

**ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM
SELECTED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR
UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**FOCUS AREA:
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
COLLABORATING TO
STRENGTHEN
PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Demographics Illinois Community College System demographic data on credit students are gathered through the Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1) submission. These data illustrate that Illinois community colleges serve a broad cross section of the general population.

During fiscal year 2007, Illinois community colleges served approximately 13,152 Students with Disabilities (2.0 percent of all credit students). In the latest census estimates, 10.0 percent of all Illinoisans between the ages of 16 and 64 years of age have a disability.

The Male/Female distribution of all students in the Illinois Community College System typically fluctuates little from year to year. Females comprised 55.5 percent of the student population in fiscal year 2007. Census data show little change in the proportion of Females in Illinois with 50.8 percent in 2007 versus 51.0 percent in 2000.

In fiscal year 2007, the average age of Illinois community college credit students was 30.6 while the median age was 25.7. According to 2007 census data, the median age of all Illinoisans was 35.7 years.

According to 2007 census data, Minorities accounted for 28.3 percent of the total Illinois population. Student racial/ethnic representation varies across broad program levels. During fiscal year 2007, Minorities comprised 28.2 percent of baccalaureate/transfer enrollees whose ethnicity was known. An examination of each Minority racial/ethnic group's representation across the baccalaureate/transfer program area indicates that African-American (14.1 percent) students accounted for the largest Minority group, followed by Latino (8.6 percent), Asian (4.7 percent), Nonresident Alien (0.5 percent), and Native American (0.3 percent) students.

According to 2007 census data, Minorities accounted for 28.3 percent of the total Illinois population. . . . Minority students accounted for 29.1 percent of career/technical graduates, compared to 28.2 percent of baccalaureate/transfer graduates.

Minority students accounted for 29.1 percent of the career and technical enrollments. African-American students had the highest representation among Minorities in career/technical programs and accounted for 15.8 percent of the population. Latino students had the second largest career/technical program enrollment (8.7 percent), followed by Asian students (4.0 percent), Nonresident Alien students (0.4 percent), and Native American students (0.3 percent).

Minority students accounted for nearly two-thirds (62.6 percent) of the individuals enrolled in community college Adult Education coursework whose ethnicity was known in fiscal year 2007. More than eight out of ten students were Minorities in English as a Second Language programs.

Minority students accounted for 29.1 percent of career/technical graduates, compared to 28.2 percent of baccalaureate/transfer graduates. Minority faculty accounted for 16.0 percent of full-time and 15.5 percent of part-time Illinois community college faculty whose ethnicity was known.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

*The IPEDS GRS survey provides a **Graduation Rate** for full-time, first-time, degree or certificate-seeking students in a specified year and provides a count of the number completing within 150 percent of "catalog" time (i.e., three years for a two-year Associate Degree); and a **Combined Rate** for those who either graduated, transferred to other postsecondary institutions, or were still enrolled at the end of the observation period.*

IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey – Federal officials have developed an approach for looking at selected educational outcomes called the Graduate Rate Survey (GRS) which is part of the nationwide Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS) initiative. The IPEDS GRS survey provides a **Graduation Rate** for full-time, first-time, degree or certificate-seeking students in a specified year and provides a count of the number completing within 150 percent of "catalog" time (i.e., three years for a two-year Associate Degree); and a **Combined Rate** for those who either graduated, transferred to other postsecondary institutions, or were still enrolled at the end of the

observation period. Although still limited in the range of potential results tracked, the Combined Outcome Rate measure more fully reflects the range of academic outcomes sought and progress being made by community college students. Even the Combined Outcome Rate reported still undercounts the positive achievements of the community college students.

Retention Rates provide a measure of student attachment to college. First-year retention is particularly important since new students – especially recent high school graduates – need to successfully transition to college and the accompanying elevated academic and personal responsibility expectations if they intend to pursue a degree or certificate. Elevated Retention Rates show an ongoing engagement in the educational process and the student's persistence demonstrates an attachment to the college. Elevated Retention Rates are typically associated with individuals who are making academic progress and improve the individual's chances of completing a certificate or degree.

***Retention Rates** provide a measure of student attachment to college. . . Fall to fall retention figures are calculated. Two percentage figures are provided in the accompanying report: a Retention Rate that includes only individuals who re-enrolled the following fall and an **Adjusted Retention Rate** which includes individuals who re-enrolled the next fall plus those individuals who graduated during the intervening or returning year.*

Statewide full-time student Fall to Fall Retention Rates were calculated for the most recent six years. Note that the time frames for the GRS related measures and the more recent Retention Rates differ so the numbers will not track across GRS and Fall to Fall retention tables. The GRS figures by definition require three years of retrospective data. Fall to Fall Retention Rates can be calculated after a single year passes.

Retention Rates are always expressed as a percentage. Two percentage figures are provided in the accompanying report: a Retention Rate that includes only individuals who re-enrolled the following fall and an **Adjusted Retention Rate** which includes individuals who re-enrolled the next fall plus those individuals

who graduated during the intervening or returning year. Part of the reason for the adjustment is that a variety of community college short-term intensive certificate programs can be completed within one year. In the tables, each student can only generate one positive outcome (unduplicated results). The Adjusted Retention Rate reflects a more comprehensive perspective and will be the focus of the analysis provided. The differences between these two rates tend to be small. Tables also include the unadjusted Retention Rate as another point of reference for interested readers. Statewide retention data are furnished for Students with Disabilities, by Gender, for Minority Students Overall, and by Racial/Ethnic Group for the larger groups.

*Cohorts of entering students in college level coursework with no prior higher education experience who completed 12 or more credits at the community college are tracked through administrative data matching for four years and the number of successful **transfers** to four year colleges and universities are identified.*

Transfer Rates – Cohorts of entering students in college level coursework with no prior higher education experience who completed 12 or more credits at the community college are tracked through administrative data matching for four years and the number of successful transfers to four year colleges and universities are identified. Illinois' statewide transfer rate tracking uses the Illinois Community College and Public University Shared Enrollment and Graduation Files (Shared

Data) and more recently the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) Student Tracker to identify transfers to four year universities. Shared Data contains complete coverage of Illinois public higher education and also includes DePaul University and Bradley University. NSC includes enrollment information for all types of out-of-state colleges and universities, as well as additional private in-state institutions. The following information is limited to a three year period because supplemental data were consistently available from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) Student Tracker for this time frame.

Having a sense of how the system is making progress at the college level provides a useful point of reference. Hence, counts of colleges reporting increases (1 percent or more), decreases (1 percent or more) and little or no change (less than 1 percent) are provided across the student outcome portions of the report. The Combined Rate and Graduation Rate looks back eight years. The Fall to Fall Adjusted Retention is based on a five-year horizon.

Students with Disabilities Outcomes

Over the last five years, on average more than one-third (40.3 percent) of the Students with Disabilities (self reported) who were identified as college ready either graduated, transferred, or were still enrolled – **Combined Rate** -- at the end of the observation period.

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Combined Rate results for the latest cohort (40.3 percent) were lower compared to last year's results (42.2 percent). This decrease can be partially attributed to an increase in the number of Students with Disabilities in the latest cohort (N = 762) compared to last year (N = 599) while 54 additional Students with Disabilities reported either graduating, transferring, or continuing their enrollment in the latest results. Latest Combined

Rate results for students without disabilities show that about three-fourths demonstrated documented progress (32.0 percent over Students with Disabilities).

