

Illinois' Workforce Equity Initiative

Providing high-skilled, high-wage outcomes for individuals experiencing poverty



Advancing Equity: Lessons Learned

Dawn Koeltzow, Illinois Central College

Candace Silas, Lincoln Land Community College

Vance Laine, Heartland Community College

Dr. Jesse Ivory, Oakton College



Background on the Initiative

Video Spotlights: IllinoisWEI.org



Heartland Student

20 Participating Colleges for FY25

- [Black Hawk College](#)
- Heartland Community College
- Illinois Central College
- [Joliet Junior College](#)
- Kaskaskia College
- Kennedy King College
- Lincoln Land Community College
- Malcolm X College
- Oakton College
- Olive Harvey College
- Parkland College
- Prairie State College
- Richard J. Daley College
- Richland Community College
- Rock Valley College
- South Suburban College
- Southwestern Illinois College
- Triton College
- Wilbur Wright College / [Harold Washington College](#)

WEI Purpose

- **Create, support, or expand** short-term workforce credentials of one year or less
 - aligned with workforce gaps
 - in demand and high wage jobs
- **Improve** workforce equity in distressed communities.
- **Serve** African American/Black population – at least 60%



Lincoln Land Student

WEI Desired Outcomes

- **Accelerate the time to completion**
 - to enter and succeed in postsecondary education/training programs
- **Employment after completion**
 - with jobs paying 30% above the regional living wage or on an educational pathway leading to the wage
 - in high skilled, high wage, and in-demand occupations.



Oakton College Student

Four-Year Success Outcomes for Illinois

WEI GOALS / TARGETS	FY20 Outcomes (at closeout)	FY21 Outcomes (at closeout)	FY22 Outcomes (at closeout)	FY23 Outcomes (at closeout)
African American/Black Students (>60%)	76%	71%	72%	72%
Completion Percentage (target is 60%)	60%	62%	71%	74%
Employed Percentage (target is 60%)	65%	70%	69%	71%
Enrolled Students	3,209	3,323	3,222	2,957
African American/Black Students	2,429	2,345	2,312	2,118
Completers (by report date)	1,938	2,064	2,302	2,184
Employed (by report date)	1,249	1,435	1,592	1,546
Transitioning to Additional Education	n/a	153	161	139
Average Starting Wage	\$17.69	\$20.39	\$21.01	\$21.99
Average Cost Per Student Enrolled	\$5,565	\$5,227	\$5,475	\$5,714

Perspectives from Three Colleges





LLCC WEI Program Overview

OPEN DOOR

WEI

WORKFORCE
EQUITY
INITIATIVE

Students Supported

Total students supported

Programs Served

Programs

Success/Retention

Students completing

2022

Total students

167

Popular programs

CNA CDL Welding

Overall Success

79% AA, 70% Completion,
79% Employed

2023

Total students

173

Popular programs

CNA CDL Auto Tech

Overall Success

73% AA, 76% Completion,
75% Employed

2024

Total students

214

Popular programs

CNA CDL HVAC

Overall Success

78% AA, 77% Completion,
77% Employed

LLCC Supportive Services

LLCC may provide:

LLCC's Workforce Equity Initiative funding is used to target our districts low-income & African-American population.

