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**FISCAL YEAR 2020**  
**ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM**  
**SELECTED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**  
**FOR**  
**UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS**

**FOCUS AREA:**  
**IMPROVING STUDENT ACCESS, RETENTION, AND**  
**COMPLETION TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP**  
**AND**  
**RECRUITMENT AND/OR MARKETING EFFORTS TO**  
**STEM ENROLLMENT DECLINES FOR AT-RISK**  
**AND/OR UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS**

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## INTRODUCTION

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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: *(1) Improving student access, retention, and completion to close the achievement gap* and *(2) recruitment and/or marketing efforts to stem enrollment declines for at-risk and/or underrepresented groups*.

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 child care needs, that 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 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.

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## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

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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 2020, Illinois community colleges served 17,852 students with disabilities (3.8 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 = 16,169) used supportive services offered by colleges. Only one out of ten students with disabilities (N = 1,683) did not use supportive services during fiscal year 2020.

Based on the unduplicated count of students with disabilities who self-reported and used supportive services, specific disabilities identified were learning, including ADHD, (54.1 percent of reported disabilities); auditory (2.5 percent); medical, including acquired brain injury and systemic/chronic health problems, (9.5 percent); mobility (3.1 percent); psychological (26.3 percent); visual (1.9 percent); and other, including speech/language impairment, deaf-blind, and developmental, (2.4 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 90.8 percent of reported disabilities. Of those services used, based on unduplicated count, more than one-half (54.1 percent) were used by students with learning disabilities, including ADHD ([2020 Student Disability Table](#)).

Census figures show a substantial number of Illinoisans with disabilities. In the 2019 Illinois census estimate, among Illinois' civilian non-institutionalized population, 5.8 percent between 18 and 34 years of age and 11.0 percent between 35 and 64 years of age had a disability. Nearly one fourth (24.5 percent) of the Illinois population age 16 and over with disabilities was employed ([2019 American Community Survey 1-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 54.3 percent of the student population in fiscal year 2020. The percentage of Male students has averaged 46.3 percent over the past five years. Census data show little change in the proportion of Females in Illinois with 50.9 percent estimated in 2019 versus 51.0 percent in 2010 and 2000 ([ICCB FY 2020 Annual Student Enrollment and Completion Report](#), [U.S. Census 2000 Illinois](#), [U.S. Census 2010](#), [2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates Table S0101](#)). From 2016 to 2020, the number of Female students completing degree programs decreased 4.8 percent, while the number of Female students enrolled in Illinois community college credit courses decreased 18.8 percent ([ICCB FY 2016 and FY 2020 Annual Student Enrollment and Completion Report](#)).

## Age

The average age of Illinois community college credit students was 27.4 years in fiscal year 2020, which is a slight decrease from fiscal year 2019 (27.9). The median age was 22.3 years in fiscal year 2020, which is also lower than the previous year (22.7). According to the 2019 population estimates, the median age of all Illinoisans was estimated to be 38.6 years. The latest census estimates also show that over three-quarters (77.8 percent) of all Illinoisans were 18 years of age or above ([ICCB FY 2020 Annual Student Enrollment and Completion Report](#) and [2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates Table S0101](#)).

## State of Illinois' Race/Ethnicity Distribution

State census data show that Illinois' population was 12.81 million in 2020 compared to 12.83 million in 2010, and 12.42 million in 2000 ([U.S. Census 2000 Illinois](#), [U.S. Census 2010](#), enter Illinois, and [2021 Index of Need](#) Table 1). These detailed Illinois census data indicate that the state's population grew 3.2 percent between 2000 and 2020. The state population, however, decreased 0.1 percent between 2010 and 2020. Illinois' 2020 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 2020, as the percent of Caucasians decreased from 70.9 percent to 61.4 percent of the population ([U.S. Census 2000 Illinois](#) and [2021 Index of Need](#) Table 1).

The race/ethnicity data collection methodology changed for the 2000 census and continued in the 2020 census data. The 2020 census data showed that 8.9 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 2020 data in the table. These duplicated Hispanic/Latino population counts show substantial growth, from 1,530,262 in 2000 to 2,337,410 in 2019 ([U.S. Census 2000 Illinois](#) and [2021 Index of Need](#) Table 1).

Illinois' largest minority group in 2000 was African American and in 2020 was Hispanic/Latino. Compared to 2000, African American counts in 2020 decreased from 15.1 percent to 14.1 percent,

whereas Asian American counts increased from 3.4 percent to 5.9 percent, Native American from 0.2 percent to 0.8 percent, and Hispanic/Latino from 12.3 percent to 18.2 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%

\*Includes Pacific Islander

\*\*Includes two or more races

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

SOURCE OF DATA: U. S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 & 2021 Index of Need, Table 1.

### Race/Ethnicity Distribution in Community College System Credit Programs

Overall in fiscal year 2020, minority students accounted for 47.4 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 2020 data show that minority representation was

*Students identifying themselves as Hispanic/Latino—115,779 in fiscal year 2020—accounted for the largest number of minority enrollments in the Illinois Community College System.*

similar to the prior year (fiscal year 2019 = 46.7 percent). Fiscal year 2020 results are above the five-year average (45.4 percent). Students identifying themselves as Hispanic/Latino students—115,779 in fiscal year 2020—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 2020, Hispanic/Latino students were again the largest minority group. African American students—58,717 in fiscal year 2020—constitute the second largest minority group in the latest data. Asian American students—23,434 in fiscal year 2020—constitute the third largest minority group enrolled in the Illinois Community College System. The fiscal year 2020 proportionate representation by Hispanic/Latino students was higher by one percentage point in comparison to the prior year (25.5 percent in fiscal year 2020 versus 24.5 percent in fiscal year 2019), while the proportional representation by African American students was slightly lower in comparison to the prior year (12.9 percent in fiscal year 2020 versus 13.4 percent in fiscal year 2019). 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 (-51.1 percent), Native American (-30.8 percent), African American (-27.9 percent), Asian American (-11.1 percent), and Hispanic (-3.9 percent), while an increase was noted among students identifying themselves as Nonresident Alien (23.1 percent) and Two or More Races (11.9 percent).

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 nearly three-fourths (72.6 percent) of the individuals enrolled in community college Adult Education coursework. In fiscal year 2020, Hispanic/Latino students



accounted for over forty percent of Adult Education enrollments and African American students for nearly one-fourth of those enrollments (42.9 percent and 23.8 percent, respectively). Additionally, minority students accounted for about eight out of every ten (81.4 percent) individuals enrolled in community college ESL coursework during fiscal year 2020. Hispanic/Latino students accounted for nearly two-thirds (63.7 percent) of the community college ESL students, followed by Asian American students (10.0 percent) and African American students (5.8 percent).

**Table 2**  
**Fiscal Year 2020 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>
<b>ABE/ASE %</b>	<b>23.8%</b>	<b>42.9%</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>72.6%</b>
Number	4,766	8,598	814	88	54	18	225	14,563
<b>ESL %</b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>63.7%</b>	<b>10.0%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>81.4%</b>
Number	1,549	16,912	2,645	425	19	20	56	21,626

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 2020, minorities comprised nearly one-half (45.6 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 (23.2 percent), followed by African American students (12.2 percent), Asian American students (5.6 percent), students of Two or More Races (3.3 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 (37.8 percent). Hispanic/Latino students also had the highest representation among minorities in CTE programs and accounted for 19.0 percent of the population. African American students had the second largest CTE program enrollment (11.7 percent), followed by Asian American students (4.0 percent), students of Two or More Races (2.3 percent), Nonresident Alien students (0.5 percent), Native American students (0.3 percent), and Pacific Islander students (0.1 percent).

**Table 3**  
**Fiscal Year 2020 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>
<b>Transfer %</b>	<b>12.2%</b>	<b>23.2%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>45.6%</b>
Number	30,281	57,899	13,985	2,252	547	207	8,327	113,498
<b>CTE %</b>	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>19.0%</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>37.8%</b>
Number	13,921	22,626	4,718	637	312	106	2,710	45,030

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

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

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 2016 through fiscal year 2020) on first-generation college student enrollments. Fiscal year 2020 first-generation college student enrollment decreased by 8.2 percent compared to last year and decreased by 13.6 percent compared to fiscal year 2016. The overall enrollments continue to decline. Nearly four out of ten students (39.0 percent) in the Illinois Community College System were first-generation college students in fiscal year 2020.

**Table 4**  
**First-Generation College Student Enrollment in the Illinois Community College System  
Fiscal Years 2016-2020**

	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	One-Year % Change	Five-Year % Change
First-Generation College Student Enrollment	213,101	217,873	207,794	200,555	184,041	-8.2%	-13.6%
Annual Enrollment	597,290	553,174	519,387	500,477	472,478	-5.6%	-20.9%
<b>Enrollment Rate of First-Gen. College Students</b>	<b>35.7%</b>	<b>39.4%</b>	<b>40.0%</b>	<b>40.1%</b>	<b>39.0%</b>		

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 2020. [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 2020. [Table 6](#) provides a comparison of fiscal year 2016 through fiscal year 2020 completions in the Illinois Community College System by race/ethnicity.

[Table 5](#) shows that during fiscal year 2020, similar numbers of minority graduates completed CTE degrees and certificates (N = 13,197) as Transfer degrees and certificates (N = 12,485). Minority students accounted for 44.3 percent of Transfer graduates, compared to 37.8 percent of all CTE graduates. The majority of the Transfer credentials earned by minorities was Associate in Arts degrees (44.8 percent, N = 5,593), while 36.4 percent (N = 4,550) was the General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) Credentials. Hispanic/Latino students accounted for the largest group of Transfer minority graduates (25.7

*Minority students accounted for 44.3 percent of Transfer graduates, compared to 37.8 percent of all CTE graduates in fiscal year 2020.*

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percent) followed by African American students (9.8 percent), Asian American students (4.9 percent), students of Two or More Races (2.8 percent), Nonresident Alien students (0.9 percent), Native American students (0.2 percent), and Pacific Islander students (0.1 percent). The fiscal year 2020 proportional representation of the Hispanic/Latino Transfer graduates (25.7 percent) was higher by 2.8 percentage points from the prior year (22.9 percent). Hispanic/Latino students also accounted for the largest minority group for completions in CTE programs (19.3 percent), followed by African American students (11.7 percent), Asian American students (3.8 percent), students of Two or More Races (2.1 percent), Nonresident Alien students (0.6 percent), Native American students (0.2 percent), and Pacific Islander students (0.1 percent). The fiscal year 2020 proportional representation of the Hispanic/Latino CTE program graduates (19.3 percent) was higher by 1.6 percentage points from fiscal year 2019 (17.7 percent).

**Table 5**  
**Fiscal Year 2020 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>
<b>Transfer %</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>25.7%</b>	<b>4.9%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>44.3%</b>
Number	2,762	7,231	1,388	248	44	31	781	12,485
<b>CTE %</b>	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	<b>3.8%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>37.8%</b>
Number	4,098	6,752	1,310	194	78	29	736	13,197

**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 2020 totaled 65,707. More than two-fifth (41.0 percent) of all degrees and certificates in fiscal year 2020 were awarded to minority students (nonwhite) whose race/ethnicity was known. Compared to last year, there was an increase in minority completions among Hispanic/Latino students (19.6 percent), Pacific Islander students (12.5 percent), Asian American students (7.8 percent), students of Two or More Races (7.4 percent), and African American students (5.5 percent). Decreases in completions were noted for Native American students (-21.2 percent) and Nonresident Alien students (-7.0 percent) since last year. Compared to fiscal year 2016, the total number of minority completers increased 7.2 percent.

