas courses; directions on participating in discussions, submitting assignments and quizzes, and viewing instructor feedback and grades; links to useful Richland services; and tips on being successful in an online environment. When the online orientation was originally put in place in 2009, online retention initially jumped 7.7 percent. This

increase has continued and remains relatively steady. Even with the transition to online delivery in March 2020, since all of the students had already completed the orientation, having their courses moved online, while upsetting, was less traumatic than if they had never used or been trained to use Canvas. Similarly, since the Fall 2018 semester, Richland has required that faculty of all credit courses must post at least a syllabus and assignments and must use the Canvas gradebook. This expectation meant that faculty, regardless of original mode of delivery, had at least a foundation for the transition to online delivery in Spring 2020. The Online Boot Camp for instructors provided additional support in developing courses for subsequent semesters, as it was developed to help them learn the Canvas platform's features and resources, navigate the process of building a quality online course, and connect with fellow faculty in a community of practice. It is available for all faculty to access at any time.

Support Services and Initiatives for Students with Disabilities

John Wood Community College expanded disability services in August 2021 to increase the efficiency of accommodations, decrease time from request for accommodations and completed process, and increase the total number of students served. The College hired a part-time program assistant for Disability Services to offer administrative support to the coordinator, enabling the coordinator to increase one-on-one, intrusive personal and academic advising time with students. There has been a 23 percent increase in the number of students requesting accommodations. Furthermore, there has been a 38 percent increase in the number of accommodations offered, and a decrease in amount of time from initial student request to contact with faculty and finalizing accommodations (averaged about 60 hours in Fall 2020 to about 24 hours in Fall 2021).

John Wood Community College expanded disability services in August 2021 to increase the efficiency of accommodations, decrease time from request for accommodations and completed process, and increase the total number of students served.

The Center for Accessibility and Neurodiversity (CAN) at **Illinois Valley Community College** (IVCC) offers comprehensive, wrap-around services on an ongoing basis for students with learning differences and who also need more individualized support to help them be successful in the classroom. This robust, individualized, and systematic support assists these students in their successful transition to college, their coursework, and, ultimately, their degree completion. Services may include, for example, one-on-one or small group orientation, individualized accommodations, regular check-in appointments, course progress monitoring, study skills/ time management intervention, among many others. Interestingly, students who qualify for these services may request them while they are still juniors or seniors in high school (e.g., dual credit students may invite the CAN coordinator to attend Individualized Education Program meetings with their high school counselors) and they may still use them as they get ready to leave IVCC (e.g., students who may need help on how to transition and transfer to another institution of higher learning). Since the summer of 2020, on average, 80 percent of the students with learning differences who use CAN services were successful (with a C or better) in their courses. Active CAN students also have a better chance to persist and complete their courses or programs of study, with an average of 72 percent of students doing so. These percentages clearly demonstrate that the wrap-around services provided by CAN are needed by underrepresented

student populations and that they are helping these students to be successful in their coursework at IVCC.

The COACH program at the College of DuPage was recognized with a 2019 LERN International Award as an international model for noncredit/community programming.

Now in its fifth year, The COACH program is a cohort-based program at the **College of DuPage (COD)** that offers adult learners with mild-to-moderate intellectual and developmental disabilities comprehensive academic, life, and vocational skills within the college environment. Student tuition covers the cost of the instructors' pay and student instructional materials. Continuing Education funds cover the cost of the program coordinator's pay. In 2021, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriation Act (CRRSAA) funds were approved, and the COD Foundation has begun securing donors for COACH-eligible student scholarships. The COACH program works closely with Developmental Education staff at local high schools and non-profit agencies serving young adults with disabilities and conducts high-touch interviews and assessments with prospective students. In the COACH program, progress reports are completed after each semester. Student progress is based on formative and summative evaluation procedures. Students who attend 90 to 100 percent of their COACH courses and complete 90 percent of their coursework with at least 60 percent accuracy successfully complete the COACH cohort. Since its inception, the COACH program has served 109 students, and 93 percent of total Project COACH students who began in the first semester were retained to completion of the program at the end of the fourth semester. In 2019, the COACH program was recognized with a LERN International Award as an international model for noncredit/community programming.