Shifting emphasis to the number of institutions reporting progress, shows that over the five-year period studied, colleges reporting increases in the Combined Rate for Students with Disabilities outnumbered colleges with declines two to one. A handful of colleges (N = 6) reported little or no change.

Narrowing the focus to Students with Disabilities who completed programs within the GRS time frame shows the following results. Over the last five years, **Graduation Rates** for Students with Disabilities averaged 17.1 percent. The most recent Graduation Rate results for Students with Disabilities (16.8 percent) were lower than the results achieved in four of the last five years. IPEDS does not provide national comparable information on Graduation Rates for Students with Disabilities. The number of colleges reporting Graduation Rate losses (N = 19) for Students with Disabilities and gains (N = 19) were the same, and ten colleges reported little or no change.

Academic achievement for Students with Disabilities as reflected in the latest Combined Rate – graduation/retention and transfer – shows that about one-fourth of the Students with Disabilities are being retained within higher education. Breaking apart the GRS, latest GRS Combined Rate results show that 23.5 percent of Students with Disabilities either were still enrolled or had transferred to another institution. The latest Combined Rate for Students with Disabilities was 32.0 percent lower compared to all other students.

The latest Fall to Fall **Adjusted Retention Rate** results from fall 2005 to fall 2006 show that Students with Disabilities had an Adjusted Retention Rate of 63.2 percent. The Adjusted Retention Rate for Students with Disabilities in the most recent year was higher than (+2.7 percent) than, students without disabilities (60.5 percent). The most recent Students with Disabilities results are slightly higher than the three-year average (62.2 percent). The latest performance of students without disabilities (61.0 percent) is slightly lower than their long-term average.

Twenty-three colleges showed increases in their Adjusted Retention Rate over the last three years, 22 colleges registered decreases, and the remaining three colleges displayed little or no change.

The latest breakouts show that students with disabilities had a **transfer rate** of 26.3 percent. These were the highest rates over the 3-year period. The transfer rate increased 7.5 percent over the previous year, and the number of students with disabilities increased 72 students over the previous year. Students with disabilities (22.4 percent) achieved lower three-year average Transfer Rates than other students (33.6 percent). On average, slightly more than one-fifth (22.4 percent) of students with disabilities transferred during the observation period. Recent gains are noted as the latest results are higher than the three-year average (N=+45; +3.9 percent).

Twenty-six colleges showed positive results in their Transfer Rates over the last three years while 9 colleges showed negative results. The remaining 13 colleges showed little or no change.

Bottom Line on Academic Achievement Measures for Students with Disabilities

– The latest results for college ready Students with Disabilities compared to five years ago show positive movement for the Combined Outcome Rate (40.3 percent versus 28.8 percent in 2002) and a small decrease in the Graduation Rate (16.8 percent versus 17.1 percent in 2002). Students with Disabilities Combined Outcome Rates were improving, and the number of colleges showing gains over the last five years outnumbered those with declines 2 to 1. Graduation Rates within 150 percent of catalog time for Students with Disabilities were less positive with some recent improvement noted. The most recent Graduation Rate results for Students with Disabilities (16.8 percent) were lower than the results achieved in four of the last five years. The latest Graduation Results for Students with Disabilities are slightly less favorable at 16.8 percent than the previous year (15.1 percent). Over the last five years, the number of colleges reporting Graduation Rate reductions (N = 19) for Students with Disabilities and increases (N = 19) were the same, and ten colleges reported little or no change.

Students with Disabilities Combined Outcome Rates were improving . . . The most recent Graduation Rate results for Students with Disabilities (16.8 percent) were lower than the results achieved in four of the last five years. . . The latest Adjusted Retention Rate at 63.2 percent was down compared to 2004 (59.2 percent), but is higher than the latest Adjusted Rate for students who did not self identify as having a disability (60.5 percent).

The latest Adjusted Retention Rate at 63.2 percent was down compared to 2004 (59.2 percent), but is higher than the latest Adjusted Rate for students who did not self identify as having a disability (60.5 percent). Trends at the college level were mixed, with the number of colleges showing increases in Adjusted Retention Rates over the last five years just one more than the number of colleges with decreases.

The latest transfer rate was 26.3 percent, which was the highest over the 3-year period. The transfer rate increased 7.5 percent over the previous year, and the number of students with disabilities decreased 72 students over the previous year. Trends at the colleges showed twice as many colleges showing gains than declines in transfer rates of students with disabilities.

Female Student Outcomes

Five-year average **Combined Rate** – graduated/ transferred/still enrolled – results for Female (70.3 percent) students were about 3 percent higher than the results attained by Male (66.8 percent) students. Over the last five years, Females consistently outperformed Males by achieving between 1.6 and 5.6 percent higher rates.

The latest Combined Rate outcomes for both Female (72.7 percent) and Male (70.1 percent) students were the second highest over the five-year period. Males students have demonstrated recent gains in reducing the performance gap.

Looking at progress at the institutional level, the number of colleges with Female Combined Rate percent increases over the last five years shows that advances lead declines by almost ten to one.

Female students averaged a 25.1 percent **Graduation Rate** over the past five years and Male students averaged 20.5 percent – a little less than 5.0 percent lower.

The most recent Graduation Rate outcomes were below the five-year average. In the 2006 results, just under one-quarter of Female (23.6 percent) and one-fifth of the Male (20.2 percent) students graduated. According to the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), the latest available national figures for two-year public colleges show a Female Graduation Rate of 24.7 percent and a Male Graduation Rate was 22.2 percent. Hence, the Illinois Female Graduation rate was slightly lower (-1.1 percent) than the national rate, and Illinois' Male Graduation Rate trailed the national rate by 2.0 percent.

Among the 48 community colleges, 26 colleges reported decreases, 15 colleges reported increases in Female graduates over the five-year period being reviewed, and 7 colleges experienced little or no change in the percent of Female graduates.

The latest **Adjusted Retention Rate** for Females (62.1 percent) were higher than Males (59.1 percent). Female Adjusted Rates have been consistently higher over the last three years. The latest results were on par with the three-year average for Males and very similar to the three-year average for Females (62.6 percent). Compared to a couple of years ago, 13 colleges showed increases in the Adjusted Retention Rate for Female students, 32 colleges exhibited decreases, and three colleges showed little or no change.

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The latest data show growth in the number and **transfer rate** of Female students. The latest breakouts show that Female students (39.0 percent, N = 6,347) demonstrated the higher Transfer Rate over Male students (37.6 percent, N = 5,526). These were the highest rates over the 3-year period. The Female student transfer rate increased 8.3 percent over the previous year, and the Male student transfer rate increased 6.0 percent over the previous year. Female students outnumbered Male students 1.1 to 1 in the number of transfers. Female students (33.5 percent) achieved slightly higher three-year average Transfer Rates. On average, about one-third of both Female (33.5 percent) and Male (33.2 percent) students transferred during the observation period.

For Female students, 42 colleges showed positive results in their Transfer Rates over the last three years while 3 colleges showed negative results. The remaining 3 colleges showed little or no change (less than 1 percent) among Female students. For male students, forty colleges posted positive Transfer Rate results, 4 colleges exhibited little or no change, and 4 colleges reported a decrease.