Need-Based

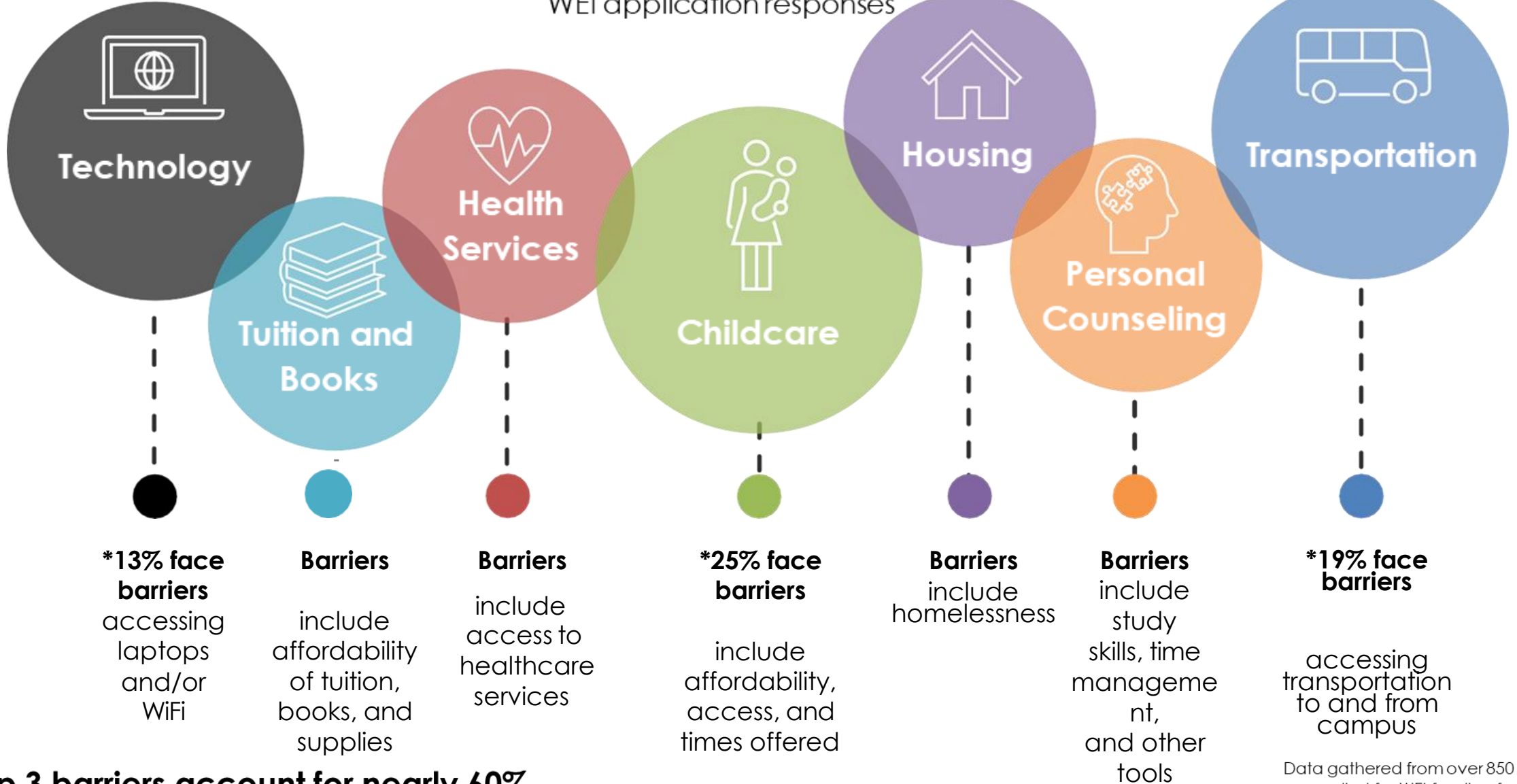
- Tuition Assistance & Educational Awards
- Books & Program materials
- Background check & Drug screening
- Immunization fee assistance
- Paid credentialing & licensing test
- Transportation & childcare assistance
- Tutoring - instructional support

Additional Resources

- LLCC outstanding tuition balance waiver
- Loanable technology support
- Career & Employment support
- Referrals - food, housing, medical, legal, etc.
- Essential Skills Training
(personal & work ethic, communication, teamwork)

Student Barriers

WEI application responses



***Top 3 barriers account for nearly 60%**
Over 50% reported facing 2 or more barriers

Data gathered from over 850 students who applied for WEI funding from 2021-2024. Students identified barriers through multiple choice and open-ended questions on the application.