Initiatives in Developmental Education and Co-requisite Remediation

The co-requisite English program is part of the curricular revision overhaul at **Oakton Community College** that has involved professional development for developmental English faculty that addresses issues of equity and current best practices so that students can be successful in persisting to degree completion. The co-requisite English initiative is one of several that Oakton is employing to achieve the College's overarching goal of eliminating disparities in degree completion rates between African American and White students, between Hispanic/Latino and White students, and between low-income and higher income students (as indicated by Pell receipt). In Spring 2019, the English department piloted a co-requisite course, EGL 099/101: Writing Tutorial/ Composition. This course places eligible developmental students directly into college-level English (EGL 101) in the first semester with supplemental instruction to support their success (enrollment in EGL 099). The co-existing classroom environment of EGL 099 and EGL 101 students learning together allows for students who may not have been as strongly prepared for EGL 101 to be influenced by the students that placed directly into EGL 101. The co-requisite model also allows for a more direct curricular alignment between EGL 099 and EGL 101. Part of the curricular revision for this program will

The co-requisite English program offers a co-requisite course through the Oakton Community College's Department of English that places eligible developmental students directly into college-level English in the first semester with supplemental instruction to support their success.

involve professional development for developmental English faculty that addresses issues of equity and current best practices. Offering the co-requisite course model at Oakton has allowed more students to enroll immediately in English 101 than would have been able to in the past. African American students that enrolled in the co-requisite English course had higher success rates than their same ethnic peers who only enrolled in English 101 (67.6 percent vs. 66.7 percent). The same is true for Hispanic/Latino students (56.6 percent vs. 55.4 percent).

In Spring 2021, Shawnee Community College piloted a Level-Up Program, a self-paced module-based learning enrichment course designed to give students added practice in order to prepare them for placement into the English co-requisite course.

According to the [2019-2020 Illinois Report Card](#), 2018 remediation rates of the 12 **Shawnee Community College** (SCC) district high schools ranged from 11 percent to 60 percent, for an average district remediation rate of 33.9 percent. Data also indicated 34 percent of students who entered SCC during Fall 2016 through Fall 2020 tested into either a developmental English or math class. Students who are not able to be placed using multiple measures and

who test into the lowest levels of developmental education have a difficult time persisting towards degree completion. At SCC, the lowest-level developmental courses are often cancelled due to low enrollment, leaving the student with no option to persist. Complicating matters further, most all of SCC's district high schools have opted out of offering transitional courses, placing the onus back on the college to meet the needs of not only traditional but nontraditional learners. To address the needs of these learners, the English department piloted a Level-Up Program in Spring 2021. Level-Up is a self-paced module-based learning enrichment course designed to give students added practice in order to prepare them for placement into the English co-requisite course. Students enrolled in Level-Up work with a professional English tutor on a one-on-one basis as they progress through the self-paced modules. The Level-Up Team was pleased overall with the results of the students who completed the program and have identified a few barriers to address for the future, particularly, the need to spend more time with students and SCC advisors on the front-end to improve communication and set clear expectations. There were 18 students included in the pilot, and eight of the 18 tested into the co-requisite course, with one student testing into ENG 111 without the need for the co-requisite course. Unfortunately, there were eight students who chose not to enroll in any classes at SCC after the pilot. Having someone dedicated to following up with those students will be another focus area moving forward. This has been identified as a gap, and SCC is thus implementing completion coaches to support the developmental education students through their pathways.

Initiatives in Adult Education

Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC) provides student services through the Adult Learner Initiative Program. By enhancing the services available to these students, especially in terms of opportunities for low-cost, minimal-time credit options, thereby, the College attracts more adult students. The program was funded as part of the CTE Leadership grant. It was originally implemented in November 2020 and has since been transitioned to Perkins as part of Special Populations, which include the economically disadvantaged, individuals preparing for nontraditional fields of study, single parents, English learners, and the homeless. Recruitment of learners will be increased by establishing and building upon existing partnerships with local

community organizations, churches, and businesses as well as through social media and radio ads. Retention will be focused on an expansion of curricular options and learning modalities, including expansion of prior learning assessment and online/blended learning opportunities as well as a dedicated advising process. Finally, success will be enhanced for these students by having properly trained and dedicated staff and faculty members who are both aware of the needs of adult learners and the wealth of experience with which they come to IVCC. The efforts of this support system will be augmented by online and web-based resources that allow the learners to access services at their convenience.