The latest Combined Outcome Rate results were very positive for Female students compared to five years ago (72.7 percent in 2006 versus 64.7 percent in 2002) and the Graduation Rate for Female students showed little change (23.6 percent in 2006 versus 25.0 percent in 2002).

Bottom Line on Academic Achievement Measures for Female Students – The latest Combined Outcome Rate results were very positive for Female students compared to five years ago (72.7 percent in 2006 versus 64.7 percent in 2002) and the Graduation Rate for Female students showed little change (23.6

percent in 2006 versus 25.0 percent in 2002). Looking at progress at the institutional level, the number of colleges with Female Combined Rate percent increases over the last five years shows that advances lead declines by nearly ten to one.

The Female Graduation Rate for Illinois (23.6 percent) was below corresponding national Graduation Rates (24.7 percent) as reported by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). Among the 48 community colleges, Female student Graduation Rates decreased at 26 colleges, increased at 15 colleges, and were fundamentally unchanged at 7 colleges.

The latest Adjusted Retention Rate for Female (62.1 percent) students were higher than Males (59.1 percent). Female Adjusted Rates have been consistently higher over the last three years. Compared to a couple years ago, Female student Adjusted Retention Rates were up at 13 colleges, down at 32 colleges, and relatively unchanged at three colleges.

The latest data show growth in the number and rate of Female students who transferred. Current data show that overall Female students (39.0 percent) had slightly higher Transfer Rates than the Male student (37.6 percent) population. Trends at the college level were very positive as 42 colleges showed positive results in the transfer rates of Female students.

The comprehensive all student data show that 379,922 Female students were enrolled in Illinois community colleges in fiscal year 2007. Female enrollments decreased 2.2 percent compared to five years ago and are fairly consistent with the previous year (+0.7 percent). With 29,292 graduates in 2007, Female completion counts are up 12.0 percent over the past five years. Female completions were up 1.4 percent compared to the previous year.

Across the board progress is noted as the latest percentage Combined Rates for Minority (66.2 percent) students and White (73.5 percent) students were the second highest for both groups over the five- year period. The gap between Minority and White student performance which averaged nearly 10 percent over five years, narrowed to about 7.3 percent in the latest results.

Minority Students Overall Outcomes

Over the last five years statewide, on average just over 60 percent of the Minority students either graduated, transferred, or were still enrolled at the end of the observation period.

Across the board progress is noted as the latest percentage Combined Rates for Minority (66.2 percent) students and White (73.5 percent) students were the second highest for both groups over the five- year period. The gap between Minority and White student performance which averaged nearly 10 percent over five years,

narrowed to about 7.3 percent in the latest results.

Over the last five years, ninety percent of all community colleges in Illinois (N = 43) experienced Combined Rate increases in Minority Graduation Rates, four colleges reported decreases, and one college reported little or no change.

Over the last five years Graduation Rates for Minority students averaged 12.4 percent. The most recent

graduation results were below average for Minority Students (11.9 percent or one out of every 8.4 students in the cohort). According to NCHEMS, the Minority student completion rate for two-year public institutions nationwide was 19.1 percent, which is about 1.6 times the Illinois Graduation Rate (11.9 percent).

White students outnumbered Minority students over 2.5 to one in the entering full-time cohort. Looking at the latest data, Minority student representation among graduates was lower with White completers outnumbering Minority graduates more than five to one. The latest GRS results show that White students were twice as likely to graduate within the observation period as Minority students.

Colleges showing increases in Minority Graduation Rate performance outnumbered decreases 1.1 to one. Twenty-four colleges reported increases in Minority graduates, 21 colleges saw decreases in Minority student Graduation Rates, and three colleges experienced little or no change in Minority completers.

The latest data show overall Minority (52.0 percent) students registered lower **Adjusted Retention Rates** than were recorded in the White (61.6 percent) student results. This pattern was consistent over the three years. The latest results are lower than the three-year average (64.7 percent) for White students and about the same as the overall average for Minority (52.1 percent) students. Compared to last year, Minority students Combined Rate results (-0.1 percent) experienced little change.

The latest breakouts show that among the largest racial/ethnic groups, Asian students (45.6 percent, N = 494) demonstrated the highest **Transfer Rate**. The number of Asian students transferring was relatively small. White students outnumbered Asian students 19.5 to 1 in the number of transfers but this represents an improvement over the 22.1 to 1 White/Asian student ratio among the entering students who were tracked for this performance indicator.

Transfer Rates for Latino (29.7 percent) and African American (28.7 percent) students were substantially lower. While ranking results were similar across the three-year observation period, Latino and African American student Transfer Rates show marked recent improvement in both the Transfer Rate and number of transfers. Both Latino (+9.6 percent) and African American (+9.0 percent) student one year Transfer Rate gains outpaced White student (+7.2 percent) and Overall Minority student (+8.6 percent) gains for the same time frame. Substantially more Latino (N = 670, +254) and African American (N = 977, +393) students transferred compared to last year. While progress is noted, additional advances will be necessary to narrow the gap with the highest performing populations.

Looking at the groups with the most participants, Asian students (40.6 percent) achieved the highest three-year average Transfer Rates. Nearly one-quarter of the Latino (24.1 percent) and African-American (23.4 percent) students transferred based on the three-year average.

Thirty-seven colleges posted positive Transfer Rate results for African-American students during the three-year observation period. Four colleges exhibited little or no change, while the remaining 7 colleges reported a decrease in their African-American student Transfer Rates.

Thirty-two colleges registered increases in their Latino student Transfer Rates during the time frame under study. Nine colleges experienced decreases in their Latino student Transfer Rates over the last three years. The 7 remaining colleges showed little or no actual change in their Latino student Transfer Rates.

Advances outnumbered declines about 2 to 1 in the Transfer Rate for Asian students among community colleges. Twenty-five colleges reported increases in their Transfer Rates for Asian students over the last three years and 14 colleges exhibited decreases. The 9 other colleges displayed little or no change.

Bottom Line on Academic Achievement Measures for Minority Students Compared to five years ago, the most recent Combined Rate results for Minority students were very positive (66.2 percent in 2006 versus 44.2 percent in 2002) and Graduation Rate results for Minority students were about 0.1 percent higher than five years ago (11.9 percent in 2006 versus 11.8 percent in 2002). The latest Combined Rate for Minority (66.2 percent) students was the second highest during the five-year period. Advances led declines by almost eleven to one in the number of community colleges reporting increases in overall Minority Student Combined Outcomes over the five-year period.

According to NCHEMS the Minority student Graduation Rate for two-year public institutions nationwide was 19.1 percent, which is about 1.6 times the Illinois Minority student Graduation Rate (11.9 percent). In Illinois, compared to five years ago, 24 colleges reported increases in Minority Graduation Rates, 21 colleges saw decreases, and three colleges experienced little or no change.

The latest data show an **Adjusted Retention Rate** for overall Minority was 52.0 percent, which is slightly below performance levels from two years ago (52.3 percent).