**Table 6**  
**Student Completers in the Illinois Community College System by Race/Ethnicity**  
**Fiscal Years 2016-2020**

<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<b>FY 16</b>	<b>FY 17</b>	<b>FY 18</b>	<b>FY 19</b>	<b>FY 20</b>	<b>One-Year % Change</b>	<b>Five-Year % Change</b>
<i>African American</i>	9,218	7,728	7,093	6,951	7,331	5.5%	-20.5%
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	11,209	11,506	12,145	12,181	14,564	19.6%	29.9%
<i>Asian American</i>	2,795	2,538	2,521	2,589	2,791	7.8%	-0.1%
<i>Nonresident Alien</i>	372	477	462	513	477	-7.0%	28.2%
<i>Native American</i>	187	157	197	165	130	-21.2%	-30.5%
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	112	72	62	56	63	12.5%	-43.8%
<i>Two or More Races</i>	1,237	1,350	1,330	1,464	1,572	7.4%	27.1%
<b>Minority Subtotal</b>	<b>25,130</b>	<b>23,828</b>	<b>23,810</b>	<b>23,919</b>	<b>26,928</b>	<b>12.6%</b>	<b>7.2%</b>
<i>Unknown</i>	2,477	1,843	1,811	1,626	1,647	1.3%	-33.5%
<i>White</i>	42,852	40,472	39,050	36,697	37,132	1.2%	-13.3%

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

Table 7 contains trend data (fiscal year 2016 through fiscal year 2020) on student completers by gender. During fiscal year 2020, just more than half of degrees and certificates were earned by females (54.4 percent). The number of male completers increased 3.2 percent, and the number of female completers increased 7.6 percent compared to the previous fiscal year. When compared to fiscal year 2016, the number of male completers decreased 9.0 percent, and the number of female completers decreased 4.8 percent.

**Table 7**  
**Student Completers in the Illinois Community College System by Gender**  
**Fiscal Years 2016-2020**

<i>Gender</i>	<b>FY 16</b>	<b>FY 17</b>	<b>FY 18</b>	<b>FY 19</b>	<b>FY 20</b>	<b>One-Year % Change</b>	<b>Five-Year % Change</b>
<i>Male</i>	32,911	30,590	30,188	29,014	29,954	3.2%	-9.0%
<i>Female</i>	37,548	35,553	34,483	33,228	35,753	7.6%	-4.8%

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

### 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

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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 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 8 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 2017 cohort graduated, transferred out, or were still enrolled by Summer 2020 (54.4 percent) compared to about two in three White students (68.9 percent). Pacific Islander students accounted for the highest advancement rate among minority students entering in Fall 2017 (77.3 percent), followed by Asian American students (76.7 percent), Hispanic/Latino students (55.9 percent), students of Two or More Races (54.9 percent), Nonresident Alien students (51.3 percent), Native American students (48.3 percent), and African American students (44.9 percent).

Table 8  
**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 2014-2018**

<i>Race/Ethnicity*</i>	<b>Fall 2013 Summer 2016</b>	<b>Fall 2014 Summer 2017</b>	<b>Fall 2015 Summer 2018</b>	<b>Fall 2016 Summer 2019</b>	<b>Fall 2017 Summer 2020</b>
<i>African American</i>	2,049/ 4,603 44.5%	1,789/ 4,051 44.2%	1,634/ 3,496 46.7%	1,616/ 3,456 46.8%	1,539/ 3,429 44.9%
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	3,201/ 5,571 57.5%	3,283/ 5,780 56.8%	3,555/ 6,180 57.5%	3,754/ 6,520 57.6%	3,868/ 6,918 55.9%
<i>Asian</i>	697/ 919 75.8%	747/ 966 77.3%	782/ 1,040 75.2%	808/ 1,072 75.4%	771/ 1,005 76.7%
<i>Nonresident Alien</i>	65/ 133 48.9%	75/ 157 47.8%	86/ 172 50.0%	85/ 177 48.0%	115/ 224 51.3%
<i>Native American</i>	41/ 78 52.6%	32/ 64 50.0%	44/ 80 55.0%	38/ 67 56.7%	28/ 58 48.3%
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	32/ 41 78.0%	26/ 44 59.1%	20/ 32 62.5%	24/ 34 70.6%	17/ 22 77.3%
<i>Two or More Races</i>	418/ 708 59.0%	418/ 752 55.6%	502/ 847 59.3%	509/ 866 58.8%	486/ 886 54.9%
<b>Minority Subtotal</b>	<b>6,503/ 12,053 54.0%</b>	<b>6,370/ 11,814 53.9%</b>	<b>6,623/ 11,847 55.9%</b>	<b>6,834/ 12,192 56.1%</b>	<b>6,824/ 12,542 54.4%</b>
<i>White</i>	11,198/ 16,642 67.3%	10,610/ 15,536 68.3%	10,385/ 15,183 68.4%	10,231/ 14,803 69.1%	10,062/ 14,605 68.9%

\*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 8 of the FY 2019 and FY 2020 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 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. Three out of five minority first-time, full-time students enrolling in Fall 2019 at Illinois community colleges were retained or graduated in Fall 2020 (60.0 percent) compared to about two out of three White students (68.2 percent). Asian American students accounted for the highest fall-to-fall adjusted retention rate among minority students enrolling in Fall 2019 (76.9 percent), followed by Nonresident Alien students (72.6 percent), Pacific Islander students (62.5 percent), Hispanic/Latino students (62.3 percent), students of Two or More Races (61.5 percent), Native American students (55.1 percent), and African American students (47.3 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 2016-2020

<i>Race/ethnicity*</i>	Fall 2015 Fall 2016	Fall 2016 Fall 2017	Fall 2017 Fall 2018	Fall 2018 Fall 2019	Fall 2019 Fall 2020
<i>African American</i>	1,535/ 3,493 43.9%	1,574/ 3,456 45.5%	1,560/ 3,424 45.6%	1,482/ 3,209 46.2%	1,470/ 3,107 47.3%
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	4,097/ 6,180 66.3%	4,484/ 6,514 68.8%	4,673/ 6,898 67.7%	4,535/ 6,764 67.0	4,511/ 7,246 62.3%
<i>Asian</i>	810/ 1,042 77.7%	846/ 1,072 78.9%	820/ 1,004 81.7%	853/ 1,096 77.8%	861/ 1,119 76.9%
<i>Nonresident Alien</i>	100/ 172 58.1%	110/ 177 62.1%	147/ 224 65.6%	141/ 212 66.5%	167/ 230 72.6%
<i>Native American</i>	47/ 80 58.8%	33/ 67 49.3%	35/ 58 60.3%	27/ 47 57.4%	38/ 69 55.1%
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	21/ 32 65.6%	22/ 34 64.7%	14/ 22 63.6%	18/ 23 78.3%	10/ 16 62.5%
<i>Two or More Races</i>	519/ 847 61.3%	553/ 866 63.9%	532/ 885 60.1%	584/ 946 61.7%	570/ 927 61.5%
<b>Minority Subtotal</b>	7,129/ 11,846 <b>60.2%</b>	7,622/ 12,186 <b>62.5%</b>	7,781/ 12,515 <b>62.2%</b>	7,640/ 12,297 <b>62.1%</b>	7,627/ 12,714 <b>60.0%</b>
<i>White</i>	10,577/ 15,185 69.7%	10,323/ 14,798 69.8%	10,284/ 14,592 70.5%	9,754/ 13,920 70.1%	9,643/ 14,143 68.2%

\* 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 (A1) Data, Fall Enrollment (E1) Data, and National Student Clearinghouse (NSC)

Note: Table 9 of the FY 2019 and FY 2020 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 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 2020 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>	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>14.7%</b>	<b>15.5%</b>	<b>23.1%</b>
Number	634	1,167	1,339	598	605
<i>Hispanic/Latino %</i>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>15.2%</b>
Number	289	689	1,017	510	398
<i>Asian American %</i>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>3.6%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>
Number	224	581	325	113	32
<i>Nonresident Alien %</i>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
Number	18	50	48	10	26
<i>Native American %</i>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>
Number	15	33	18	6	9
<i>Pacific Islander %</i>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>
Number	4	14	11	3	3
<i>Two or More Races %</i>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
Number	66	103	148	28	25
<b><i>Minority Subtotal %</i></b>	<b>20.6%</b>	<b>17.6%</b>	<b>32.0%</b>	<b>32.8%</b>	<b>41.9%</b>
Number	1,250	2,637	2,906	1,268	1,098

\*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 2020, minority faculty and staff accounted for 20.6 percent of tenured faculty/officials and managers, 17.6 percent of non-tenured faculty, 32.0 percent of professional staff/protective service workers, 32.8 percent of office and clerical/paraprofessionals, and 41.9 percent of service maintenance employees. Compared to fiscal year 2019, the number of minority faculty and staff decreased by 2.1 percent in fiscal year 2020. The largest decrease in the minority employee count from the previous year was noted for professional staff/protective service workers (-3.3 percent), followed by non-tenured faculty (-3.0 percent), office and



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clerical/paraprofessionals (-2.4 percent), and service maintenance (-0.6 percent). An increase in the minority employee count from the previous year was noted for tenured faculty/officials and managers (1.6 percent).

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 2016 and 2020**

<b>2016</b>	Percentage of Student Representation	Percentage of Faculty Representation*	Percentage Point Difference
<i>African American</i>	14.4%	8.7%	<b>-5.7%</b>
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	21.2%	4.1%	<b>-17.1%</b>
<i>Asian American</i>	4.6%	3.8%	<b>-0.9%</b>
<i>Nonresident Alien</i>	0.5%	0.3%	<b>-0.2%</b>
<i>Native American</i>	0.3%	0.2%	<b>-0.1%</b>
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	0.1%	0.1%	<b>-0.1%</b>
<i>Two or More Races**</i>	1.9%	0.8%	<b>-1.1%</b>
<i>White</i>	56.9%	82.1%	<b>25.2%</b>
<b>2020</b>	Percentage of Student Representation	Percentage of Faculty Representation*	Percentage Point Difference
<i>African American</i>	12.9%	9.1%	<b>-3.8%</b>
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	25.5%	5.0%	<b>-20.5%</b>
<i>Asian American</i>	5.2%	4.1%	<b>-1.1%</b>
<i>Nonresident Alien</i>	0.8%	0.3%	<b>-0.5%</b>
<i>Native American</i>	0.2%	0.2%	<b>0.0%</b>
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	0.1%	0.1%	<b>0.0%</b>
<i>Two or More Races**</i>	2.7%	0.9%	<b>-1.9%</b>
<i>White</i>	52.6%	80.3%	<b>27.7%</b>

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 increased slightly (4.1 percent in fiscal year 2016 vs. 5.0 percent in fiscal year 2020), but did not increase enough in comparison to the increase in the Hispanic/Latino student representation (21.2 percent in fiscal year 2016 vs. 25.5 percent in fiscal year 2020). Across the same time frame, African American faculty representation increased slightly (8.7 percent in fiscal year 2016 vs. 9.1 percent in fiscal year 2020), while the



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African American student representation experienced a sharper decrease (14.4 percent in fiscal year 2016 vs. 12.9 percent in fiscal year 2020). Asian American faculty and student representation both increased over the period of five years, but the increase was slightly smaller for Asian American faculty (3.8 percent in fiscal year 2016 vs. 4.1 percent in fiscal year 2020) than the increase for Asian American students (4.6 percent in fiscal year 2016 vs. 5.2 percent in fiscal year 2020).

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## BEST PRACTICES

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This following section provides information about best practices from the Illinois Community College System in fiscal year 2020 for improving student access, retention, and completion to close the achievement gap. It also includes best practices for recruitment and/or marketing efforts to stem enrollment declines for at-risk and/or underrepresented groups. 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.