The Adult Education Department at **South Suburban College** (SSC) is committed to providing services to all populations. SSC is currently a Predominantly Black Institution (PBI) and is close to also becoming a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). In fiscal year 2020 the Adult Education Department started livestreaming adult education events. The livestreamed Graduation and Family Reading Nights are recorded and viewed hundreds of times. When class projects and

Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes provide instruction in language arts, math, science, and social studies to students whose educational functioning level is below a 9th grade level. Each section has workplace skills, job readiness, critical thinking, and career exploration built into the curriculum to help students pass their high school equivalency and move on to college and/or a career.

accomplishments happen, teachers capture these moments, and they are celebrated by the student's friends and families. This inspires the students and promotes the program. The SSC Adult Education Department has recently started to use Google Forms to take online appointments. This has allowed for more registrants as students can sign up instantly online. Afterwards, the manager of adult education emails students an orientation video that is hosted on YouTube. This makes it possible for the student to review the video whenever they want. In fiscal year 2021 SSC created asynchronous online courses for students who cannot come to class at a fixed time.

City Colleges of Chicago's Career Bridge Program helps students improve their reading, writing, math, and English language skills while earning an industry-recognized certificate that can lead to entry-level job opportunities and careers in early childhood education. The Early Childhood Education (ECE) Bridge programs are tuition-free—all books, materials, and industry certifications are provided to students at no cost. Students can complete the program in as few as four semesters. At the end of the program, students earn an Illinois Gateways Level 2 certification. This program targets upper-level ESL and English high school equivalency students. Applicants are required to complete an online application, submit an English writing sample, and participate in an oral interview. Each entering student cohort participates in an orientation session to review their upcoming semester schedule and map out their pathway to graduation. Students enrolled in this program receive bi-weekly support from their adult education instructor who attends credit classes with them and helps them prepare for exams and to review and complete assignments. **Richard J. Daley College** launched the first ECE Cohort, which consisted of 21 students, in Fall 2020. Of these 21 students, seven proceeded to earn a basic certificate in child development in Spring 2021.

Joliet Junior College (JJC) has a collaboration between the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs (OMSA), Workforce Education, the Department of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL),

the Student Advising Center, and other offices in meeting the needs of English Language Learners (ELL), undocumented, and adult education students as they transition to college. To better transition DAEL students to credit coursework, piloted presentations have been introduced for bridge students enrolling in the Integrated Education and Training Program. This program is designed for students concurrently enrolled in credit-bearing and contextualized adult education coursework, resulting in stackable credentials. These presentations encourage continuous enrollment into the AAS degree program. The first Integrated Education and Training Program presentation was conducted with six participants to Early Childhood Education students enrolled through the DAEL. Additional presentations have continued after the end of the fiscal year. In addition, the Testing Services Office helps advance equity by providing student testing for various academic populations, including ELL and DAEL students. Finally, support is provided through the Tutoring and Learning Center to aid in the retention of ELL and DAEL students.

As students complete their high school equivalency credentials through **Illinois Central College** (ICC), Adult Education Transition Coordinators work closely with students close to completion to plan next steps. These steps may include employment or the pursuit of a postsecondary credential with marketplace value. With ICC's strong Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming, many students choose to pursue CTE credentials and can benefit from participation in the College's Carl D. Perkins program for additional financial and academic support. Coordinated and intentional efforts to transition more high school equivalency completers into postsecondary education began during fiscal year 2021 between the Perkins Coordinator, the Adult Education Manager, and the Transition Coordinators to stave off the negative effects of COVID-19. Adult education programming at ICC is embedded with learning modules such as the Greater Peoria Essential Abilities and Knowledge and Career Coach, targeting career planning and next steps following degree completion. High school equivalency students also participate in workshops and presentations that highlight available resources at ICC. Students expressing interest or curiosity in CTE programming as a next step are connected to the Perkins Coordinator with the assistance of the Adult Education Transition Coordinators. This braided-efforts model has helped to increase the awareness of options among high school equivalency completers as they plan their next steps with the Adult Education Transition Coordinators. High school equivalency completers entering CTE programs with hefty supply costs, such as Welding, are now more open to the idea of continuing education because they are aware of the financial support available for books and supplies. Students are also relieved to learn that Perkins can provide additional academic support via subject matter tutors and library resources.

Counseling/Mentoring/Tutoring

Personal counseling is a crucial component of the Student Support Services (SSS) program because of its link to student success. Implemented on September 1, 2020, personal, one-on-one counseling is provided at **John A. Logan College** to program participants experiencing problems that might affect their ability to complete their education. Eligible students receive a personal connection developed from individual counseling reducing the risk of dropping out. The SSS staff monitor participants, continually assess

*Implemented on September 1, 2020, personal, one-on-one counseling is provided at **John A. Logan College** to program participants experiencing problems that might affect their ability to complete their education.*

academic progress, and register students in their courses. The personal counselor also assists students in choosing a career option, guides students to sign up for needed support, such as tutoring, and helps reduce the impact of personal problems and concerns. A semester calendar is created, and a checklist of items is discussed relative to the time in the semester. Counseling increases participant retention, improves academic achievement, and assists with planning for graduation, transition to a new job, or transfer to a four-year institution. John A. Logan College runs this program through the TRIO grant. The objectives are a persistence rate of retaining 70 percent of students. Good academic standing requires 87 percent of the students to maintain a GPA 2.0 or better and a graduation rate of 36 percent with 18 percent transferring. The College has met these objectives.