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Overall, the comprehensive fiscal year 2007 data show that known Minority enrollments decreased slightly (-3.9 percent) compared to five years ago (N = 237,662 in 2007 versus N = 247,338 in 2003). Over the last year, Minority student enrollments showed a decrease of 0.2 percent. The number of known Minority student completers increased 19.4 percent compared to five years ago (N = 15,532 in 2007 versus N = 13,012 in 2003). Known minority completers increased 9.5 percent over the past year (N = 15,532 in 2007 versus N = 14,186 in 2006).

The latest data show blanket growth across racial/ethnic groups in the number and **transfer rate** of students. Current data show that overall White students (40.5 percent) had substantially higher Transfer Rates than the overall Minority student (31.9 percent) population. This pattern was consistent over the past three years. The transfer rate performance gap between White and overall Minority students remained about the same in the latest figures (8.6 percent) as in the three year average (8.5 percent). Recent gains are noted for both groups as the latest results are substantially higher than the three-year average for both White students (+5.3 percent) and Minority students (+5.2 percent). Latino and African American student Transfer Rates show marked recent improvement in both the Transfer Rate and number of transfers. While progress is noted, additional advances will be necessary to narrow the gap with the highest performing populations. Thirty-seven colleges posted positive Transfer Rate results for African-American students during the three-year observation period.

African-American Student Outcomes

Over the last five years, on average more than one-half (58.5 percent) of the African-American students either graduated, transferred, or were still enrolled at the end of the observation period. The African-

American student Combined Rate was lower than the corresponding average overall Minority Combined Rate (61.2 percent) and average results for White (70.5 percent) students.

Progress is evident as the latest percentage Combined Rates for African-American (61.9 percent) and White (73.5 percent) students were the second highest for both groups over the last five years. Compared to last year, the rate of growth declined for African-American (-1.2 percent) students and White (-0.1 percent) students. The latest data show that African-American students have made some recent strides in narrowing the Combined Rate outcome performance gap with White students. Transfer and retention are the areas where improvement has been noted.

For African-American students, 41 colleges showed positive movement in the Combined Rate measure over the five-year period with advances leading declines at more than fourteen to one.

Over the last five years, Graduation Rates among African-American students have averaged 10.3 percent compared to 12.4 percent for all Minorities and 26.4 percent for White students.

Over the last five years, Graduation Rates among African-American students have averaged 10.3 percent compared to 12.4 percent for all Minorities and 26.4 percent for White students. Compared to five years ago, the African-American student Graduation Rates increased 0.4 percent (FY 2002 = 9.7 percent versus FY 2006 = 10.1 percent), Minority student Graduation Rates were

largely unchanged (FY 2002 = 11.8 percent versus FY 2006 = 11.9 percent), and White student Graduation Rates increased 0.5 percent (FY 2002 = 25.4 percent versus FY 2006 = 25.9 percent).

At 15.8 percent, the latest in Graduation Rate outcomes gap between African-American (10.1 percent) and White (25.9 percent) students was very similar to five years ago (15.7 percent), and lower than the previous year (16.7 percent) and the five-year average (16.1 percent).

According to NCHEMS, the national completion rate among African-American students for two-year public institutions was 17.7 percent, which is more than 1.7 times higher than the Illinois completion rate (10.1 percent) among African-American students

The latest results highlight the difference between the two types of Student Outcome measures available through IPEDS. Just over one in ten African-American (10.1 percent) students Graduated, while more than one out of two African-American (61.9 percent) students either graduated, transferred, or were still enrolled.

Twenty-five community colleges in Illinois experienced increases in African-American Student Graduation Rates, six showed little or no change, and 17 colleges reported decreases.

The most current Adjusted Retention Rates for African American students (42.2 percent) were substantially lower than those registered by other large racial/ethnic groups and the overall rate. The latest African-American Student Adjusted Retention Rate was down 3.7 percent compared to 2004 (45.9 percent).

Nineteen colleges posted positive Adjusted Retention Rates for African-American students over the last three years, 26 colleges reported decreases, and three colleges exhibited little or no change.

Bottom Line on Academic Achievement Measures for African-American Students

The latest results for college-ready African-American Students compared to five years ago show strong positive movement for the Combined Outcome Rate (61.9 percent versus 47.5 percent in 2002) and in the Graduation Rate (10.1 percent versus 9.7 percent in 2002). The latest Combined Rate for African-American Students was the second highest over the time frame reviewed. For African-American Students, persistence and transfer were up while graduation was up compared to five years ago. Just over one in ten African-American (10.1 percent) students Graduated, while more than one out of two African-American (61.9 percent) Students either graduated, transferred, or were still enrolled. Compared to five years ago, colleges with African-American Students Combined Rate increases outnumbered those with decreases by more than fourteen to one.

The latest results for college-ready African-American Students compared to five years ago show strong positive movement for the Combined Outcome Rate (61.9 percent versus 47.5 percent in 2002) and in the Graduation Rate (10.1 percent versus 9.7 percent in 2002).

The latest African-American Student Graduation Rate was lower than four of the last five years, and national data indicate that further improvement is warranted. According to NCHEMS, the national completion rate among African-American students for two-year public institutions was 17.7 percent, which is more than 1.7 times higher than the Illinois completion rate (10.1 percent) among African-American students. Compared to five years ago, colleges reporting increases (N = 25) in African-American Student Graduation Rates narrowly outnumbered those reporting decreases (N = 17). Six colleges reported little or no change in African-American Student Graduation Rates.

The latest Adjusted Retention Rate at 42.2 percent was down 3.7 percent compared to 2007, and is not competitive with the latest Adjusted Rate for all students (60.6 percent).

The latest Adjusted Retention Rate at 42.2 percent was down 3.7 percent compared to 2007, and is not competitive with the latest Adjusted Rate for all students (60.6 percent). Trends at the college level were mixed with 19 colleges showing increases in Adjusted Transfer Rates compared to three years ago with 26 colleges reporting decreases and three

colleges reporting little change. The latest Adjusted Retention Rate shows that more than almost four out of ten African-American Students returned or completed in the subsequent year.

In absolute terms, enrollments are decreasing and completions are increasing for African-American Students. In fiscal year 2007, there were a total of 97,254 African-American Students attending an Illinois community college. Over the last five years, enrollment by African-American Students is down 2.1 percent and enrollments fell 2.1 percent over the last year. There were 7,794 African-American graduates in fiscal year 2007, which is up 16.1 percent over the last five years and 9.5 percent compared to last year.

Latino Student Outcomes

Over the past five years on average, nearly two out of three (65.2 percent) Latino students in the GRS tracking cohort graduated, transferred, or were continuing their education. This is almost 4 percent higher than the corresponding Combined Overall Minority Rate (61.2 percent) and approximately 5 percent below the average results for White (70.5 percent) students.

Progress is evident as the latest Combined Rate for Latino students. Nearly two-thirds (67.1 percent) of the Latino students graduated, transferred, or were still pursuing their education, which represents the third best results over the last five years.

Over the last five years, approximately three colleges reported increases for every college with a decrease in the Combined Rate for Latino students.

Over the last five years Graduation Rates -- based on the IPEDS approach -- among Latino students averaged 14.4 percent compared to 12.4 percent for all Minorities and 26.4 percent for White students.

Over the last five years Graduation Rates -- based on the IPEDS approach -- among Latino students averaged 14.4 percent compared to 12.4 percent for all Minorities and 26.4 percent for White students.