OPEN DOOR

WEI | WORKFORCE
EQUITY
INITIATIVE

Lincoln Land Community College



Partnerships Making A Difference

- ▶ Resources
- ▶ Internships
- ▶ Externships
- ▶ Return-ships
- ▶ Guest speakers
- ▶ Employability Class
- ▶ Academic mentors
- ▶ Job-shadowing
- ▶ Job Placement

Heartland Community College

- First WEI courses in Summer 2022
- 177 students enrolled in FY24
- Popular programs - Welding, Truck Driving, CNA
- 73% African-American enrollment
- 93% Student Aid Index ≤ 0 , 87% = -1500

Welding

Welding Skills Certificate

Employment



Advanced Gas Metal Arc Welding (3)

Intro to Gas Metal Arc Welding (3)

Gas Metal Arc Welding

Microcertificate

Advanced Shielded Metal Arc Welding (3)

Intro to Shielded Metal Arc Welding (3)

Shielded Metal Arc Welding

Microcertificate



Welding Capstone (2)

Employment Success Strategies (1)

OSHA Safety (1)



Employment

Employment

- Two off-ramps for those who need income soon
- Wraparound supports from Navigator and team
- Barriers removed – welding PPE, steel-toed boots, books



HEARTLAND
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Facilities Maintenance

Facilities Maintenance Skills Certificate

Air Conditioning & Refrigeration I (3)

Heating Systems I (3)

Employment Success Strategies (1)

OSHA Safety (1)

HVAC-R Installer

Microcertificate

Industrial & Building Electricity & Systems (3)

Fluid Power & Mechanical Systems (3)

Technical Mathematics I (3)

Employment



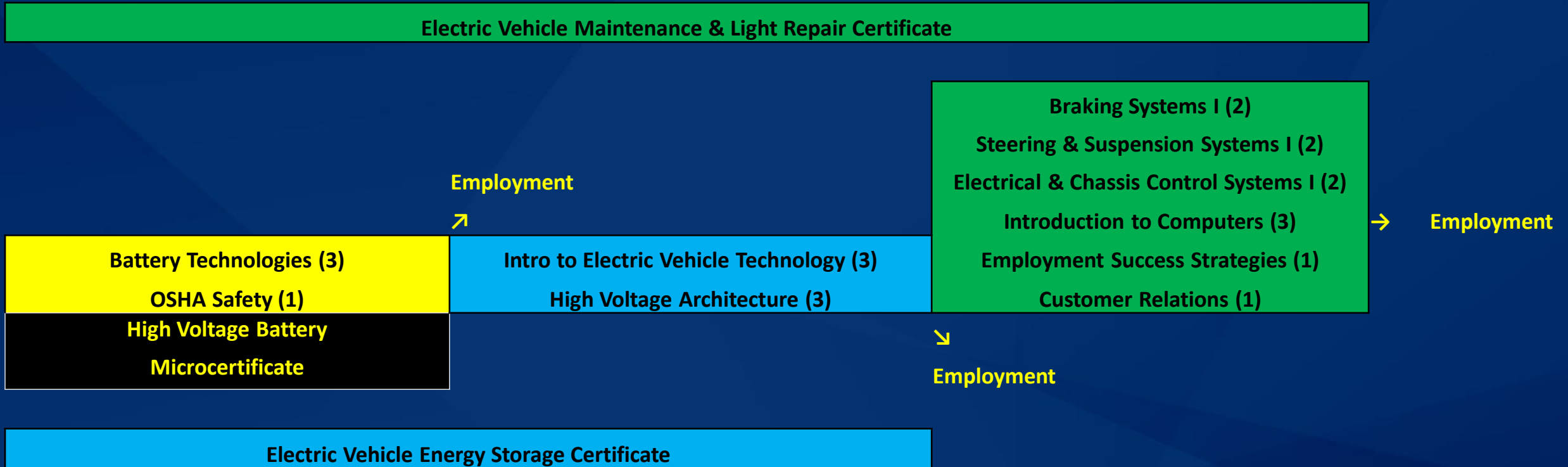
Employment

- Good jobs for HVAC installers after one semester
- Apprenticeship opportunities for Facilities Maintenance graduates