In a recent survey reported by [Inside Higher Ed](#), college students are growing even more concerned about their physical and mental health. The study finds nearly nine out of ten students believe there is a mental health crisis at U.S. colleges and universities. Seventy percent say they are experiencing pandemic-related distress or anxiety. “While each student might have a different understanding of what a mental health crisis is, it’s clear that students are suffering,” said Alan Dennington, chief medical officer and co-founder of TimelyMD, the survey’s creator. In response to similar reports across the country over the last several years of the pandemic, **Kankakee Community College (KCC)** decided to set aside additional funding and resources to partner with Transformative Growth Counseling (TGC) in July 2020 to increase counseling services that further support students mentally and emotionally. Through KCC client data analysis, TGC found that most students come in seeking counseling due to struggles with trauma. Additionally, 48 percent of current clients have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder or a co-occurring disorder. TGC provides therapeutic services for the students in the form of individual counseling. As part of the agreement between the college and TGC, KCC students may receive five counseling sessions with a TGC counselor free of charge. In addition to in-person services, students now can schedule zoom appointments to receive services. As part of the two-pronged approach, TGC not only increased its availability in the modalities of service, but also the hours services are provided to students. From July 1, 2020, to June 20, 2021, TGC saw 17 clients, which was one less client than the same time the previous year, and these clients attended 292 appointments versus 91 the prior year. All clients served in this timeframe utilized remote methods, while all clients served the prior year utilized in-person services. The ability to offer online therapy allowed TGC to maintain client-clinician interactions throughout the COVID-19 pandemic closure.

The Office of Instruction Mentoring Program at **Kishwaukee College** is designed to provide historically marginalized students the opportunity to develop supportive relationships with college faculty. Students can develop a growth mindset when faced with the challenge of meeting expectations during their experiences in college. Support experiences through professors, who make learning exciting and serve as encouraging mentors, help students build the self-efficacy necessary for success. Providing mentors increases opportunities for students to receive the positive micro-messaging that will assist in the development of a growth mindset and positive self-efficacy. The mentoring program was piloted in March 2021 with five students and four faculty mentors. The program expanded to ten student mentees and eight faculty mentors during the Fall 2021 semester. Faculty mentors are provided training to become mentors. Each mentor is also provided a guide, which includes resources to guide interaction with students during meetings. A college administrator provides coaching and training for faculty mentors who engage in intrusive

coaching in their interactions with students participating in this initiative. Benefits include developing a pathway toward educational goals, increasing confidence in degree planning, and increasing help-seeking behavior. Students participating in the program are likely to enroll in courses in the subsequent semester. Eighty percent of the mentees from the spring pilot enrolled in courses the following semester. One hundred percent of the students from the Fall 2021 cohort (nine students) registered for the Spring term or graduated. The grade point average for the Fall cohort of student participants was 2.42.

*In January 2021, the Academic Success Center at **Frontier Community College** implemented free peer-to-peer tutoring to provide social and academic support to all struggling students.*

In January 2021, the Academic Success Center at **Frontier Community College** (FCC) implemented free peer-to-peer tutoring to provide social and academic support to all struggling students. Peer tutoring builds on the idea that students learn more effectively through interaction,

collaboration, and discussion with other students than they do through individual study. Peer tutoring has also been associated with lower test anxiety and higher student engagement in the learning process. Three peer tutors were hired to offer tutoring services in the subjects of Math, Science, Composition, and Humanities. The tutors went through an orientation that focused on different learning styles and best tutoring practices. Group tutoring sessions have set schedules that are posted online and advertised around campus. Students can also make appointments for one-on-one tutoring, which increases accessibility for students who may need to schedule around jobs or childcare. To reduce language barriers, one peer tutor offers sessions in Spanish, making them more accessible and comfortable for the Spanish-speaking students. So far, this program has been utilized by 68 FCC students, and seven students have made one-on-one appointments.