Fiscal year 2020 will always be known as the year of COVID-19. Illinois community colleges were in the middle of the Spring 2020 semester when the pandemic closed the doors on college campuses. At-risk populations became even more vulnerable and susceptible to educational interruption when this occurred. The college staff worked tirelessly to prevent and/or to minimize such disruption to their students. Many of the following best practices address how colleges dealt with the pandemic challenge.

### IMPROVING STUDENT ACCESS, RETENTION, AND COMPLETION TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

#### Technology Lending Program

Home or personal Internet access varies across the state and the digital divide affects rural, urban, and suburban communities alike. Connectivity issues range from not having computers, to people not knowing how to use technology, or not being able to afford Internet subscriptions. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in the middle of the Spring 2020 semester and campus facilities shut down, increased needs related to remote, digital access were identified for enrolled students who relied on campus computer labs to complete their coursework. With so many new difficulties stemming from the pandemic and Illinois' statewide stay-at-home order, the access to laptops and routers is a pragmatic way to help students overcome a major challenge.

*The digital divide refers to the gap between those that have reliable personal Internet access and those who do not.*

In an effort to support students enrolled in any academic program at the college during the COVID-19 pandemic who encountered a remote learning barrier, **Black Hawk College** (BHC) expanded upon the Perkins laptop loan program by making additional laptops available as well as wireless routers. Throughout the 2019-2020 academic year, all Perkins laptops were loaned out to students enrolled in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, and during the Spring 2020 semester, all the additional routers and laptops were also loaned out. Students borrowing Perkins equipment had their progress monitored with an Academic Progress Report at midterm. Those students who were not progressing successfully were contacted by the CTE advisor who provided assistance and support. In both loan programs, registration was verified at midterm to ensure students were still enrolled and equipment continued to be utilized. Technical assistance was also available to trouble-

shoot issues with the equipment after it was brought home by the student. BHC's laptop and router loan initiative improved access and exceeded expectations for student retention and completion. During Fall 2019, over 85 percent of students who were loaned a laptop through the Perkins program were able to successfully complete their coursework by the end of the semester. Additionally, 72 percent of the students who participated in the Perkins laptop program during Fall 2019 continued to the Spring 2020 semester. In the Spring 2020 semester, students who were loaned a laptop through Perkins successfully completed the semester at a rate of 90 percent.

To provide access to learning and research materials to students who do not have regular access to a computer off campus, and thus support their success and continued enrollment, **Carl Sandburg College** Library began checking laptops and Chromebooks out to students in Fall 2017. Due to high demand and demonstrated student need, an additional 30 Chromebooks were purchased for the program in January 2020 and the checkout duration of devices was extended from two weeks to one full semester. Students are allowed to renew for each semester in which they are enrolled to support their online coursework. When campus closed in March 2020 due to the pandemic, the IT Department took up their own device lending program, and only 40 students needed to borrow devices at that time due to the amount of inventory that was already loaned out by the library. The library's inventory included more than 100 devices. There were no fines or late fees for the devices, as long as the materials were returned in good condition. The same policy was adopted by the IT lending program during the closure.

When Illinois Governor Pritzker issued the stay-at-home order due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, **Highland Community College (HCC)** surveyed all students to help determine the level of need. Individualized outreach calls were made to students who had completed the survey indicating specific needs. The Student Services Department collaborated with the HCC Foundation to identify a donor willing to support the purchase of laptops, webcams, and hotspots that could be loaned to enrolled students with accessibility barriers in order to retain them during the Spring 2020 semester. Highland was able to purchase 27 laptops, 10 webcams, and several hotspots for students by the middle of March 2020. Student Services created a 'Loaner Equipment Agreement' and began the loaner program immediately. While the College was closed to follow state guidelines, the Student Services Executive Assistant came to campus once or twice a week using safety precautions to provide curbside loaner equipment pick-up, provide directions for the use of the equipment, facilitate the signing of the agreement, and provide a compiled list of community and campus resources including Wi-Fi hotspots and other technology resources. HCC was able to provide equipment to 33 different students to date. Thirty-two of those students were classified in an underrepresented groups category. Having access to this equipment proved to be successful in retaining 64 percent of the students who borrowed equipment.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased need for technology and Internet access, **Lake Land College** began a technology lending program in March 2020 using funding from the CARES Act to increase access to virtual capabilities for students in need. The program continued through the Summer and Fall 2020 semesters and for the Spring 2021 semester. The technology lending program lends personal Wi-Fi hotspot devices called MiFis and Google Chromebooks. Students can access the technology by contacting the Learning Resource Center (LRC) and requesting the checkout of the devices. Students sign an agreement to take care of the devices while they are using them and to return them at the end of the semester if they are not continuing

as a student or they no longer need the device(s). During the Fall 2020 semester, 57 students checked out Google Chromebooks, and 48 students checked out MiFi equipment. Anecdotally, numerous students reported to staff that they may have had to suspend their coursework if they did not have the option of participating in the technology lending program.

To address the issue of the digital divide and support students in completion of their spring semester courses, **Richland Community College** developed a technology loan program for any student who expressed a need. The program began in mid-March, with hotspots and additional computers purchased by the end of March. Students checked out technology for the semester and were able to retain it if they registered for summer classes. In Spring 2020, 76 computers and 10 hotspots were loaned; in Summer 2020, nine computers were loaned. This program continued in fiscal year 2021.

### Remote Learning Initiatives

**Frontier Community College (FCC)** constructed a faculty recording studio during academic year 2019-2020 to provide the college instructors and staff the ability to create quality visual and audio content to enhance hybrid and online classes. Along with the studio, an Education Technology Specialist was hired to facilitate the studio's technology. Computers, multiple monitors, a light board, and green

*Online videos are available anytime and anywhere, empowering students to take control of their own learning. Students can learn at their own pace – they can speed up, slow down or re-watch lessons as needed – allowing those with learning disabilities more time and opportunity to learn.*

screens are some of the many amenities available to be utilized by faculty and staff. FCC's recording studio can be used as a tool in promoting various programs and events on campus. A virtual campus tour was developed to allow prospective students to visit the FCC campus from their computer or portable devices. New Student Orientation, which is typically attended by students in person on campus, was revised to be a completely online experience. Students who are visually impaired or who have special needs can often access audio lessons more easily than text. Open captioning on videos also allows hearing impaired students the ability to easily follow along. Currently, 67 participants recorded 96 videos for course material.

To help students overcome academic success obstacles, the Online Learning Navigators Pilot Program began in the Summer 2020 at **Waubensee Community College**. With the transition to remote learning in 2020, many faculty members at the College expressed concerns about the amount of time being spent assisting students with navigating online courses. Similarly, several students expressed concerns about remote learning and the various challenges encountered in the online learning environment. During the initial pilot, one staff member from Academic Support partnered with faculty to serve as a navigator in two online math courses. The staff member supported students in connecting to on-campus resources, utilizing third party tools (e.g., MyMathLab), and navigating Canvas and other technologies. The pilot was then extended to Fall 2020, with two navigators and eleven courses from math, English, and college success topics. In Spring 2021, the expanded pilot had 27 courses with nine navigators. Courses ranged from math and science, business, English, humanities, and psychology. Navigators were embedded into the course's learning management and homework systems. They connected students to campus and

community resources and monitored disengaged students. Data from the Fall 2020 Online Learning Navigator pilot showed that students who were enrolled in a course with a navigator were more likely to earn a C or better in their courses and had a nine percent higher completion rate than students who did not participate in the pilot program.

**Triton College** launched the Virtual Navigator Program in Summer 2020 as a response to students transitioning to online learning and virtual support services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the program, Triton staff volunteered to serve as Virtual Navigators and were paired with faculty by request. Virtual Navigators were embedded into the online classroom throughout the semester to serve as another point of contact for students. Virtual Navigators were there to connect students to Triton’s Student Support Services and community resources, assisted in supporting and coaching students to adapt to online learning, and supported students in navigating the Blackboard learning platform. The program is led by Triton Student Success Strategist, who also manages Triton’s Peer Mentoring Collaborative Program. Class sections with a Virtual Navigator ended the Fall 2020 semester with a 76 percent success rate compared to a 68 percent success rate for class sections without a Virtual Navigator. Class sections with a Virtual Navigator for Fall 2020 ended the semester with a 93 percent retention rate compared to an 87 percent retention rate for class sections without a Virtual Navigator. Student success and retention rates for Fall 2020 were 6-8 percent higher for students of color with a Virtual Navigator compared to students of color without a Virtual Navigator.

## Food Pantries

The issue of food insecurity is becoming more prevalent within colleges and universities. According to a [study](#) published by the Association of American Colleges and Universities in 2019, rates of food insecurity, or “the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food, or the ability to acquire such food in a socially acceptable manner,” were higher at two-year institutions, where 28 percent

*According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities, food insecurity can have considerable psychological and academic impact on students, resulting in low grades and a decrease in completion rates.*

of students had very low food security and 19 percent experienced low food security. In August 2018, **Lewis and Clark Community College** implemented a Snack Pantry on its Godfrey campus. Non-perishable snacks are made freely available to students at Snack Pantry locations throughout the campus. The program is based on an honors system, and there are no questions asked of a student requesting a snack, except for a student ID to track the aggregate usage of the Snack Pantry.

The concept of Food Resources Erase Student Hunger (FRESH) Food Pantry was born after **Wabash Valley College** (WVC) faculty members discussed students who had come to them in need of food resources. This sparked concern that there were many more students facing food insecurity and not asking for help. More than half of all community-college students struggle with food insecurity, according to an article [“The Hidden Hunger on College Campuses”](#) published in the Atlantic. To help meet that need, the WVC Student Senate launched the FRESH initiative in February 2019. With assistance from faculty, staff, students, and the community, FRESH makes non-perishable food items and other necessities, such as personal products and paper goods, available to all WVC students in need. Each year a competitive food drive is held to increase the

number of items offered as well as raise funds to purchase necessary items. An Amazon wish list is available for anyone who is interested in donating. FRESH is staffed by student volunteers who assist their peers in selecting the goods they need. FRESH is located in the library on campus, and the staff is able to assist students during library hours. So far over 500 students have taken advantage of FRESH.

**Black Hawk College (BHC)** expanded from an Emergency Food Pantry with only non-perishable food to Hawk's Cupboard, a drop in/pick up food pantry with fresh/perishable food for students, in March of 2019. The BHC emergency pantry, which started in Fall 2013, was only used on an emergency, referral basis. The expansion of the pantry allowed the College to partner with River Bend Food Bank to offer fresh produce, frozen food, and additional non-perishables free of charge. Hawk's Cupboard is open to any BHC student at any time, allowing food insecure students to focus on their education. During Fall 2019, over 86 percent of students who utilized the food pantry successfully completed their coursework by the end of the semester, and they consistently exceeded the College's benchmarks for retention (72 percent) and persistence rates (47 percent). The data gathered also specifically looked at male students, minority students, first-generation students, and students with disabilities, and they also exceeded the benchmarks for retention and persistence.

**Kennedy-King College (KKC)** discovered an alarming percentage of students who indicated they faced homelessness, housing insecurity, and food insecurity in the [#RealCollege Survey](#). For example, 69 percent of KKC respondents reported experiencing housing insecurity in the 12-month period prior to being surveyed. In response to the findings in the survey, the College partnered with the [Greater Chicago Food Depository](#) to open a food pantry, the KKC Healthy Student Market, in August 2019 to support students dealing with food insecurity. The Healthy Student Market aims to offer KKC students healthy food at a day and time that is convenient for them, as well as increase the variety of food items offered, provide opportunities to engage and empower student advocates, and make sure resources and support are available to the students that need it most. The Healthy Student Market served 751 students and their families in Fall 2019. COVID-19 affected operations of the food pantry in 2020. KKC piloted a small food pantry pick up service for students in Fall 2020.