The most recent graduation results were below average for Latino students (FY 2006 = 12.5 percent and five-year average = 14.4 percent). According to

NCHEMS, nationally the Latino student completion rate for two-year public institutions was 16.8 percent compared to 12.5 percent in Illinois.

For Latino students, 13 colleges reported Graduation Rates increases, 19 colleges reported decreases, and sixteen showed little or no change.

The gap between the latest Latino Combined Outcome Rate and Graduation Rate was 54.6 percent, which is second largest of any racial/ethnic group. The Graduation Rate for Latino students in Illinois was 4.3 percent behind the national Graduation Rate. Based on the latest results, in Illinois just over one in eight Latino students graduated, while two out of three Latino students either graduated, transferred, or were still enrolled.

The latest Fall to Fall Adjusted Retention Rate for Latino students was 57.7 percent. Latino students reported an Adjusted Retention Rate reduction (-2.9 percent) in Fall to Fall retention over the last year.

Twenty colleges registered increases in their Latino student Adjusted Retention Rates during the time frame under study. Twenty six colleges experienced decreases in their Latino student Adjusted Retention Rates over the last three years. The two remaining colleges showed little or no actual change in their Latino student Adjusted Retention Rates.

Bottom Line on Academic Achievement Measures for Latino Students

The latest results for college-ready Latino students compared to five years ago show increased results for the Combined Rate (67.1 percent in 2006 versus 58.2 percent in 2002) and a reduction of 1.5 percent in the Graduation Rate (12.5 percent in 2006 versus 14.0 percent in 2002). Progress is evident in the Combined Rate as just over two-thirds of the Latino students graduated, transferred, or were still pursuing their education, which was the third best results over the last five years.

The latest results for college-ready Latino students compared to five years ago show increased results for the Combined Rate (67.1 percent in 2006 versus 58.2 percent in 2002) and a reduction of 1.5 percent in the Graduation Rate (12.5 percent in 2006 versus 14.0 percent in 2002).

According to NCHEMS, nationally the Latino student completion rate for two-year public institutions was 16.8 percent compared to 12.5 percent in Illinois. Among Latino students in Illinois, over the last five years, 33 colleges reported Combined Rate increases, 10 reported decreases, and 5 demonstrated little or no change. About three colleges saw Latino student Combined Rate increases for every college with a decrease.

The latest Fall to Fall **Adjusted Retention Rate** for Latino students was 57.7 percent. Latino students reported an Adjusted Retention Rate decrease of 3.5 percent over the last three years. Among Latino students, 20 colleges reported Adjusted Retention Rate increases, 26 reported decreases, and two showed little or no change.

*The latest Fall to Fall **Adjusted Retention Rate** for Latino students was 57.7 percent. Latino students reported an Adjusted Retention Rate*

A comprehensive look at all student enrollment and completion data show a decrease in enrollments and an increase in completions among Latino students compared to five years ago. In fiscal year 2007, overall 106,147 Latino students attended an Illinois community college. Over the last five years, enrollment by Latino Students is down 3.7 percent. Latino student enrollments showed a 2.1 percent increase from the previous year. There were 4,589 graduates in fiscal year 2007, which is an increase of 25.2 percent compared to five years ago and up 6.8 percent compared to last year.

Asian Student Outcomes

Asian students registered the highest five-year average Combined Rate outcomes of any racial/ethnic group. Just over three-fourths (75.5 percent) of the Asian students and more than two-thirds (70.5 percent) of the White students either graduated, transferred, or were still enrolled. Furthermore, Asian students achieved the highest Combined Outcome Rate in each of the last five years. The latest rate for Asian students (81.1 percent) showed growth (14.1 percent) compared to five years ago.

While Asian students included in the GRS cohort performed well, there were relatively few individuals included (N = 1,041 in latest data). Looking for opportunities to increase the number of full-time, first time Asian students in the entering cohort would benefit more individuals and could enhance overall statewide rates.

Twenty-nine colleges reported increases in the rate of Asian students who graduated, transferred, or were still enrolled, 9 colleges experienced decreases, and 10 colleges saw little or no change in Asian student Combined Rate results.

Over the last five years, Graduation Rates for Asian students averaged 14.9 percent across the five-year period, the percent of Asian students graduating increased by 3.8 percent, and the number of Asian students who graduated increased by 50 (from 126 to 176).

Over the last five years, Graduation Rates for Asian students averaged 14.9 percent across the five-year period, the percent of Asian students graduating increased by 3.8 percent, and the number of Asian students who graduated increased by 50 (from 126 to 176). National Graduation Rates for Asian students were not provided by NCHEMS.

The most recent Asian student Graduation Rate results were above average (16.9 percent) and 3.5 percent higher than the previous year (13.5 percent).

Results attained by Asian students highlight the difference between the two types of GRS student outcome measures. Approximately one out of six Asian students graduated, while over four out of five Asian students either graduated, transferred, or were still enrolled.

Over the last five years, 23 colleges saw increases in Asian student Graduation Rates, 13 colleges experienced decreases, and 12 colleges saw little or no change.

Combined Rates for Asian students were strongly positive. Asian student Graduation Rates leave room for additional improvement.

Among the largest groups, the latest racial/ethnic breakouts of the data show that Asian (70.3 percent) students demonstrated the highest Fall to Fall **Adjusted Retention Rates**. Over the last year, short-term Asian students reported an improvement in the Adjusted Retention Rate (2.3 percent). Over the last three years, 20 colleges reported increases in their Fall to Fall Adjusted Retention Rates for Asian students, 20 colleges exhibited decreases, and eight colleges displayed little or no actual change.

*Among the largest groups, the latest racial/ethnic breakouts of the data show that Asian (70.3 percent) students demonstrated the highest Fall to Fall **Adjusted Retention Rates**.*

The latest results for college-ready Asian students compared to five years ago show gains in the Combined Rate (81.1 percent versus 67.0 percent in 2002) and in the Graduation Rate (16.9 percent versus 13.1 percent in 2002) with additional room for further upward movement in completions.

Bottom Line on Academic Achievement Measures for Asian Students

– The latest results for college-ready Asian students compared to five years ago show gains in the Combined Rate (81.1 percent versus 67.0 percent in 2002) and in the Graduation Rate (16.9 percent versus 13.1 percent in 2002) with additional room for further upward movement in completions. Note that Asian students had the highest Combined Rate during each of the last five years. Institutional Combined Rate

outcomes for Asian students were positive compared to five years ago, as 9 colleges posted declines, 29 colleges reported increases, and 10 colleges saw little or no change.

The most recent Graduation Rate results for Asian (16.9 percent) students were the highest achieved over the last five years, but were not competitive with the overall Graduation Rate results (21.9 percent). College-level results were mixed. Compared to five years ago, 23 colleges recorded Graduation Rate gains among Asian students, 12 reported little or no change, and 13 colleges saw losses.

The latest Adjusted Retention Rate for Asian students increased compared to three years ago (70.3 percent in 2006 versus 69.0 percent in 2003). Adjusted Retention Rates for Asian students were consistently higher than the all student overall Adjusted Retention Rate (60.6 percent in 2006 and 61.6 percent in 2003). College-level data show that 20 colleges experienced increases in the Adjusted Retention for Asian students and 20 experienced decreases. The remaining eight experienced little or no change.