In response to the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act, **Lake Land College** created two stipends for employees within Student Services in Fall 2020 who would provide mental health support to students, increase awareness of mental health resources available to students, support faculty and staff in responding to a student's mental health needs, and decrease the stigma of mental health across the campus community. Counseling services are available for walk-ins or appointments for short-term counseling and referrals. The College also implemented BetterMynd, an online counseling platform, for students in Fall 2020 to make mental health resources more accessible to college students. BetterMynd offers a network of licensed clinicians with appointments available throughout the day, including nights and weekends. Sessions are available via laptop or smartphone. Faculty and staff can make LEAP (Lake Land College Early Advantage Program) referrals to the counseling services for students needing a mental health check-in or follow-up. Students can also self-refer through the BetterMynd link in their Laker Hub. They receive six free sessions, eliminating the financial pressures associated with beginning mental health counseling. BetterMynd reports that 75 percent of students who have created a BetterMynd account have scheduled a counseling session, with the average of 2.5 sessions completed for each student enrolled. Since its implementation, 144 Lake Land College students have created a BetterMynd account, 126 students have scheduled sessions and 353 sessions, have been conducted.

The Peer Mentoring Collaborative (PMC) program is a peer mentor program at **Triton College** that offers enhanced academic support to students inside the classroom. PMC hires eligible Triton

students who demonstrate a strong academic record and have taken and earned an “A” grade in the course, or equivalent, that they will support to serve as peer mentors. They are strategically embedded into classes that have been identified as high enrollment and low success. Their responsibilities include attending each class session to support students in the classroom, hosting weekly office hours to tutor students on course content, facilitating class study sessions, and connecting students to Triton College student support services and community resources. PMC merges embedded academic support with traditional peer mentoring to provide students with the best opportunity for success. It also provides Triton students hired as peer mentors with a paid opportunity and the experience of working with Triton faculty and fellow students. Class sections with a peer mentor ended the Fall 2021 semester with a 78 percent success rate compared to a 60 percent success rate for the same class without a peer mentor. Student success rates for Fall 2021 were 28 percent higher for minority students, 18 percent higher for Female students, 24 percent higher for first-generation students, and three percent higher for students with disabilities with a peer mentor compared to the same demographic of students without a peer mentor.

In order to pivot alongside COVID-19 best practices and mandates, the Tutoring Center at **Black Hawk College** (BHC) worked diligently to meet students where they were for their tutoring needs. In the face of a global pandemic, meeting in-person was not only limited but students were sometimes not comfortable doing so. The BHC Director of Tutoring, Tutoring Coordinator, and Lead Math and Writing Tutors held ongoing discussions regarding the received tutor requests in order to best service students with their varied concerns which included technology skill level/comfortability/access, learning styles, and having children/others at home with them in spaces where they could not necessarily separate. The Tutoring Center flexed remote appointment times based on student and tutor availability which included late, early, and weekend hours outside of usual operating hours. In-person appointments were held during regular hours using plastic barriers, masks as well as six feet social distancing. For remote sessions, tutors shared a virtual whiteboard to draw or have students draw equations and/or shared their screen. A wooden arm was created to hold a webcam over a physical piece of paper so the tutor could write directly on it to show students the concept/calculation. When students’ Internet bandwidth seemed to be a problem, tutors would call them to walk through the verbal piece, sometimes sending pictures through text or email as a visual support. For ESL students, phone calls were often used for speech/pronunciation pieces, and less frequently used was iPhone’s Facetime. Of the first-generation college students enrolled at BHC from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, 14 percent of the students who received tutoring graduated with their chosen degree/certificate compared to 11 percent who did not receive tutoring; 19 percent of the students who received tutoring transferred on to the next college or university versus 11 percent of those who did not receive tutoring; and 93 percent who received tutoring earned a grade of A, B, and/or C compared to 83 percent who did not receive tutoring during that time period.

Advising and Other Retention Initiatives

The **Danville Area Community College** (DACC) Academic Advisement and Counseling department utilized the pandemic-related downtime to review their services in place and focus efforts to grow as individuals and as a critical resource to students and staff. After identifying the underperforming student populations and identifying their own strengths and weaknesses, the department completed various trainings such as the Appreciative Advising model inspired by the

best practices from NACADA (the Global Community for Academic Advisors), to grow as advisors and counselors and to, ultimately, serve underrepresented groups better, as they show a greater understanding of the diversity of DACC student populations and how that may affect their success in college. Advisors have expanded their areas of expertise, from community partnerships to technical capabilities, to deliver comprehensive academic and non-academic support. Advisors have increased their presence in student-populated areas during their down time to promote mental health services and upcoming dates and deadlines. The visits also serve as a general check-in for students who would not normally ask for help. The Advisement and Counseling department repurposed a former office into a small computer lab for students. Department staff and student workers provide hands-on assistance to students in need.

