



## **ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGES BOOST LOCAL ECONOMIES AND PROVIDE CRITICAL SOURCES OF EMPLOYMENT**

*Illinois Community Colleges account for \$3.5 billion in economic output and more than 43,000 jobs*

SPRINGFIELD (September 29, 2021) - Illinois' 48 community colleges boost local Illinois economies and are important sources of revenue and employment for the communities and regions they serve, according to a new report issued by the Illinois Community College Board.

The study is a valuable assessment tool for Illinois' community college system (the third largest in the nation) as it continues to strive to increase value and access for all Illinoisans.

"Here in Illinois, our community colleges are a core building block to ensure our state's workforce is well equipped for the jobs of the future," said Governor JB Pritzker. "These investments in community colleges are a microcosm of what we're doing across the state where we've committed to creating and supporting good paying jobs and invigorating our next generation of leaders."

"It is clear that community colleges remain a solid return on investment for local communities and the students that use them. Our system plays a vital role in meeting the needs of Illinois' workforce by providing quality training and education and gives students a greater opportunity to earn higher wages in countless industries throughout the state," said ICCB executive director, Dr. Brian Durham.

It evaluates Illinois' community college system on its ability to meet the needs of business and industry, equity, student outcomes, students' return on investment, and the system's overall economic impact to local economies and job growth. The report also examines statewide trends including employment, population, race and ethnicity changes, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Community colleges remain a valuable resource for students of all walks of life. We are committed to creating an equitable path to economic mobility no matter who you are or where you live through the Illinois community college system,” said Dr. Lazaro Lopez, ICCB Board Chair.

The study found that more than 84 percent of students who earn a Long-Term Certificate or associate degree in applied science programs are employed in solid paying career jobs within a year of graduation.

Investing in an Illinois community college Long-Term Certificate or Associate in Applied Science degree yields an average annual rate of return of nearly 27 percent, with an average wage increase of nearly 40 percent one year after graduation.

Annual earnings are even greater in specific areas of study. For students graduating with Long-Term Certificates in Architecture and Construction programs, the average annual earning five years after graduating is \$60,552, while manufacturing program graduates earn \$54,378 in the same timeframe.

“Community colleges are integral to building a skilled workforce, which is essential to the success of the Illinois and American manufacturing sector. These great institutions provide students with educational opportunities that include both technical training and soft interpersonal skills to make sure that manufacturers have a competitive and modern workforce,” said Mark Denzler, president and CEO of the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association.

“We’re very proud that Governor Pritzker recently adopted the IMA Education Foundation’s initiative to create two Manufacturing Academies on community college campuses in Illinois, which will further strengthen the longstanding partnership between manufacturers and community colleges while providing students with skilled job training.”

The study also looked at Illinois community colleges’ impact on local economies.

In fiscal year 2020, Illinois community colleges directly employed nearly 33,000 staff with a total payroll of \$1.3 billion. In addition to wages and salaries, Illinois community colleges account for almost \$500 million in additional expenses.

“An investment in a community college education benefits all stakeholders -- students, taxpayers, businesses, and society as a whole. Illinois community colleges place the benefits of higher education within reach for everyone,” said Jim Reed, executive director of the Illinois Community College Trustees Association.

These direct impacts ripple through the economy creating additional jobs, payrolls, and other economic activity in Illinois. The total economic output of Illinois community colleges on the statewide economy in fiscal year 2020 is estimated at \$3.5 billion and 43,316 jobs.

“Finding employees with the right workforce skills remains a top tier challenge for Illinois employers. Our economic future depends on it. Community colleges provide these skills to thousands of Illinoisans, allowing them to build careers and help employers prosper,” said Illinois Chamber of Commerce President and CEO, Todd Maisch.

The Illinois Community College System and ICCB are committed to creating, supporting, and expanding workforce training opportunities equitably in high-need communities. In 2019, Illinois started the Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) program, a grant program designed to increase workforce opportunities for African Americans which are severely underrepresented among Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Over the last two years, the WEI program has granted nearly \$40 million to address education and unemployment gaps in the African American and other minority communities throughout Illinois.

“The state’s 39 community college districts serve an extremely diverse student body and our colleges’ commitment to equity is demonstrated in the undergraduate enrollment data which shows we serve more underrepresented minority students than all other Illinois higher education institutions combined. We are proud to be our communities’ colleges, and the data in this report illustrates our continued investment in our communities and the residents we serve,” Illinois Council of Community College Presidents Chair/Lake Land College President, Dr. Josh Bullock said.

When examining earnings one year prior to completion compared to three years after completion, African American student earnings increased 47 percent while Latinx students increased their earnings by 57 percent.

To review the full study, please visit <https://bit.ly/iccbEIS>.

### **About the Illinois Community College Board**

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

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