FY 2007 comprehensive data show both enrollment and completion are increasing for Asian students. In fiscal year 2007, overall 29,223 Asian students attended an Illinois community college. Over the last five years, enrollment by Asian Students is down (-5.1 percent) and down 0.2 percent from the last year. There were 2,787 Asian graduates in fiscal year 2007, which is up 23.2 percent over the last five years and 17.0 percent compared to last year.

WHAT WORKS: PROMISING PRACTICES FOR PROMOTING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

Sample promising practice initiatives aimed at enhancing student success are highlighted in the report and are provided around the following topics: Student Success Centers; Early Alert College Core Course Expectation Initiatives; Services to Individuals with Disabilities; Services to Minority Students; Services to English-as-a-Second Language Students; Services to Female Students; Teen Parents; Sample Orientation and Interventional Advisement; Learning Communities; and Program Support Services Initiatives.

John A. Logan College's Write Place Writing Center (WPWC) is devoted to strengthening student writing and provides assistance to over 300 students per year. Southwestern Illinois College's Personal Advocate Linking Services (PALS) program promotes individualized academic and career success and provides one-on-one assistance to students.

What Works: Sample Student Success Center Initiatives. John A. Logan College's Write Place Writing Center (WPWC) is devoted to strengthening student writing and provides assistance to over 300 students per year. Southwestern Illinois College's Personal Advocate Linking Services (PALS) program promotes individualized academic and career success and provides one-on-one assistance to students with Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) forms; links students to campus and

community resources; emergency funding for books and/or tuition for at risk and low income students; assistance with resume preparation; and internships and career mentoring. Other colleges that reported samples student success initiatives included: **McHenry County College** and **Parkland College**.

What Works: Sample Early Alert College Core Course Expectation Projects. In spring 2006, **Black Hawk College** began teaming up with area secondary schools to increase the number of high school graduates prepared for successful entry into college level math and English courses. The college's two step approach to reduce the number of recent high school graduates that need to take developmental coursework include: helping align high school course content with college learning objectives and providing college placement testing on high school campuses. **Harold Washington College, Kankakee Community College, Lake Land College, Moraine Valley Community College, Richland Community College, and Shawnee Community College** also reported sample early alert initiatives in their reports.

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The Supported College Transition (SCT)/College for Life (CFL) program has been in place at Lewis and Clark Community College helps individuals with disabilities achieve independence and academic or employment success through certificate and associate degree programs.

What Works: Sample Programs to Serve Individuals with Disabilities. The Supported College Transition (SCT)/College for Life (CFL) program has been in place at **Lewis and Clark Community College** helps individuals with disabilities achieve independence and academic or employment success through certificate and associate degree programs. The program was a featured cover story in the newsletter: *Disability Compliance for Higher Education*. **Waubensee**

Community College's First Move helps incoming freshmen with disabilities increase academic success and develop self-advocacy skills. Students reported that as a result of the program they understood more about college processes, procedures and protocols; campus resources; and available educational technology. Additional initiatives to serve students with disabilities were reported at **Elgin Community College, Heartland Community College, Kishwaukee College, Oakton Community College, Carl Sandburg College, and South Suburban College.**

What Works: Sample Initiatives to Serve Minority Students.

Prairie State College began a networking program for African American males called **Ties that Bind or Knot: Strengthening Ties Between African American Men**, allowing students to connect with African American male professionals (role models/mentors) and to hear their stories of professional success that resulted from pursuing higher education. **Triton College's** initiative is designed to **foster persistence** of first generation, low-income, multi-cultural students to academic goal achievement by creating a learning environment that understands and adapts to their unique needs. A primary goal is to engage the student from the moment they walk onto the Triton College campus for enrollment, and to foster student success by facilitating retention and completion. The program has three primary elements: Bridging Entry; Foundations for Student Progress, and Building Learning Communities. Additionally, **Harry S. Truman College, Illinois Central College, Joliet Junior College, McHenry County College, and John Wood Community College** all reported promising practices aimed at enhancing services to minority populations.

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What Works: Sample Projects to Serve English-as-a-Second Language Students. The goal of the **English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) Career Programs Initiative** at the **College of Lake County** is to help ESL students earn career certificates that lead to employment. Extra support includes offering students both in-class tutoring with a Supplemental Instructional Assistant and/or an ESL support class to be offered along with the content course. The program also provides career assistance with workshops on resume writing and job search skills.

*Kennedy-King College's **Mary McLeod Bethune Women's Center** aims to expand options for women students and empower them with the knowledge and skills to make better life decisions for themselves and their families and to become more productive community members.*

What Works: Sample Initiatives to Serve Female Students.

Kennedy-King College's Mary McLeod Bethune Women's Center aims to expand options for women students and empower them with the knowledge and skills to make better life decisions for themselves and their families and to become more productive community members. The Women's Center provides a wide range of informational resources including health, education, housing, life skills, business, legal, relationships, children, parenting, domestic violence, and finances.

William Rainey Harper College officials developed a learning community course called **Life Choices and Career Directions** for Women's Program participants to better equip them with the skills and confidence to be successful in and out of school. The Women's Program serves low-income single mothers; non-

traditional career seekers; victims of domestic violence; and women who have become widowed, divorced or separated. The program helps individuals identify personal strengths, values, skills, and abilities. An initiative to strengthen services for female students was also reported by **Sauk Valley Community College**.

What Works: Services for Teen Parents.

Eighty-seven percent of the high school seniors who participated in the **Olney Central College Teen Parenting** program graduated from high school and moved in to post-secondary education or employment. Goals for this workshop for pregnant or parenting teens included: raising high school graduation rates; increasing enrollment in post-secondary education and/or increasing placement in employment; and showing that completing high school greatly improves earning potential and quality of life for both parents and children.

*Eighty-seven percent of the high school seniors who participated in the **Olney Central College Teen Parenting** program graduated from high school and moved in to post-secondary education or employment.*

*Lincoln Trail College officials make extensive use of **degree audit evaluations** to provide a program map of curriculum requirements and student progress for each major to students and their advisors.*

What Works: Sample Orientation and Interventional Advisement Initiatives.

Lincoln Trail College officials make extensive use of **degree audit evaluations** to provide a program map of curriculum requirements and student progress for each major to students and their advisors. A degree audit evaluation is a detailed account of what courses a student has completed,

is currently enrolled in and courses for which they are registered compared to degree/certificate requirements. By using the evaluations, students and advisors can see how courses fit into an academic program, identify approved transfer courses, ascertain substitutions and waivers, verify grades for completed courses, and review notes about courses needed to fulfill program requirements. **Rend Lake College** has increased participation in their dual credit math initiative to improve the level of math preparation among entering recent high school graduates. Successful **dual credit math** students who register at **Rend Lake College** after high school graduation are eligible to enroll in Calculus and Analytic Geometry II during their first semester in college. Students who demonstrate high risk behaviors such as low test scores, poor attendance, incomplete homework assignments, or poor comprehension, are recorded by faculty through the **Lake Land College** electronic **Early Alert Program (EAP)** system. The student is offered the appropriate intervention – tutoring, career exploration, study skills, test anxiety and time management are some of the services available – to improve their chance of successful course completion. Faculty can view the student/coordinator contact record and the recommendations in the EAP electronic system. Orientation and interventional advisement initiatives were also reported at **Frontier Community College, Illinois Valley Community College, Shawnee Community College, Southeastern Illinois College, and Spoon River College**.