The Mandatory Advising Program (MAP) at **Elgin Community College** (ECC) seeks to ensure that students are meeting with an academic advisor to develop or refine their academic plan within the crucial 24-36 credit hour window. Incentives such as the potential to win a priority (early) registration time for the upcoming semester were offered to eligible students. During the Spring 2021 semester, in addition to a priority registration date, the ECC Foundation, in collaboration with Academic Advising, offered a micro scholarship to students who met one or more criteria for ECC's Illinois Equity in Attainment (ILEA) Equity Plan—African American, Hispanic/Latino, and/or Pell Eligible students. The goal was to close gaps in degree completion among these populations by providing a monetary incentive to meet with academic advisors, confirm they are on the correct path to reach their academic goals, and persist to degree completion. The MAP micro scholarship incentive provided an automatic five dollars for qualified students who met with an academic advisor by a specified deadline and an additional five dollars for those who enrolled by a specified deadline. For students who qualified for both incentives, they were also entered into a drawing for a chance to win one of three three-credit-hour tuition vouchers. Of the eligible students (N=412), 97 qualified for the partial five-dollar incentive, from which 65 qualified for the full ten-dollar incentive. Of the 65 students who participated in both qualifying events, 92 percent were retained and are currently enrolled in Spring 2022 classes.

Educational Plans are defined as term-by-term maps of course sequences to help students understand the length of time to complete a program and what courses are needed to complete. They are developed jointly by advisors and students using pre majors and curricular pathways in place at the college.

The Educational Plans initiative is one of several that **Oakton Community College** implemented in Fall 2017 to achieve the College's overarching goal of eliminating disparities in degree completion rates between African American and White students, between Hispanic/Latino and White students, and between low-income and higher income students. It ensures that

students receive timely academic advising to develop a clear set of curricula that will meet their educational goals. In a one-on-one conversation between the advisor and student, an educational plan is created based on the student's academic and/or career goals, the length of time the student wants to attend Oakton, and the student's placement levels in reading, writing, and math. By increasing the numbers of advisors, the College has been able to increase the number and percentage of new students that complete educational plans. In 2017, 31 percent of new students had developed educational plans compared to 41 percent of new students in Fall 2019. The Fall 2019 overall retention rate for students with educational plans was higher than the rate for those

without educational plans by almost 30 percentage points. During the academic year 2020-21, 63 percent of new students developed educational plans, with at least 52 percent of every racial/ethnic category of students having developed an educational plan. Furthermore, there has continued to be intentional outreach to African American, Hispanic/Latino, first-generation, and other minority students. For the cohort that started in Fall 2019, students who created educational plans were more likely to enroll full-time, earn more credits in their first year, and were more likely to be retained the following fall. Although pre-pandemic statistics of students with educational plans showed better progress towards full-time credits earned and fall-to-fall retention, the College has still seen good progress in these areas despite the negative impacts within higher education from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The goal of SHARP (Sauk Holistic Advising and Retention Program) is to support students who identify as first-generation, low-income, or who have a documented disability. Currently, over 90 percent of all **Sauk Valley Community College** students qualify to participate in SHARP. The program's current capacity is 100 students. Twenty-four percent of SHARP students are age 25 or older, approximately two-thirds of them are female, and nearly 30 percent of them are classified as undecided students. Sixteen percent of program participants identify as Hispanic/Latino, and 53 percent are first-generation. Additionally, 47 percent are Pell-eligible, 13 percent use Disability Support Services on campus, and 18 percent are enrolled or were enrolled in a developmental course. The program is modeled after the College's TRIO Student Support Services program. Through this process the College realized that while most of Sauk's students could benefit from TRIO SSS services, the program had a limit of 200 participants. Through SHARP Sauk has given more students the opportunity to receive intensive advising and transfer services. The program also provides assistance with college applications and FAFSA filing, various academic workshops, individualized coaching, laptop lending, and academic progress monitoring. The SHARP was created as part of a Higher Learning Commission Quality Initiative in 2017 and formally launched in 2018. It has seen measurable success in retention, completion, and success efforts despite some early trouble with staff turnover.