HEARTLAND
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Electric Vehicle Technology



- Expanding job opportunities at each step
- Career support starts at orientation so students know options

Overview - WEI at Oakton College



- 300+ Students Since Fall 2022
- Top programs – CDL, Basic Nursing Assistant Training (BNAT)
- 65% African American/Black Enrollment
- 90+ Employers
- 5.7+ Million in Combined Earning Power for Completers
- **Holistic Support:** Stipends (College and Employer), bus/gas/food cards, rental and childcare assistance, etc.



Organizational Readiness



Empathy

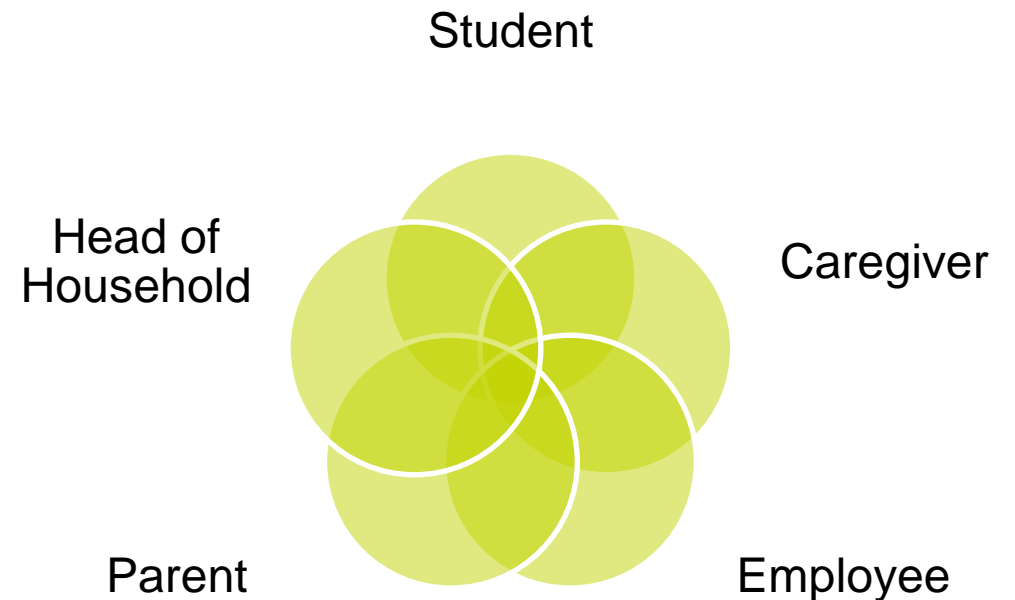
Action

How do we move from empathy to action?

Organizational Readiness



- Empower Equity-Minded Disruption
- Cultivate Buy-in with Capacity Building
- Build Momentum by Showcasing Impact
- Center the Whole Person Experience
- Frequent Impact Evaluation
- Cascading Support



Lessons Learned Q&A

- 1) What are some of your lessons learned regarding meeting the WEI employment outcomes? Do you have any challenges or solutions that you would like to share?
- 2) What sort of resources (infrastructure, funds, staff) does a college need to implement WEI?
- 3) Do you have other lessons learned regarding offering holistic student supportive services?

Thank You and Contact Info

Candace Silas, Candace.Silas@lcc.edu

Vance Laine, Vance.Laine@heartland.edu

Dr. Jesse Ivory, Jivory@oakton.edu

Dawn Koeltzow, Dawn.Koeltzow@icc.edu