*As the result of surveying students about food insecurity, **Kennedy-King College** partnered with Greater Chicago Food Depository to open a food pantry in August 2019.*

Richland's Pantry, a collaboration between **Richland Community College** and a local provider of meals and job training, was opened in late 2018. Any student could access the Pantry by registering in Student Success; registration did not require proof of income or other personal information except to indicate how many individuals lived in the household. From August 2019-May 2020, the Pantry was open three days a week, and in the summer the Pantry was open one day per week. In addition, the College's Culinary Arts Institute, which manages the food service options on campus, began serving meals five days per week from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. from April through the summer. Over fiscal year 2020, the Pantry served 145 students and their families. They visited the Pantry 353 times over the course of the year. A total of 8,000 meals from the Culinary Arts Program were distributed from March to June 2020.

The Learning Resource Center (LRC) at **Spoon River College** (SRC) started an emergency food pantry on both the Canton and Macomb campuses in the fall of 2016, as national data trends of food insecurity among college students were gaining media attention and SRC Student Success Coaches were correlating these trends with what they were hearing from the students. An additional goal with this initiative was to help students apply for SNAP benefits. In the fall of 2019, the SRC Allied Health Coordinator was working with an intern from SIU School of Medicine whose interests and studies were focused on food insecurity. He offered to help author a Student Needs survey for SRC. A total of 168 students completed the survey from all four campus locations. Only 25 percent of participants were male while 75 percent were female. The largest age group represented was 18-21, having 56 percent participation. Key results showed that more than two-thirds of SRC students worked, yet 49 percent were struggling with food insecurity. More than 40 percent of students worried that their food supply would run out before they were able to get more money, and 16.7 percent were on a food relief program such as SNAP, WIC, or Medicaid. Over 40 percent of SRC students revealed that they either cut the size of their meal or skipped it because of money. About 45 percent of SRC students shared that they ate less than they should because of money. The results were presented to all college employees at Professional Development Day on February 14, 2020. As a result, a Student Needs committee was formed to further address the issues identified in the survey. The Student Success Coaches spearheaded the committee and have now formed several subcommittees including food insecurity; transportation, childcare, and housing; mental health and self-care; and financial issues. Each group has been tasked to look at the survey, break down specific needs, and look for solutions or initiatives to support those students' needs. The goal is to build local partnerships with organizations that are already providing services and to help educate students about them. The work of this committee is ongoing.

### Other Student Support Initiatives

Student support initiatives aim to develop effective approaches for improving access, retention, and completion to close the achievement gap for all students. They provide opportunities for academic development, help students stay enrolled, and motivate them towards the successful completion of their postsecondary education. Illinois public community colleges offer various student support programs and services to assist students at all stages of their educational journey.

*Student Success Navigators provide ongoing assistance to assigned students throughout their lifecycle at **College of DuPage**, from enrollment to completion.*

Recognizing that closing achievement gaps among underrepresented groups requires an intensive and coordinated approach to student support, the **College of DuPage** added Student Success Navigator positions to the College's integrated advising staff in Fall 2019. The goal of

the Student Success Navigators is to provide ongoing assistance to assigned students throughout their lifecycle at the institution, from enrollment to completion. Navigators assist assigned students in academic goal setting and self-assessment, offer referrals and connection with internal and external resources, and provide continuity of service within a culture of personalized care. Recent survey data demonstrated that students served by Navigators were highly satisfied with their experiences; in addition, when asked if their Navigator experience "helped increase [their] chances of being a 'successful' student," 55 percent of respondents answered "Definitely" and 29 percent



answered “Probably.” Meanwhile, term-to-term and year-over-year persistence rates among Hispanic/Latino, African American, and multiracial students per IPEDS data were significantly improved for students who actively engaged with a Navigator.

During 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic meant in-person learning was replaced with online learning. While many students have the ability and means to learn in an online environment, the at-risk population needs assistance. With the shelter-in-place rules coming in late March 2020, programs were implemented immediately at **John Wood Community College** to provide services to all students, and especially the at-risk population. Wi-fi hotspots were put into place in parking lots at the main campus and at outlying center campuses. This allowed those students who did not have Internet or reliable connectivity a place to do their online studies while keeping them socially distanced from others. Student Support Services did monthly ‘care-package’ deliveries of stress/anxiety relieving items along with academic support items such as pens/pencils/paper for Upward Bound students. A focus was put on the social/emotional side of the students through art nights and de-stress events. Student Life reached out to employees for additional food pantry items and delivered those in a safe manner to students who were in need. While withdrawals were higher in Spring 2020, student evaluations of those who completed, and student surveys noted they felt the college made its best effort and they were successful. In the fall of 2020, measures were taken to provide blended classes, where students would have some online work and some in-classroom work, and still be socially distanced. Classes were split into multiple sections to allow for fewer students in any given space. This was continued into Spring 2021 so that prior planning provided for less interruption should restrictions occur.

**Richland Community College** worked to coordinate a number of initiatives, some ongoing and some new, in fiscal year 2020 that focused on student support outside the classroom, with the goal of assuring that students had a “one stop” location for support. With the shift in educational programs in Spring 2020 to online learning after the campus closure, students struggled to balance the completion of the semester and their work and personal lives. Richland responded to the pandemic by addressing the whole student. The College started a technology loan program, continued offering free food at Richland’s Pantry, and provided funds to students in need. Further support included virtual testing, online tutoring through NetTutor, and virtual appointments with Success Coaches and faculty.

### **TRIO Student Support Services**

The [TRIO Student Support Services \(SSS\) Program](#) at **Carl Sandburg College** serves first-generation, low-income, and students with disabilities to increase their chances of graduating with an associate degree and transferring to a four-year institution. The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in necessary program adaptations starting in March 2020, continuing through the emergency. Modifications were made to minimize disruption to program operations, provide continuous service to SSS participants, and preserve SSS participants' and staff's health and safety. All procedures were in keeping with SSS federal regulations and published guidance from the U.S. Department of

*The TRIO Student Support Services Program serves first-generation, low-income, and students with disabilities to increase their chances of graduating and transferring to a four-year institution.*

Education during the national emergency duration. The program application was moved to an online format to promote accessibility for potentially eligible program participants and to create easy access and file sharing for program staff. Campus visits were moved to a virtual format, with information on various transfer schools, including admission information, financial aid, and scholarship information, and virtual campus tours were emailed to participants. The TRIO SSS program handbook, study skills guide, financial literacy guide, and other materials that would have normally been distributed during the program's orientation day in August were disseminated in two drive-through, pick-up days in August. Sessions to promote college success skills were produced in a video format so that participants could access the information at times that were convenient for them. The videos were disseminated via the program's social media, email, text message, and Moodle. Live virtual workshops were also offered via Zoom. Workshops that required participants to utilize tools or supplies were packaged in kits that were mailed or picked up in a low- or no-contact setting. Academic advising, priority course registration, transfer advising, financial aid and scholarship assistance, and peer mentoring were offered via Zoom, text, phone, and email. The program also found it necessary to purchase online software to facilitate virtual/online program service delivery. The program also hired several speakers to present virtual, live workshops. There was not a significant change to student GPA or the number of students moving away from good academic standing during this time.

The **Illinois Central College** TRIO SSS Program serves 250 students per year and throughout its history has met or exceeded its retention, graduation, and transfer goals. The program was initially implemented during the 1990-1991 academic year and has served over 4,550 students. The wrap-around support for students includes tutoring, expanded advising, academic skills and career workshops, cultural enrichment activities, personal development workshops, technology support, and achievement recognition activities. The most recent program year began on September 1, 2020. During the performance period of September 2018 through August 2019, the persistence rate of 87 percent exceeded the goal of 65 percent. The goals for good academic standing rate, associate degree or certificate rate, and associate degree or certificate and transfer to a four-year institutions rate were also exceeded. The program has proven to be an effective model for increasing the number of college graduates, particularly among underrepresented groups.

The purpose of the TRIO SSS Program at **College of Lake County** (CLC) is to increase retention and graduation rates, improve understanding of financial aid and financial literacy, and foster a climate of supportive success and sense of belonging for the first-generation and underrepresented students. TRIO SSS has been a program at CLC since 2010. During the summer of 2020, the program received the grant award for the third time. The grant covers a five-year period. The TRIO SSS program serves 140 students every year. TRIO SSS staff meet with students at least once a month to check on their progress in their classes, make any time management recommendations, or talk about anything that is affecting their academics. They also review financial aid awards with students to ensure they understand all categories and their responsibilities, walk students through their FAFSA completion, or teach them financial literacy. TRIO SSS staff also schedule weekly times for chats with students to ask about current events or anything happening in their community, study strategies, and various other topics. The TRIO Chats has been a great platform for keeping students connected through virtual learning. Workshops are another way to connect with students. They focus on financial, academic, or career topics and include facilitators who racially and ethnically represent TRIO SSS students' racial and ethnic identities while also making connections

to CLC staff, faculty, community members, and alumni. The student cohorts' persistence rates between academic years 2011-2012 and 2019-2020 range from 66 percent to 96 percent. The most recent cohort (2019-2020) has the lowest persistence rate compared to previous cohorts, but this can be due to the COVID-19 circumstances. Many of the courses at CLC were shifted to remote online learning, which may have led to an increase in students' decisions to withdraw from some of their classes.

Prior to COVID-19, TRIO students at **John A. Logan College** took part in many face-to-face workshops, tutoring services, counseling, and support services, as well as field trips. When COVID-19 struck in March 2020 and the campus closed, these in-person activities were suspended but continued, if possible, virtually. The TRIO staff focused immediately on ensuring TRIO students had computers and that they were provided online mentoring/tutoring services to transition them to online learning. The TRIO students were also provided virtual

*When COVID-19 struck in March 2020, the TRIO staff at **John A. Logan College** focused immediately on ensuring TRIO students had computers and that they were provided online mentoring/tutoring services to transition them to online learning.*

advisement, counseling, support, and referral services during this time. As per funding guidelines, a minimum of 200 students must be enrolled in TRIO during the grant period. Even during COVID-19, this enrollment was maintained. TRIO students also graduated at the end of Spring 2020 despite the barriers brought on by COVID-19. During fiscal year 2020, the TRIO program submitted a new five-year application for funding in January 2020 that was awarded in August. This funding will allow outreach to continue to these student populations.

Project RISE is a federally funded TRIO program that works with students who are first generation, low income, and/or have disabilities, promoting the behaviors to succeed at **Heartland Community College**. The wide variety of services is designed to maximize a student's success and assist in overcoming obstacles. The program accepts 170 participants. The program provides a multitude of services including peer mentoring, workshops, college visits, cultural events, and volunteer experiences. Furthermore, the program asks students to meet with staff monthly to review goals, progress toward graduation, and academic performance, as well as troubleshoot issues. Staff reviews academic performance at the five-, eight-, and sixteen-week mark. The achievement gap is most pronounced in math enrollment. Many students are placed into developmental math and linger in the self-paced, computer-based modules. Project RISE offers a Developmental Math Lab to provide additional instruction and a support network, as well as the Student Success Education Course 107, Math Success Skills. The course covers math anxiety, math confidence, and study strategies specific to math. Program participants have higher GPA, graduation and transfer rates compared to eligible non-participants. During COVID-19, services were offered virtually, except for college visits, which were cancelled. Students were directed to financial and technology resources to overcome some of the obstacles they were facing.