Waubonsee Community College launched a major redesign of its advising program in the summer of 2019. This included a division reorganization to blend academic and career advising and to assign each degree-seeking student to one advisor who supports them from start to finish. This reorganization also created a retention unit to support "high opportunity"

Waubonsee Community College launched a major redesign of its advising program that included a division reorganization to blend academic and career advising and to assign each degree-seeking student to one advisor who supports them from start to finish.

or at-risk students. In 2020, a new position of Full-Time Retention Coordinator was created to focus on the retention of financially vulnerable students, with a special emphasis on Pell recipients. Program elements include regular communication and data sharing between the Financial Aid Office and Retention Coordinator; activity reporting/oversight on Pell recipients, WIOA recipients and students on financial aid warning status; a student communication plan featuring new student onboarding deliverables and targeted monthly outreach to financial aid students; and personalized individual support from the Retention Coordinator for advisors and students to answer questions and/or trouble-shoot issues. Early indicators demonstrate that the case management-coordinator model has a positive impact on both retention and academic success. Fall-to-spring retention rates

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for Pell students in the 2020-21 academic year were five percent higher with the caseload-coordinator model than in the 2019-20 academic year. Success rates for students on Financial Aid appeal (or “warn” status) were six to ten percent higher than the prior two semesters.

Olney Central College (OCC) developed and implemented message campaigns targeting specific populations using the texting platform Signal Vine in August 2019 to assist in the use of the Appreciative Advising framework. Initially, three programs piloted the platform. In July 2020, additional programs were added to the platform to further reach underrepresented groups. Signal Vine is the leading Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered messaging platform transforming how higher education leaders reach, support, and engage students. OCC now connects with dual credit students, sends appointment and orientation reminders, and continues to retain students by sending mental health check-in messages. The Retention and Financial Aid coordinators, TRIO and Nursing advisors, and Adult Education and Upward Bound departments now utilize Signal Vine to connect with their students. Specific message campaigns have been built and redesigned each semester for specific at-risk groups of students. Students are more likely to respond to messages that have been customized. To date, 62,987 messages have been sent or received from the OCC Signal Vine programs. The Financial Aid department sends messages targeted to Pell eligible students. Students who have applied to OCC but have not applied for financial aid, students who have started but have not finished the application, and students who have completed the application once and need to apply again are sent specific messages. The adult education program imports data based on students who have started high school equivalency classes but have not finished. Targeted messages are sent to students needing to take one class to complete their high school equivalency. Using data from CRM Recruit, targeted messages will be sent to students who are first-generation, minorities, economically disadvantaged, and those with disabilities.

Rend Lake College designed and opened a designated Wellness Room in July 2021 that is located in the Learning Resource Center. It is a designated quiet and safe space for students to relax, breathe, and get centered. Many groups, especially those of minority, female, individuals with disabilities, or first-generation students tend to have limited knowledge or access to mental health services. While it is designed as a private space where students can relax away from the general population, there is also a staff member who assists students as needed to obtain referrals for mental health or community resources. The College offers self-guided wellness activities such as journaling, mindfulness prompts, and art/coloring supplies. The usage of this space has continued to increase as students are returning to campus in a face-to-face learning environment. Records also show a dramatic increase to services such as ULifeline, the free mental health resource that is available to students in a confidential, private setting.

The Nursing Program Retention Project at **Prairie State College** is a partnership between the Office of Equity and Inclusion and the Allied Health and Emergency Services Division, and in particular, the Nursing Department. The overall program attrition rate in the Nursing program decreased progressively over the past several years, reaching a record low of 26 percent in the 2018-19 academic year. This progress is due in great part to the launch of a Supplemental Instruction initiative beginning in Fall 2014. During the 2019-20 academic year, however, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the retention rate to lower to 59 percent between the Fall and Spring semesters. The purpose of this retention project was to pilot the use of various student retention strategies to increase retention between Fall Nursing 101 and Spring Nursing 102 courses. This

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project focused on the cohort that began in Fall 2021 that included 64 incoming freshmen among whom 65 percent were African American, 23 percent Hispanic/Latino, eight percent White, and four percent Asian. Women comprised 90 percent of this cohort. The strategies included a Nursing program pre-semester pizza party, which was held before the semester began and included new and sophomore nursing students, alumni of the program, faculty, and administrators; increased supplemental instruction offered seven days a week; and a supplemental workshop to discuss test taking strategies specific to taking tests within the Nursing program and the future certification exam. While there was only an increase of one percent in retention over the previous year, the program was a success as thirty-one new students and guests attended the pre-semester pizza party, and 100 percent of the respondents thought the event was a good idea and as new students helpful for their future success. Furthermore, 71 percent of the new students participated in supplemental instruction vs. 51 percent in the previous semester (a 20 percent increase), and over half of the new students participated in the voluntary, supplemental test-taking strategy workshop and found it helpful.