What Works: Sample Learning Communities.

The **Malcolm X College Summer Scholars Academy** was implemented in fiscal year 2007 to provide opportunities to explore theme and inquiry-based interdisciplinary learning in English/Literature, Science, Mathematics, and the

*In the fall 2007 semester, a variant of the **Fundamentals of Nutrition (BIO 120)** course was offered at **Parkland College** that enabled students to investigate and experience the **entrepreneurship of product research and development** in the field of nutrition.*

Creative Arts for motivated high school students entering their junior and senior years. The Academy offers a six week, college level, intensive study experience where students work in learning communities with faculty from different disciplines, on projects that derive from questions they develop, which are related to the selected theme of the Academy. In the fall 2007 semester, a variant of the Fundamentals of Nutrition (BIO 120) course was offered at **Parkland College** that enabled students to investigate and experience the **entrepreneurship of product research and development** in the field of nutrition. This Parkland College course focused on establishing a new food product, and students demonstrated entrepreneurial skills which are critical in any market sector. Initial course grades for this entrepreneurial course indicate student success, compared to traditionally taught course sections of the same course. In addition, learning community initiatives were also reported at **Highland Community College, Kaskaskia College, Rock Valley College, Carl Sandburg College, and South Suburban College.**

What Works: Sample Program Support Services Initiatives.

The **Health Career Club (HCC)** at **Sauk Valley Community College** provides targeted support services to help students successfully complete health career programs. Begun in September 2006, the HCC serves mostly females and some minority students. Many are single mothers and often they have been out of school for several years. The HCC helps students deal with stress, financial concerns, spouse and family issues, and provides social and emotional support. **Heartland Community College's Project RISE** is designed to improve the persistence, graduation and transfer rate of students characterized as first-generation, low- income or disabled. Project Rise assists them in overcoming the academic, social and personal barriers which may prevent them from achieving academic success. The project offers peer mentoring for all first-and second year program participants; proactive, intrusive advising; early alert monitoring; and learning communities with study groups. **Olive-Harvey College** and **Danville Area Community College** also reported on initiatives related to enhancing program support services.

*The **Health Career Club (HCC)** at **Sauk Valley Community College** provides targeted support services to help students successfully complete health career programs. **Heartland Community College's Project RISE** is designed to improve the persistence, graduation and transfer rate of students characterized as first-generation, low- income or disabled.*

What Works: Other Initiatives

Other initiatives were reported by a several colleges. For example, **Richard J. Daley College** and **Wilbur Wright College** both reported on sample bridge programs. Additionally, a program aimed at enhancing teamwork was reported by **Wabash Valley College**. **Lincoln Land Community College** and **Morton College** both reported on initiatives to improve services and support for faculty.

PROVIDING RESOURCES TO PROMOTE STUDENT SUCCESS

Community colleges are responsible for providing access to higher education to all individuals who can benefit and are challenged by the current fiscal climate, which makes it increasingly difficult to provide the array of support services to help individuals be successful. Key components of the State of Illinois' support of underrepresented students have been the Special Populations/related Disadvantaged Student Success Grant and the General Revenue Fund Base Operating Grant. In recent years, support for the former has disappeared and support for the later has diminished. Resources are needed to provide students from underrepresented groups and others with the support systems required for success. State-level funding losses are negatively impacting community college efforts to serve all students and may be impacting individuals from underrepresented groups to an even greater extent.

The Special Populations/Disadvantaged Student Grants assisted underrepresented students from low-income households, first-generation college attendees, and Students with Disabilities and provided services such as: tutoring, supplemental instruction, academic advisement and counseling, mentoring, and retention services. Special Populations Grant funding reached a peak in fiscal year 2001 at \$13 Million. The appropriation was eliminated in fiscal year 2003 and a revised related program called the Disadvantaged Student Success Grant was funded at a \$3 Million level in FY 2007.

Special Populations Grant funding reached a peak in fiscal year 2001 at \$13 Million. The appropriation was eliminated in fiscal year 2003 and a revised related program called the Disadvantaged Student Success Grant was funded at a \$3 Million level in FY 2007. For the second consecutive year in fiscal 2009, the Disadvantaged Student Success Grant was not funded.

For the second consecutive year in fiscal 2009, the Disadvantaged Student Success Grant was not funded. Colleges have reported that state- and federal-mandated services to students with disabilities that were previously funded through the Disadvantaged Student Success and Special Populations Grants are being paid for out of operating budgets, which further reduces service capabilities to students in other areas.

Unadjusted Base Operating Grant Funding in fiscal year 2009 was \$2.8 Million below last year and \$2.2 Million below fiscal year 2005.

The General Revenue Fund Base Operating Grant provides the state's primary payment to community colleges. Base Operating Grant payments to colleges peaked in fiscal year 2002 at \$327.1 Million. The latest Base Operating Grant for fiscal year 2009 was nearly \$295 Million which is \$32.2

Million below the fiscal year 2002 funding level. Unadjusted Base Operating Grant Funding in fiscal year 2009 was \$2.8 Million below last year and \$2.2 Million below fiscal year 2005. College operating expenses have risen during the last eight years. Personnel cost increases and recent energy price increases are contributing factors. The mid-year rescission reduced fiscal year 2009 funding by \$7,255,042.

Funding gaps continue to plague community college programs and services for underrepresented groups. Decreased funding, combined with mandates from the American with Disabilities Act, Vocational Rehabilitation Act, and Illinois Human Rights Act, exacerbates the challenges colleges are facing to serve Students with Disabilities. In spite of the continuing rise in the number of students with disabilities to be served (12,337 in FY 2006 and 13,152 in FY 2007) and the continuing decline of funding, community colleges remain dedicated to providing needed services to eligible Students with Disabilities. Community colleges continue to serve underrepresented students including individuals with disabilities, but the challenges are much greater without Special Populations/related Disadvantaged Student Success Grant funds.

Reductions in Base Operating Grants are particularly challenging in the current environment where early indications are that overall enrollments are increasing for fiscal year 2009. Preliminary FY 2009 survey results for the Illinois Community College System show that Fall 2008 opening headcount enrollments increased 1.9 percent and Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) increased 2.7 percent and Spring 2009 opening headcount enrollments increased 3.1 percent and FTE increased 4.2 percent. With additional resources, more individuals with disabilities and under-prepared students could be served and their needs more fully accommodated. Efforts to restore funding to better serve all individuals including underrepresented groups should continue.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The structure of the Underrepresented Groups Report continues to evolve in an effort to focus activities and resources on high impact initiatives. The topic for fiscal year 2009 has been established – Recruitment and Preparation. Colleges will describe and evaluate programs and initiatives related to the recruitment and retention of diverse student, faculty, and staff, as well as activities related to the student transition (high school to college, adult education to college, developmental education to college, etc.), and public-private partnerships are scheduled to be addressed. Future editions of the report are expected to address components of the Public Agenda for College and Career Success. A workgroup of community college and university officials will meet to develop the next steps in the process.