The goal of the TRIO SSS program at **Malcolm X College (MXC)** is to provide opportunities for academic development, assist with basic college requirements, and to motivate selected students each year toward the successful completion of their postsecondary education. To meet this goal, the MXC SSS program addressed four objectives (approved by the Department of Education) that assess key measures of success and achievement from SSS participant performance: (1) Sixty

percent of all participants served by the SSS project will persist from one academic year to the beginning of the next academic year or graduate and/or transfer to a 4-year institution during the academic year, (2) sixty-five percent of all enrolled participants served by the SSS project will meet the performance level required to stay in good academic standing at the grantee institution, (3) thirty percent of new participants served will graduate with an associate degree or certificate within four years, and (4) ten percent of new participants served will transfer with an associate degree or certificate within four years. In fiscal year 2020, the persistence rate of SSS participants was 63 percent, which was three percentage points higher than its objective of 60 percent. The rate of SSS students who were in good academic standing was 86 percent, which was 21 percentage points higher than its objective of 65 percent. The graduation rate of SSS students was 56 percent, which was 26 percentage points higher than its objective of 30 percent. Lastly, the transfer rate of SSS students was 23 percent, which was 13 percentage points higher than its objective of 10 percent.

The TRIO SSS Program has existed at **Sauk Valley Community College** for nearly thirty years. The program strives to create innovative programming that serves Sauk's most at-risk populations. Currently, over 90 percent of all students at Sauk qualify to participate in the TRIO SSS Program. The program's current capacity is just over 200 students. While TRIO's general goal is to support at-risk students, the program has a few specific objectives. These objectives include increasing rates of degree completion, transfer rates to four-year universities, and retention rates. TRIO participants must also receive financial literacy education, complete the FAFSA, and maintain good academic standing. Due to the many services provided by TRIO advisors, TRIO students have higher than average retention and completion rates. The fall-to-spring retention rate in the 2019-20 academic year for TRIO students was 90.7 percent in comparison to 76.8 percent for the general Sauk population.

### **Support Services and Initiatives for Students with Disabilities**

The Student Access and Accommodations Services (SAAS) Department at **Heartland Community College** implemented Vital Signs and Otter.AI software to support students with disabilities. Vital Signs, a transcribing service, was initially implemented in January 2020 to provide closed captioning to those in lecture-based courses that were hard of hearing. Through the COVID-19 related campus closure, it has allowed students to receive real time captioning in Zoom. Otter.AI, a meeting notes and audio recording software, was implemented at the start of COVID-19 (end of March 2020), to replace the note taker accommodation. It records and transcribes every word that is said and saves it in Otter.AI for the student to access later. The SAAS office will be continuing to utilize these systems for additional support and continued success towards closing the achievement gap.

*Otter.AI, a meeting notes and audio recording software, was implemented at **Heartland Community College** at the start of COVID-19 to replace the note taker accommodation.*

**Kankakee Community College (KCC)** developed a five-year plan in the summer of 2020 to conduct accessibility audits of instructional materials in the College Learning Management System, Canvas. The plan includes an initial self-assessment of the College materials and development of a plan that would allow for faculty and staff to complete necessary modifications.

The plan also includes the training and professional development necessary for faculty and staff to ensure all materials are ADA compliant within five years. In the fall of 2020, KCC began this action project to support the College's strategic priority, "Improve physical and virtual teaching and learning spaces." To identify issues that need to be remediated, KCC purchased Ally, an additional software that runs audits and assists faculty in making necessary corrections. The software also creates alternative file formats that may be beneficial or necessary for students with disabilities. Initial data from Ally's audits in the summer of 2020 uncovered that KCC's overall accessibility score is 73 percent. The three most prevalent issues are documents that have contrast issues, images that do not have descriptions, and documents that do not have headings. Faculty have begun remediation according to the initial plan, and a faculty pilot group has enabled Ally in their courses. As of January 2021, twenty-five faculty are participating in the pilot program, with eighty-one course sections having Ally enabled. In February 2021, high enrollment course instructors, program directors currently in their program review process, and ION accessibility instructors will be invited to enable Ally in their courses. In Summer 2021, Ally will be deployed in every course. Faculty will then be able to remediate all issues, and Ally will be available for all students to begin accessing alternative file formats as necessary.

To improve accessibility of instructional content, **Parkland College** implemented Techsmith Knowmia (formerly Relay) in December 2019 and Blackboard Ally in August 2020. Ally creates awareness of accessible content in Parkland's learning management system and can also be used as a training tool not only to create conversations about accessibility but to provide instruction and support on creating accessible content. Knowmia makes it easier for faculty not only to create video content but also to caption that content to help ensure all video content is properly captioned. Both tools have been of particular importance given the rapid expansion into online classes as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Parkland began training on Knowmia in the early spring of 2020 and saw rapid adoption beginning in March once all instruction moved online. The tool had 1900 users and 1400 pieces of media at the end of the first quarter of usage. As of January 2021, it has been used to caption over 3,200 videos. Ally was piloted in the fall for several faculty members and has now been launched in all Spring 2021 classes.

**Rend Lake College** recognizes the need of students who are looking to improve mental health. In March 2020, the college partnered with ULifeline, a college mental health support system that includes contact information for local institutions and national help hotlines. These contacts are not just limited to college students. Anyone from the general public is encouraged to utilize these resources. The number of students who use these mental health services/resources increased and has continued to increase over the past few months. RLC plans to continue to address these needs on an ongoing basis.

The Accessibility Task Force was formed at **Richland Community College** to address campus-wide accessibility in a unified cross-departmental approach. The Task Force created a comprehensive six-year Accessibility Plan to ensure legal compliance and promote best practices for consistent accessibility across all areas. Traditionally, accessibility and universal design practices have been implemented to remove barriers for people with disabilities; however, good design often benefits everyone. Captioning can be used by a parent wanting to watch a video for class without disturbing sleeping children. Screen reader compatibility is beneficial to those who prefer to listen instead of to read. Adequate color contrast and font style make readability on a

smartphone easier. Accessibility features tend to promote usability and organization and create searchable content to save time. In December 2019, the Accessibility Task Force requested the creation of a committee to oversee the implementation of the Accessibility Plan. Although the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift in priorities caused a delay in forming the committee, the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Committee was formed on September 25, 2020 to further accessibility efforts.

*The goal of the RAISE Program is to transition young adults with intellectual disabilities into **Rock Valley College's** career pathways and ultimately into successful competitive employment.*

The RAISE Program was developed at **Rock Valley College** in 2010. Over the past decade the program has steadily grown and now includes six courses, and over 40 students annually participate. Seven local high school districts refer students to the program as well as an increasing number of private pay families. The program provides

academic, vocational, and social opportunities for young adults who have intellectual disabilities, as well as academic accommodations and other supports to improve the persistence, retention, and completion rates of these students who would otherwise find traditional postsecondary education programs too challenging. The goal of RAISE is to transition program students into RVC career pathways and ultimately into successful competitive employment. To aid recruitment efforts and reduce potential financial barriers for families, scholarships are available for program participants each year. Since 2010, nearly 500 students have completed RAISE coursework. A total of 80 students enrolled in coursework in fiscal year 2020, completing a combined total of approximately 400 credit hours. In 2020, the program underwent a process of expansion to transition RAISE graduates into regular college coursework and the first cohort of five RAISE graduates began working on coursework that aligned with a career pathway. Program staff are in the process of developing vocational opportunities and internship experiences for students who have completed the RAISE program and who are working toward competitive employment.

The Disability Support Services (DSS) office was established as a centralized office at **Rock Valley College** in 2002. At that time, it was staffed by a program coordinator. The College hired two full-time sign language interpreters (2004 and 2005), a part-time administrative assistant (2007), a part-time accommodations specialist (2012), and a part-time assistive technology specialist (2014) to provide more targeted and direct support to a growing population of students with disabilities. The upward trend in program enrollment continues, and in fiscal year 2020 there were over 550 students registered with DSS. The purpose of the DSS office is to support students with disabilities by identifying and removing barriers, facilitating academic accommodations, and coordinating services to ensure equal access to all the College's programs, facilities, and events. DSS also serves as a resource for the College by providing information, training, and assistance to the larger campus community on issues relating to disability, access, and inclusion. Program success is also achieved through strong partnerships with external community organizations such as the local high school district and special education departments, RAMP, Division of Rehabilitation Services, and the Rockford Park District. Since its development, the DSS office has seen an increase in the number of students who register for services every year except for one (2018). In 2019 both the persistence and retention rates for students with disabilities was above that of students with no disabilities (+1.24 percent and +3.23 percent respectively). Sixty-one students with disabilities completed a degree in 2020.

## Support Services and Initiatives for Minority Students

The PASO Program was implemented at **Harper College** in June 2019. Its goal is to strengthen communication, build connections, and provide answers to college questions for the families and supporters of the College's Hispanic/Latino students. PASO is designed to form a welcoming community to engage and support students

*The PASO Program, which targets Hispanic/Latino students, promotes family and community involvement at **Harper College**.*

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 can opt into the program through the Harper application and receive invitations to PASO events and program. The content for the program was influenced by a survey to prospective participants who indicated an interest in learning about financial aid and scholarships, career support, campus resources, the educational system, and the difference between high school and college. In response, 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. Initial enrollment data indicates a positive trend. Overall new student enrollment in the Hispanic/Latino populations increased by 11 percent from Fall 2018 to Fall 2019, and the new student yield rate increased by two percent compared to the prior year. In Spring 2020, new student applications increased by seven percent and enrollment improved by six percent over the prior spring. The work completed by the PASO team this summer and fall positively contributed to these outcomes.

The Promotion of Underrepresented Minorities in Academic STEM Alliance (PUMA-STEM) is focused on strengthening underrepresented minority (URM) student success in STEM at primarily undergraduate and regional institutions in the Chicago area. The alliance consists of seven four-year institutions: Elmhurst College, Benedictine University, Concordia University Chicago, Dominican University, Lewis University, North Central College, and Saint Xavier University; and one community college: **College of DuPage**. The overall five-year goals of the PUMA-STEM implemented in Fall 2019 are (1) an increase of the number of underrepresented minority students graduating with STEM majors in the alliance institutions from 146 to 292 for the five-year grant period; (2) improved retention of underrepresented minority students in STEM between the first and second years by closing the retention gap between URM and non-URM students by at least 50 percent; (3) increased number of underrepresented minority students entering STEM graduate programs by at least 25 percent; and (4) improved successful transfer and persistence of underrepresented minority students from two-year to four-year institutions, increasing URM transfer student graduate rates in STEM by at least 25 percent. The PUMA-STEM alliance, which is funded by the National Science Foundation Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP) program, developed a methodology for recruiting students as peer mentors and summer researchers. In addition, the College of DuPage STEM Club was established, and the Academic Success Coach began working with students.



After following the enrollment patterns of first-time, full-time students, **Danville Area Community College** (DACC) noted large success rate gaps between White students and African American students, especially with the male gender. The College investigated best practices across the nation and decided on a few strategies to put in place. Initially, the program was titled AMALE (African American Males Addressing Life Effectively). After working with the AMALE group for a year, the College assessed the program's success. A few changes were made, and the Toolbox initiative was implemented in the summer of 2019. DACC faculty, staff, and administration (1) build relationships with each Toolbox participant (By getting "proximate" with the students, going to their homes before the start of the semester, Toolbox mentors begin building relationships and a network of resources with potential participants, meeting them in their environment); (2) gain a better understanding of educational barriers on and off campus, determine best ways to communicate, assist, and motivate the African-American male population, and use information to develop both academic and social support activities to build engagement and inclusivity; and (3) share data and lessons learned with DACC faculty, staff, and administration to build equity in policies, procedures, services, and instruction. After implementing the changes, the College saw positive changes in the engagement, communication, persistence, and success rates of the Toolbox participants. In Fall 2019, 21 students were identified as potential Toolbox participants: 18 participated (86 percent) with 15 regular attendees. Twelve (67 percent) were still enrolled at the end of the term and engaged with the Toolbox group. In Spring 2020, 13 students were part of the cohort (12 from the fall and one new student). Despite COVID-19 and various economic/family-oriented decisions to drop out, 11 participants persisted.