Over the years, the Perkins Student Support Project has provided services to career program students meeting special populations eligibility requirements (economically disadvantaged, single parent, displaced homemaker/out-of-workforce individual, and nontraditional students). These students have been eligible to borrow required career-

Lewis and Clark Community College wrote into its Perkins Grant Application a provision to make career program students of color automatically qualified for Perkins services. Illinois Community College Board approved this initiative for fiscal year 2021.

specific textbooks, be provided some required career-specific supplies/materials (Allied Health students only), or, beginning in fiscal year 2021, borrow a laptop computer for a semester. With the new Perkins legislation (Perkins V) now in effect and emphasizing equity, inclusion, and diversity, **Lewis and Clark Community College** wrote into its fiscal year 2021 Perkins Grant Application a provision to make career program students of color (SOC) automatically qualified for Perkins services. The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) approved this initiative for fiscal year 2021. In Fall 2020 semester, 13 SOC received Perkins Project Services; three of these students would have been denied services in earlier years due to not possessing one of the eligible Special Populations traits needed for services. In Spring 2021, 12 SOC received Perkins services but only one would have not received those services due to not possessing a special populations trait. Women in nontraditional programs who seek out Perkins services, have been eligible since the enactment of Perkins III. In Fall 2020, 12 of the 14 nontraditional students served were women. In Spring 2021, eight of the 16 nontraditional students served were women.

The special population work groups began in fiscal year 2020 at **Rock Valley College (RVC)**. Comprised of faculty and staff, the groups were tasked with planning and developing an action plan for each of the special populations for review and implementation with the goal to recruit, retain and support the specific needs of each targeted special population group with the ultimate objective to have the students successfully complete their CTE pathway coursework and gain competitive employment. The Perkins Coordinator organized a mandatory virtual professional day session to faculty and staff where all the special population work groups presented basic information about their special population and looked at the impact in Illinois, in the college region, and at RVC as well as at the barriers to enrollment and becoming a successful student.

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Each special population work group has reached out to community leaders and organizations which may serve, work with, or have a working knowledge about the individual special population to serve on a focus group. The work groups on students with disabilities and students who are single parents held their focus groups and completed their action plans. The outcomes were partially met, as the work continues with other groups in various stages of completion. Students with disabilities entering the Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathway was significant with the addition of the Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) Program for students with intellectual disabilities. Single parent enrolling was up 32 percent from fiscal year 2020 to fiscal year 2021. The work group on students aging out of foster care held their focus group and completed their action plan at the end of fiscal year 2021.

As evidenced by data, students who enroll in a transfer-level English or math course by the end of their freshman year usually persist towards degree completion and/or transfer to a university. Multiple measures placement for English and mathematics allows for students to be enrolled in the highest class where they have the prerequisite skills to be successful. **Shawnee Community College (SCC)** allows for multiple methods for students to qualify for college-level English and math courses, thus decreasing time-to-degree completion. To ensure students in the SCC district could persist, the College has piloted multiple measures placement in Fall 2020 to accelerate time-to-degree completion for all students deemed not college-ready by enrolling students in a transfer-level English and/or math course by the end of their first year of college. The success rates of students will be determined by tracking semester-over-semester persistence rates of the cohort of students and time-to-degree completion.

In collaboration with the seven City Colleges of Chicago, District Office Financial Aid began research on revamping the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy in Fall 2020 to decrease the number of students receiving a SAP warning or hold on their accounts. Their research found that students who received the SAP hold were more likely not to return to complete their education because the process to remove the SAP hold had many barriers. Therefore, the recommendation from the SAP committee was to implement a progressive SAP policy that is less stringent and has the least adverse impact on students' retention and success. The changes went into effect during the Spring 2021 semester. **Harold Washington College (HWC)** continues to review SAP appeals according to reviewal guidelines, which did not change under the Progressive SAP Policy. The HWC internal SAP Committee reviews appeals as well as provides weekly SAP workshops during the semester. Students also can request a one-on-one SAP virtual appointment (requested via Navigate) as well as a SAP email consultation. Students can also email the SAP Committee with any questions/concerns regarding their appeal or the SAP process in general. In Fall 2020 HWC launched the SAP Committee and started offering SAP workshops. The new SAP policy was during the Spring 2021 workshop. Comparing Spring 2021 data with Spring 2020, HWC saw a similar number of SAP appeals reviewed, but did see an increase in the acceptance rate by ten percentage points after the new policy was implemented.

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