NEXT STEPS

1. **College officials are asked to develop action plans and strengthen efforts to improve underrepresented student performance on progress and outcome measures at the local level, including Graduation Rates, Combined Outcome Rates (graduation, transfer, and persistence), Fall to Fall Adjusted Retention Rates and Transfer Rates.**

The Illinois Community College Board's *Promise for Illinois Revisited* (2006) states that community colleges should support diversity and "enable students to complete degrees, certificates and classes". The *Public Agenda for College and Career Success* identifies "increasing success of students at each stage of the P-20 educational pipeline and eliminating achievement gaps by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and disability" (IBHE, 2008) as a priority for Illinois higher education. Comparing local results with statewide results as colleges did in their reports can help officials identify and prioritize those areas where additional progress is needed most at the local level. College officials are encouraged to develop high impact action plans to address those measures – Graduation Rates, Combined Rates (graduation, transfer, and retention), Fall to Fall Adjusted Retention and Transfer Rates where opportunities for improvement exist. Academic Achievement will be the focus topic in the Underrepresented Groups Report again in the near future, and colleges will be asked to describe progress made during the intervening period.

2. **College officials are asked to further enhance local outreach efforts aimed at prompting former students – with an emphasis on individuals from underrepresented groups – to re-engage in the educational process and return to college to complete a certificate or degree.**

Illinois community colleges have already done extensive work to develop and implement automated degree audit software that identifies current and recent students who have met the requirements of a formal award, but may not have formally applied for the certificate or degree. Work continues on related projects at many colleges. The Illinois Community College Board's *Promise for Illinois Revisited* (2006) directs community colleges to "use technology to expand learning opportunities . . . and enable students to complete degrees, certificates and classes". The *Public Agenda for College and Career Success* identifies "increasing the number of quality postsecondary credentials to meet demands of the economy and an increasingly global society" (IBHE, 2008) as a priority for Illinois higher education. For students who are very close to completing a degree or certificate but who have not re-enrolled to finish the last remaining courses, some colleges are investigating more extensive use of technology to push/pull students to return and finish the degree or certificate they started.

The U.select software (formerly known as the Course Applicability System – <http://www.itransfer.org/uselect/>) offers one potential approach to assist in implementing a push/pull strategy that prompts students to re-engage in the educational process. Institutions that sign up with a U.select membership and enter all the required information on the internet can provide their students with password protected online degree audit access. The potential exists to use software components to identify individuals who are close to completing a degree or certificate and send customized e-mails (based on a template) to remind former students of how close they are to meeting the requirements of a formal award. Students who sign up for U.select must provide a current e-mail address. Colleges often also seek current e-mail addresses from students through other established institutional processes. The invitation to re-engage e-mail could include a link to the colleges' online registration website and with additional planning, could provide these close to completion individuals with priority/early registration privileges. In some instances, the needed coursework might be available online. With some planning, the college could open additional sections of those courses that are in high demand for groups of students who are close to completion.

Community colleges have been known to undertake similar projects that attempt to get students to return to college using traditional mailings. Yet, the use of e-mail with live clickable links may prompt additional students to take immediate positive action. U.select is only one potential approach for reaching out to students who are close to completing, but no longer actively pursuing a degree or certificate. Colleges are welcome to pursue the objective of pushing/pulling more students back to complete their studies in whatever manner works best locally. The current fiscal climate makes implementing a project like this challenging. Postsecondary Perkins dollars are one potential source of funds to support such an initiative.

3. **Illinois community college officials are asked to make funding services and support systems for underrepresented groups a priority and collaborate with partners to seek additional funding to support student success initiatives for these populations.**

The Illinois Community College Board's *Promise for Illinois Revisited* (2006) encourages community colleges to, "work to secure funds for colleges to provide strategies, programs, and technologies that assist students facing barriers to accessing educational opportunities and achieving success and . . . maximize resources and use them effectively and efficiently." Key components of the State of Illinois' support of underrepresented students attending Illinois public community colleges has been the Special Populations/related Disadvantaged Student Success Grant and the General Revenue Fund Base Operating Grant. Special Populations Grant funding reached a peak in fiscal year 2001 at \$13 Million. The appropriation was eliminated in fiscal year 2003 and a revised related program called the Disadvantaged Student Success Grant was funded at a \$3 Million level in FY 2007. Fiscal 2009 was the second year that the Disadvantaged Student Success Grant was not funded. These dollars provided services such as: tutoring, supplemental instruction, academic advisement and counseling, mentoring, and retention services.

Base Operating Grant payments to colleges peaked in fiscal year 2002 at \$327.1 Million. The latest Base Operating Grant for fiscal year 2009 was nearly \$295 Million which is \$32.2 Million below the fiscal year 2002 funding level. Unadjusted Base Operating Grant Funding in fiscal year 2009 was \$2.8 Million below last year and \$2.2 Million below fiscal year 2005. College operating expenses have risen during the last eight years. The mid-year rescission reduced fiscal year 2009 funding by \$7,255,042.

Resources are needed to provide students from underrepresented groups and others with the support systems required for success. State-level funding losses are negatively impacting community college efforts to serve all students and may be impacting individuals from underrepresented groups to an even greater extent.

4. **Community colleges should continue collaborating with partners in the delivery of high skills, high demand education and training programs. As a part of these initiatives, an emphasis should be placed on expanding access and revitalizing support systems that promote student success particularly for those individuals from traditionally Underrepresented Groups.**

The Illinois Community College Board's *Promise for Illinois Revisited* (2006) encourages colleges to expand their commitment to workforce and economic development by partnering "with business, industry, education, and government and . . . anticipating education and training needs for future jobs and developing flexible programs that meet state and local needs." The *Public Agenda for College and Career Success* identifies "increasing the number of postsecondary degrees in fields of critical skills shortages, such as, initially, nursing, allied health, and information technology" (IBHE, 2008) as a priority for Illinois higher education.

CONCLUSION

The population of the United States is undergoing rapid and substantial change. As a country, we are growing older and more diverse at the same time. By 2050, if projections hold, we will be a "majority minority society" -- a country that no longer has a majority of any one racial or ethnic group. <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/site/c.kjXJ5MPIwE/b.3633965/>

Given the changing demographics of the nation's workforce over the next two decades, the current educational disparities among racial/ethnic groups are projected to lead to a decline in the educational level of the U.S. workforce as a whole. If this drop in the levels of education completed occurs it would in turn result in a decrease in personal income per capita among Americans. http://www.highereducation.org/reports/pa_decline/decline-impact-demographics.shtml

Demographers project an increasingly diverse population in the United States. In this very competitive and interconnected world, narrowing educational achievement gaps among individuals from underrepresented groups in higher education will be important to the success of individuals, communities, states, and the nation as a whole.

Now is the time to put a new foundation for growth in place -- to rebuild our economy, to retrain our workforce, and re-equip the American people . . . Right now, someone who doesn't have a college degree is more than twice as likely to be unemployed as someone who does . . . In a 21st century economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, education is the single best bet we can make. . . So if we want to help people not only get back on their feet today but prosper tomorrow, we need to take a rigorous new approach to higher education and technical training.

– Barack Obama http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-Job-Creation-and-Job-Training-5/8/09/

These recent remarks by President Obama go onto identify community colleges as pivotal partners in helping Americans gain the knowledge and skills to compete and prosper in the 21st century economy. Elevating educational outcomes for all individuals will be a key to America's emergence from the current recession and its future success.

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