**Harold Washington College** (HWC) is an urban institution of higher education that works to provide accessible, high-quality academic opportunities to Chicago's diverse population of learners, including 44.2 percent of Hispanic/Latinos and 28.0 percent of African Americans. Recently, HWC developed an equity strategic plan in hopes of reducing equity gaps for African American and Hispanic/Latino students and demonstrating equitable practices and processes among faculty, staff, and students through comprehensive systematic and curricular improvements. During fiscal year 2020, various stakeholders (students, staff, faculty, and administration) were engaged to develop the equity plan including six major initiatives: (1) equity-minded instructional tools, (2) satisfactory academic progress, (3) developmental education, (4) climate/satisfaction survey, (5) student supports, and (6) equity-minded classroom data. Feedback received from the college-wide forum indicated strong support for the plan, and all targets set were completed. There was a slight delay in the publicizing the equity plan, but this presented no major roadblocks. All initiatives identified co-leads, tasks, and were, at the conclusion of the fiscal year, on track for implementation. In 2020, HWC saw substantial gains in retention and completion rates, and continued success in transfer rates from the last year.

Under the direction of Dr. Ron House, the former JALC President, **John A. Logan College** (JALC) restructured the Diversity Committee in 2019 to better address the needs of minority students, improve recruitment of students, and expand minority employment at the college. Mr. Charlie Jones, who has extensive contacts and strong ties to the African American community in Southern Illinois, was appointed as the Chair of this committee. Early in his appointment as Diversity Chair, Mr. Jones recruited numerous minority committee members who represent a spectrum of the community such as SIU and the SIU Medical School, area churches, school districts, and youth serving organizations. The Diversity Committee works collaboratively with

the Diversity and Inclusion Office which provides programming, workshops, academic support to students, and training and lectures to students, faculty, staff, and the public. The committee was in the early stages of meetings and strategic planning when COVID-19 hit. While the Diversity Committee activity was “suspended” during COVID-19, the outreach to and from campus and community resources continued to support students. One of the outcomes of the work of the Diversity Committee and Mr. Jones’ leadership is the introduction of STEM scholarships to area students via work with the NAACP. The committee anticipates moving forward in the Summer 2021 or Fall 2021 semester.

To proactively engage African American students about using the library, **Lewis and Clark Community College** implemented targeted library outreach in January 2016. Examples of this outreach include working with the Campus Diversity Council and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to promote information literacy skills. From Fall 2018 to Fall 2019, African American students that attended a library instruction course had a higher retention rate (67.7 percent) than all African American students (56 percent).

**South Suburban College** (SSC) was awarded a five-year (2016-2021) Predominantly Black Institution (PBI) grant through the Department of Education. The SSC PBI grant provides support to at-risk, African American Males, which include academic support through PBI Project Succeed tutors, mental health services through Student Assistance Program, Academic Resource Centers staffed by faculty tutors, Writing Center, Reading Center, Math Lab, financial support, and loaning laptops for virtual instruction. SSC is committed to meeting the objectives outlined by PBI. Despite the impact of COVID-19, academic support efforts continued even in the virtual environment. Project SUCCEED tutors provided individual and small group tutoring. Once the transition to a virtual teaching environment occurred in March 2020, individual and small group tutoring services continued through Zoom. Over the course of fiscal year 2020, the Writing Center provided assistance to approximately 150 students, of which about 75 percent were enrolled in developmental English courses. Over the same period, the Reading Center and the Math Lab helped approximately 75 and 100 students, respectively. Student participation did decline with the onset of COVID-19 despite services being made available over Zoom. The PBI grant in conjunction with the SSC Foundation provided financial assistance to 20 students in fiscal year 2020 for a grand total of \$10,000. These scholarships provided much needed financial support for these students to continue their education.

*The Predominantly Black Institution grant in conjunction with the **South Suburban College** Foundation provided financial assistance to 20 at-risk students in fiscal year 2020 for a grand total of \$10,000.*

### **Support Services and Initiatives for First-Generation/First-Year Students**

During FAFSA Completion Nights, **Frontier Community College** eliminates barriers to FAFSA completion by helping current and prospective students with filling out their application for financial aid assistance while also providing the necessary technology to complete the online application. Since 2014, the College has hosted FAFSA Nights on campus every year during the month of October. This event is advertised on campus and in the community with flyers, social media, local radio stations, and direct mailings. Current and prospective students can attend by

registering for the event with Frontier's financial aid office. The event is run not as a presentation but as a way for attendees to reach out to an experienced financial aid team for guidance on their application. Attendees meet in a computer lab on campus and begin filling out their online application. When they have questions, they will raise their hand and a team member will then provide one-on-one attention to help solve the issue. By the time the event is over, attendees will leave with their FAFSA application completed and familiarity of the financial aid staff on campus. In October 2019, there was a total of six students who attended the event. Offering face-to-face assistance ensures correct FAFSA completion and encourages the public to attend and begin the process in a timely manner.

**Harper College** implemented Harper Launch in July 2020. The program is designed to help first-generation, underrepresented, and/or low-income students overcome barriers to enrollment and success. The program's goals include helping students develop an academic identity and sense of belonging, proactively engage with the advising case-management model, and enroll in their developmental math and English coursework in their first semester. The core of the program is a customized three credit-hour First Year Seminar (FYS) course with a curriculum that connects incoming students to resources that assist them in successfully navigating academic and campus life. To overcome financial and technology barriers, the cost of the course was free for students, and they each received a Chromebook. The first session of Harper Launch during the Summer 2020 semester consisted of 50 students, of which 76 percent successfully completed FYS 101 with a grade of C or better (compared to a control group at 59 percent). All students who placed below college level enrolled in their developmental math or English. Seventy-five percent of students persisted to the Spring 2021 semester.

***Southeastern Illinois College** celebrates students who are the first in their families to attend college during the annual First-Generation Celebration.*

The First-Generation Celebration is a weeklong event held annually at **Southeastern Illinois College** (SIC) during the week of the nationally recognized First-Generation Day. It seeks to celebrate students who are the first in their families to attend college and to facilitate networking with community members through campus events, ceremonies, and meals. SIC's First-Generation Celebration was first organized in 2018. The event provides opportunities for first-generation students to network among themselves and with business leaders in the community; it also affirms and honors excellent academic performance in this demographic by recognizing hard-working, first-generation students with certificates of achievement. The week's events also include the creation of the annual First-Generation Tree (a ceiling-high mural of a tree with each leaf created and signed by a participating first-generation student), keynote speakers with inspiring messages, a celebratory dinner, social events, and an awards ceremony to recognize high achievers. As first-generation students rarely have opportunities to network within their own families and circles, this event is helpful to them. Educators who worked to facilitate First-Generation Week's events 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.

Rock Enroll is an enrollment initiative aimed to improve engagement, retention, and completion in students, particularly first-generation, first-year students at **Richard J. Daley College**. The week after next semester schedules are released, the office of Student Development sets up a

registration workshop area in the student lounge area. This open-aired, one-stop set-up allows students to engage with advisors, financial aid, and student engagement, transfer, and activities to plan and enroll for the following semester. Planning for Rock Enroll encompasses a shared governance model, including advisors, faculty, staff, and administration. The first semester of implementation of Rock Enroll was Fall 2018, and 223 students were served during this semester. Every semester (Fall and Spring) since then, there was an increase of at least 10 percent of students served. As a result, Daley was able to stabilize enrollment (which was previously on a decrease) and slightly improve retention.

### Initiatives in Developmental Education and Co-requisite Remediation

The Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act (PWR Act) of 2016, includes [Transitional Math](#) (TM), which is built around courses, standalone or embedded, that increase college readiness for high school seniors. A grant was provided by ICCB to assist **Olney Central College** (OCC) to work with local high schools. As a working member

*Passing a transitional math course gives students guaranteed placement into certain college-level math courses, removing the need for a math placement test. These courses significantly reduce the likelihood of students needing remedial math courses at college, saving time and money. They also provide students with opportunities to engage in authentic math problems with connections to real life and careers.*

of the state-assembled curriculum writers, the Director of the Developmental Education program at OCC was able to provide expertise to the group regarding the needs of varying programs of study and emphasizing the needs of the Career and Technical Education programs. OCC has created a pilot program, in partnership with Richland Community High School (RCHS) to prepare students for the rigor of mathematics requirements embedded in their programs of study. Transitional Math at RCHS/OCC is designed for students who have completed three years of math instruction and provides for documentation of mastery of necessary concepts to eliminate the need for remediation in postsecondary education. It is the goal of OCC and the PWR Act, to reduce the need for and/or time spent in developmental education for entering postsecondary students, increasing access for them. In 2020, OCC undertook an analysis of five years of data regarding the enrollment, completion, and impact of program completion of the mathematics and English coursework, offered as an intervention for those scoring or placing into remediation through standardized (placement or achievement) testing or high school transcripts. As a product of the PWR Act, the goal through the five years has been to reduce the number of students enrolled in math and English remediation only courses. The longitudinal study on the impact of revised developmental education revealed a dramatic reduction of students placed in semester-long, math and English remediation coursework, which meets the goals of PWR Act.

**Kishwaukee College** committed to a math success program as one of the strategies for the Partnership for College Completion, intended to graduate all students as quickly and efficiently as possible and eliminate the achievement gap for underserved populations, such as African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Pell grant-funded students. With ICCB grant funding, the College implemented the Math Placement and Success Center in Fall 2020 as a pilot program. Key elements of the program are professional math tutors with master's degree qualification and

previous teaching or tutoring experience, embedding the tutors into developmental and entry level math courses, and an advisor focused on guiding students from placement testing through registration into appropriate math courses for their desired career goals. Embedding a professional math tutor into developmental math courses was a successful pilot strategy. In MAT-098 Intermediate Algebra, 85 percent of students experiencing an embedded tutor passed the course compared to a 69 percent pass rate without an embedded tutor. Embedded tutoring served 103 students, individual tutoring and workshops served 258 students, case management for developmental math served 8 students, and placement test interventions served 15 students. In Spring 2021, the personnel in the Math Placement and Success Center are making further modifications to reach more students and create sustainable resources for the future.

*Co-requisite education places underprepared students into credit-bearing math and English courses and accelerates them through their academic program, utilizing wraparound student supports and active pedagogical strategies.*

In the fall of 2019, **Triton College** implemented co-requisite education, which places underprepared students into credit-bearing math and English courses and accelerates them through their academic program, utilizing wraparound student supports and active pedagogical strategies. Truncating the developmental education course sequence saves students time and money and increases their motivation levels. The attrition rate is lower for students who are not required

to take multiple noncredit-bearing courses. Minority students represented 51 percent and 28 percent of the incoming Fall 2019 developmental math and writing students, respectively. In that same term, 65 percent of co-requisite math and 70 percent of co-requisite English students fell into underrepresented groups. The implementation of an embedded peer tutoring program provides instructors and students with added support throughout the co-requisite courses. The student success rates in co-requisite courses were significantly higher than their credit-bearing counterparts.

In Spring 2019, the English Department at **Oakton Community College** piloted a co-requisite course, EGL 099/101: Writing Tutorial/Composition. This co-requisite course places eligible developmental students directly into college-level English in the first semester with supplemental instruction to support their success, reducing the numbers of students placed into developmental courses and increasing the number of students taking college-level English courses. This program is part of the curricular revision overhaul that has involved professional development for developmental English faculty. It 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. Offering the co-requisite course allowed more students to enroll immediately in English 101 than Oakton would have been able to in the past. Higher proportions of the students enrolled in the English co-requisite course were African American and Hispanic/Latino compared to the composition of students who take English 101 alone and those enrolled at Oakton overall. Thus, the co-requisite course provides access and is an initiative that supports the College's equity objectives. For students enrolled in the co-requisite English course in Fall 2020, Spring 2020, and

Summer 2020, the success rates exceeded that of the English 101 only students by one to four percentage points. This finding holds across all racial/ethnic groups.

**Wilbur Wright College** implemented an English 101/97 co-requisite course in Spring 2019. Its purpose is to provide students who do not qualify for English 101 by virtue of their placement test or SAT/ACT scores an opportunity to complete this required college-level course by providing additional supports through a required developmental course (English 97) that is focused on strengthening critical thinking, reading, and writing appropriate to academic literacy. English 101 is a course required for graduation in all degree programs. Placement into English 101 requires that students a) have a score of 6 (on a scale of 1-6) on the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) in-house placement exam, or b) a score of 480 or higher on the SAT, or c) a score of 19 or higher on the ACT. Students with ACT or SAT scores below the minimum required for placement into English 101 are required to take the CCC in-house placement test. Students with placement test scores of 1-2 are placed into foundational studies, while those with scores of 3-5 are placed into developmental English. Under the co-requisite model, students scoring a 4 or 5 on the placement exam can be placed into English 101 if they also enroll in English 97. Completion of both courses with a grade of C or better is required to satisfy the College's English 101 requirement. In Fall 2020, when all courses were offered in the online or remote format, the co-requisite courses had a comparable overall course retention rate (87.2 percent) compared to 85.0 percent for English 96 and 87.9 percent for English 101. The co-requisite courses, however, had an overall course success rate of 75.0 percent compared to 69.0 percent in English 101 and 59.9 percent in English 96.

### **Initiatives in Adult Education**

**Kaskaskia College** has offered a high school equivalency program, GED, to residents of district 501 to help them advance their education and enable them to obtain better job opportunities. GED classes are offered for free in seven locations throughout the district as well as online. ABE/ASE classes start several times throughout the year and meet twice per week for three hours per class. Day and evening classes are offered in several locations throughout the district. The program was renewed during the Fall 2016 semester after a hiatus due to budgetary restrictions. In fiscal year 2017, 186 students took advantage of the GED program, and that number has increased to 268 students in fiscal year 2020.

The Adult Career Pathway to Healthcare Careers, which has been offered at **Lincoln Land Community College** since 2012, provides an entry point on a pathway to healthcare careers for eligible students. The pathway culminates in 12.5 credit hours and industry recognized certificates, including CPR for healthcare, a Basic Nurse Assistant Certificate of Completion, and the Illinois State BNA certification. This pathway program utilizes a team-teaching approach, contextualized curriculum, student support services, and transition services. The pathway forms a transparent system of education and training, integrating basic skills education and career technical/occupational training for college credit; prepares students for work and/or further educational endeavors; and improves the transition of students from adult education to college. Seventy percent of enrolled students in this pathway from 2012-2020 successfully completed the program, earning college credit and industry recognized credentials. In fiscal year 2020, seven students enrolled, and six students completed successfully (86 percent), earning 12.5 college credits and three credentials.

**Morton College**, a Hispanic-Serving Institution with an 85 percent Hispanic/Latino population, served a population of 1,201 students in fiscal year 2020 in the adult education programs (18 percent of the College's total population). The College provides adult education students (those without a high school diploma and English language learners) the

*The Integrated Career Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) program at **Morton College** consists of an adult education support course, the Automotive Maintenance and Light Repair or Early Childhood Aide college credit courses, access to tutoring services, and bi-weekly meetings with a transition specialist.*

opportunity to dually enroll in college credit courses through their Next Step Transition Programs. The Next Step programs include Integrated Career Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) and Credit Connect (CC). Both initiatives allow adult education students to get a head start on their postsecondary education. ICAPS allows students to pursue a certificate in one of two areas, the Automotive Maintenance and Light Repair (MLR) Certificate and the Early Childhood Aide (ECA) Certificate. The CC program provides students with a broader choice of classes, from Basic Nursing Assistant to Computer Aided Design and more. The ICAPS program began in 2016 with the MLR Certificate and was expanded to include the ECA certificate this year. CC was established in 2018 as part of the innovative bridge and transition grant. The ICAPS program consists of an adult education support course, the MLR or ECA courses, which are team taught by adult education and a content area instructor, access to tutoring services, and bi-weekly meetings with a transition specialist. The MLR and ECA courses that ICAPS students are enrolled in are traditional college credit courses. The MLR ICAPS program is a 16-credit certificate made up of five automotive courses. The certificate is an approved credential of the Ford Motor Company. The ECA ICAPS program is a 12-credit Early Childhood Education certificate comprised of four different courses. CC provides an opportunity for adult education students to take a for-credit course free of charge concurrently with their English as a second language or high school equivalency courses. Students who qualify for CC choose a credit course from a select list developed in collaboration with the Career and Technical Education unit. Currently, tutoring and regular meetings with the Transition Specialist provide student support. Together these programs have served 55 students over the last three years. ICAPS and CC students reported their experience gave them confidence in their ability to complete college courses. The earned credits and the experience of taking college-level courses supported by a transition specialist will give students a head start towards achieving an associate degree.

The goal of the adult education and Career Bridge Pathways program is to create a strong pathway for adults to develop their academic skills and prepare for a career entry. Adult education includes English as a Second Language (ESL) and Literacy Pathways that lead to a High School Equivalency (HSE) and college placement testing. In conjunction with their studies to complete their HSEs, students may be guided into bridge or Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) courses to careers in manufacturing or healthcare. Once these courses are completed students are ready to complete certificate programs and earn stackable credentials in these fields. The adult education program has long been part of the **Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC)** mission. It has been offering services since 1980. The Bridge to Healthcare course was instituted as part of the Illinois Network for Advanced Manufacturing (INAM) grant in 2013, and the Bridge to Manufacturing course followed in 2014. The bridge classes have been offered each semester since that time. The ICAPS courses in Healthcare and Manufacturing were approved



by ICCB in 2020. The Bridge to Healthcare course is held in the fall, and the Bridge to Manufacturing course is held in the spring of each academic year. The ICAPS courses are also being offered in the fall and spring. Completers of adult education programs in 2020 averaged 33 percent of total enrollees. The Bridge to Healthcare class has served 31 students, and the Bridge to Manufacturing class has served 25 students from 2015-2020. The bridge classes result in 32 percent of the adult education transitions to postsecondary education. Three HSE/ESL students were enrolled in the ICAPS in Healthcare in the spring of 2020, and all three passed the CNA class and are employed. The ICAPS in Manufacturing pathway for welding has been approved by ICCB and recruitment has begun.

### Initiatives for At-risk Students

The Kaskaskia Early Enrichment Program (KEEP) is designed to help at-risk students achieve their education goals at **Kaskaskia College**. The Liaison Program is a new initiative within the KEEP initiative to provide a more hands-on approach to helping at-risk students. Students were first matched up with mentors/liaisons during the Fall 2019 semester. Students sign a contract agreeing to develop an educational plan to reach their goals, stay in contact with their liaison, and do their best to work towards improving their habits towards academic success. The liaisons work with the students to determine the challenges to the students' academic success and work with them to overcome these issues. In fiscal year 2020, 43 percent of students in the KEEP were retained to the next term as compared to only 37 percent of students in the KEEP during fiscal year 2019.

*The **Kaskaskia** Early Enrichment Program (KEEP) is designed to help at-risk students achieve their education goals.*

The **Lake Land College** Early Advantage Program (LEAP) provides collaboration between student services departments and faculty members to ensure students are aware of the support services on campus and in the community. Through the LEAP students are provided with immediate contact information via their student email account. The Early Advantage Program (EAP) was developed in the Fall 2002 semester as part of a Title III grant to identify students at high risk for academic failure and provide them with the knowledge and support needed to succeed. In 2005, it was successfully absorbed by Counseling Services and subsequently rebranded as LEAP. Notes and details of the interventions are captured in the LEAP electronic system, allowing for sharing of information between key student services partners (i.e., access is given to tutoring, Office of Student Accommodations, TRIO, etc., when the referral warrants it). The staff who coordinate LEAP have seen an increase in recent years of students responding to the initial LEAP outreach. The percent of students who follow up has increased from 35 percent in Fall 2017 to 61 percent during the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semesters. This has been attributed to better outreach methods (with the addition of Canvas messaging and text messaging outreach).

When **Shawnee Community College** converted to Ellucian Colleague as the campus enterprise system, the decision was made to include a retention alert program. The Student Success Center Director is charged with organizing, managing and monitoring the Retention Alert Program, a fully integrated system that allows the College to identify, monitor, and manage students who are at risk and begin intervention with students as soon as the problem is identified. Faculty began using Retention Alert in Fall 2018, but campus wide progress was slow. As is the case with new

initiatives, continuous improvements needed to be made after it was put into place. The Director of the Student Success Center has given multiple training sessions and provided very specific directions on the roles of the instructor, the advisor, and the student in the process. Both academic and student support services are better communicating the progress of students, and all parties seem to have a better understanding of the role that retention alerts and collaborative efforts can have on student retention and completion.

**Southeastern Illinois College (SIC)** offers study skills workshops for at-risk students (those who qualify for membership in the TRIO program, which identifies and supports first-generation, low-income, or students with disabilities) both online and face-to-face. The workshops instruct students with study and time-management skills so that they are better-equipped to excel in higher education. Biannual workshops began in the Fall 2012 semester. In the fall of 2018, the program coordinators also began offering one-on-one study habit counselling. Students may sign up for a study habit health evaluation with the program coordinators, during which they work together to craft an individualized study plan for the rest of the semester. These plans include allocating daytime hours specifically for study, securing quiet locations to complete homework, and registering for tutoring. The one-on-one attention that these students receive is critical for access, retention, and completion among these demographics. Qualitative research on this initiative is overwhelmingly positive. Students who participated in these workshops indicated a strong satisfaction with the program's effectiveness, noting that the individualized study plans were significantly helpful with their classes in terms of time-management and the formation of good study habits. This kind of personalized attention is a useful tool in bridging the achievement gap of at-risk students.

The Student Success Program at **Kishwaukee College** is designed to serve an at-risk student population. The program provides proactive case management using a holistic approach, which requires multiple touch points with the students throughout the semester. The Student Success Program officially started in October 2019 upon securing funding and hiring a Student Success Advisor. At-risk students for this program are identified as those students who test into both developmental English and math courses. Successful strategies for the Student Success Program include the completion of the Student Success Plan and departmental collaborations with tutoring services, TRIO Student Support Services, WIOA Youth/Adult, and instruction. The Student Success Plan incorporates a three-touch point system where the advisor and student communicate multiple times within a semester. Additionally, specialized programs, such as workshops, are held to support the academic needs of the student while creating motivation for student involvement. Students can earn incentives for their campus involvement, which includes gift cards and academic achievement scholarships through the College's Champion's Fund. During the 2019-2020 academic school year, there were a total of 78 students identified as at-risk. Of those 78 students, 29 (37 percent) completed their Student Success Plan. Of those 29 students, 21 (72 percent) received the \$500 scholarship. In addition, 17 of the 21 students who received the academic achievement scholarship returned for the Fall 2020 semester, resulting in an 80 percent retention rate for students identified as at-risk. The Student Success Program has proven to be successful in meeting the immediate needs of the qualified students by providing additional supportive services to pass developmental education courses, resulting in a greater retention rate.

## Promoting Equity/Diversity/Inclusion

**Kankakee Community College (KCC)** is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life through learning. The College's vision is to build a strong community of civically engaged, life-long learners and global citizens, and dismantle inequities that create barriers to academic and social success to cultivate a safe, diverse, and inclusive campus that will be recognized as a progressive leader and champion of social justice within the KCC community.

*The Kankakee Community College Center for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion is committed to promoting an environment of cultural awareness and social justice, and a sense of belonging for all students, faculty, and staff.*

The KCC Center for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is just the first step in activating this vision and creating a physical space and presence on campus to move this vision forward. In August 2019, the Coordinator of EDI started meeting with key stakeholders across campus and in the community to begin creating a comprehensive list of services the EDI Center will champion. The EDI Center building and renovations began in the spring of 2020. Though COVID-19 had slowed the physical space's opening, it was finally opened in February 2021. Programming has a broad scope of impact and includes peer mentoring, community mentoring, cultural celebrations, cultural student groups, a minority male retention program, professional development, seminars, and workshops. The EDI Center staff has engaged in partnerships across campus with student life, financial aid, advising, athletics, and other departments across campus to build bridges and relationships to enhance student experiences and accessibility to existing campus resources and services.

**Shawnee Community College (SCC)** provides programs and services that promote diversity for the district. To do this, in the late fall of 2018, SCC examined the entire district for a better understanding of the inherent needs through community forums and program reviews. Participants expressed the needs of their communities, and the responding actions of the College reflect attention to the diversity of the district. The Diversity and Inclusion Committee organized various cultural events and activities on campus. The following are annual events listed in the College's Strategic Plan: Hispanic Heritage, The Dragon's Daughter (Asian Culture), Black History Month - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. events, Veteran's Day, Chinese New Year, International Week, and Women's History Month, to name a few. SCC also offers the following six courses across multiple disciplines which promote human diversity: ART 227 African-American Art and Artists, EDU 111 Diversity of Schools and Society, HIS 216 African-American History, HIS 217 History of Eastern Civilizations, LIT 221 African-American Literature, and SOC 218 Cultural Diversity. Additionally, the TRIO Student Support Services program offers opportunities throughout the year for eligible students to experience activities that provide exposure to cultures other than their own. These may include, but not be limited to, tours of transfer universities, career-specific speakers, lifestyle presentations, and Technology, Entertainment and Design (TED) talks.

## Mentoring/Tutoring/Counseling

The Mentoring Program creates an opportunity for **McHenry County College (MCC)** students to build a one-on-one mentoring relationship with a faculty or staff in their intended field of interest. The mission of the program is to empower student success and self-advocacy through a mentoring

connection. Through the mentor and mentee relationship, both formal and informal shared experiences help foster student engagement and growth. The Mentoring Program is an incentivized program for students meeting program goals every semester. All students are eligible to participate in the program. When the partnership has been established, student and faculty/staff will review the Mentoring Program Handbook together and complete the Mentoring Contract, which includes program goal requirements for the student to accomplish. The program evolved as a joint effort by faculty and College Success Coaches. Mentors are made up of MCC's faculty, staff, and administration to build a stronger connection to students. Students participating in the program are evaluated on the success and attainment of their goals by their mentor at the end of each semester by completing the end of the semester program assessment. Students will receive their incentive based on the percentage rating of their designated semester. The Mentoring Program started strong in Fall 2019 with 18 mentors and 28 mentees. Upon the completion of the fall semester, 82 percent of the students exceeded their professionalism goal by earning 16 or more in the professionalism assessment tool. Also, students increased their GPA by +.03, and 82 percent met and completed program goals. The program continued in Spring 2020 with 18 mentors and 29 mentees. Upon completion of the spring semester, 96 percent of MCC students exceeded their goal by earning 16 or more on the professional assessment tool. Students increased their GPA by +.13, and 93 percent met and completed program goals.

Directing Results through Educational and Academic Mentoring (DREAM) is a program at **Moraine Valley Community College** designed to help diverse and underrepresented students reach educational and career goals through academic mentoring and provide social and personal direction. DREAM is coordinated by the Multicultural Student Affairs office. Along with having a strong alliance with Moraine Valley's Job Resource Center and Academic Skills Center, the DREAM program provides significant personalized one-on-one time to assist students to discover the right direction for a successful future. Students meet with mentors in a nonthreatening atmosphere. Many DREAM mentors/mentees focus on regular check-ins that revolve around academic and personal discussions with the goal of maximizing the student's academic success. Sometimes students and mentors coordinate free or low-cost activities that may include having lunch together, participating in campus cultural and social events, or just talking and conversing about life/world events. During the 2019-2020 academic year, 83 students attended DREAM orientations with 67 students participating in the mentoring program. Of these students, 87 percent were retained from the Fall 2019 semester to the Spring 2020 semester with an average GPA of 2.9. The DREAM program has shown many years of successful academic outcomes that exceed annual success metrics for both underrepresented students and all students. As a result, the DREAM program was selected for additional scale-up starting Fall 2020 so that more students could take advantage of working with a faculty or staff mentor.

Historically at **Olive-Harvey College** (OHC), the Academic Support Services has provided tutoring and supplemental instruction in all subject areas. Going beyond the standard tutoring practices, OHC employs professional tutors, as well as some adjunct faculty, to serve as tutors. Each work closely with faculty members to ensure alignment with course materials and student need. In Spring 2020, OHC, like most institutions of higher education, moved to remote learning, enabling students to continue their academic journey without interruption. This included the pivot from in-person to virtual tutoring. OHC launched virtual tutoring using the student success management online tool, the EAB Navigate system, which allows students to proactively plan and

manage online academic support. Most students who attended multiple virtual tutoring sessions met one or more of the following benchmarks: were retained to the next term, completed the semester with at least a C average, and/or obtained a certificate or degree.

**Wabash Valley College (WVC)** and the other three Illinois Eastern Community College campuses decided to rename and rebrand the Learning Skills Centers (LSC) to Academic Success Centers (ASC). Each campus found resistance to visiting the LSC, and directors brainstormed ideas to reduce the negative perceptions. The new name brings an opportunity for the four campuses to change the perception that smart students do not need learning assistance. The ASC offers much more than developmental skills resources, such as hosting a Transition Day for local high school students who are already receiving accommodations at the high school level and are interested in attending WVC. The grassroots efforts of employees are the main reason for successful implementation of the new ASC in the spring of 2020. Their work and planning led to a new image of the department and its services. WVC was the first IECC college to partner with Brainfuse to not use the live tutoring option, but to use TutorMatch to keep WVC tutors working effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic. Brainfuse is an online tutoring platform under which TutorMatch operates. Brainfuse offers many great services such as practice tests, pre-made flash cards, online meeting rooms, and an option to match tutors from a school with students needing tutoring. A link to TutorMatch was placed into the WVC Learning Management System (Canvas) so that students could easily access it from home. Once the technical work was completed and the tutors were trained, the platform was advertised on social media, in press releases, and on the website.

RL-CARES (Rend Lake Consultation, Advisement, Resources, Exploration, Success) is a free service encouraging students to discuss various issues, personal and academic, pertaining to one's educational future. **Rend Lake College** established this service in 2015 as a contact point for students who are experiencing circumstances that could possibly affect their success. It was expanded in Spring 2020. RL-CARES services also serve as a contact point for all members of faculty/staff who can refer students, or have the team contact a student who may be struggling. The service includes referrals to on- or off-campus resources, academic planning, connecting with community organizations, and development of a plan of action. There was an increase of call volume/referrals from less than 30 per month to 431 calls for Spring 2020. As the calls are continuing to increase, the College is better able to counsel students and offer resources with RL-CARES.

### Completion/Retention Initiatives

As part of the **Harry S Truman College's** Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, the Retention Working Group (RWG) was launched in the summer of 2019 to increase access and supports for currently enrolled credit students and foster an institutional culture that is both collaborative and reflective. The

*The activities of the Retention Working Group contributed to the highest fall-to-spring retention rate in the last five years at **Harry S Truman College**.*

Dean of Student Services leads the initiative with support from the Office of Research and Strategic Planning. Each unit within the department oversees a student group it services. The RWG meets once a month to review metrics, brainstorm strategies for supporting student success, promote retention, and troubleshoot issues with existing strategies. Since its launch, the RWG has

contributed to the highest fall-to-spring retention rate Truman has seen in the last five years. In the 2018-19 academic year, Truman had a fall-to-spring rate of 65 percent. By the following academic year, it had increased to 70 percent. Of the students who were retained in the 2019-2020 academic year, nearly 80 percent were a part of at least one of the RWG student groups being monitored. Preliminary academic year 2020-21 data suggest that Truman is on track to maintain a flat fall-to-spring retention rate despite the impacts of COVID-19 on both enrollment and student success.

To improve completion for first-generation students who may not realize they have qualified for credentials, **Joliet Junior College** created a part-time position of Degree Completion Analyst in Fall 2019. The strategy is to use data to identify students who are eligible or verging on completion and being proactive in notifying them rather than waiting for them to initiate completion. The position is funded by the Perkins grant and uses data in Colleague (ERP) to identify students who have completed certificates/degrees, but have not applied for graduation, and then contacts the students to shepherd them through the process. The Analyst also identifies students with a specified number of hours (usually 15 or fewer) or meeting other criteria (a particular CTE major) and then routes cases to faculty advisors or other appropriate staff for follow up. In fiscal year 2020, the Degree Completion Analyst assisted several hundred students and was able to complete the conferring of 144 certificates/degrees.

The Educational Plans initiative, implemented in Fall 2017, is one of several that **Oakton Community College** (OCC) 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). A program map is developed jointly by advisors and students using the pre majors and curricular pathways in place at the college. The plan helps to outline the student's plan of action for completing a program of study, and provides an opportunity for students to both get academic advising and to leave their advising appointment with a clear set of curriculum to meet their educational goals that may include a certificate, degree completion, and/or transferring to a four-year institution. Educational plans can help students anticipate the courses needed in future semesters and understand the length of time to complete certain sets of courses. By increasing the number of advisors at the College, the number and percent of new students who completed educational plans also increased. In 2017, 31 percent of new students had developed educational plans compared to 41 percent of new students in Fall 2019. Further, there was intentional outreach to African American, Hispanic/Latino, and first-generation students so that they created educational plans at higher proportions than their White peers. 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. The overall retention rate for students with educational plans was higher than the rate for those without educational plans by almost 30 percentage points.

*The Educational Plan is a program map for completing a program of study developed jointly by an advisor and a student, who can then anticipate the courses needed in future semesters and understand the length of time to complete the program at **Oakton Community College**.*

The Completion Initiative, initially implemented in Fall 2013 and reimaged in Fall 2019 as part of an overhaul of internal metrics with two cohort types emerging, the IPEDS 150 Cohort and the

TruSuccess Cohort, is a massive outreach campaign that touches all credit, credential-seeking students at **Harry S Truman College**, which is designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution. The initiative ensures that students nearing the completion of their programs (less than 12 credits needed to graduate) are equipped with the supports and services needed to finish. Advisors work with students to troubleshoot non-academic issues that may prevent completion, including settling outstanding balances, connecting to the on-campus food pantry, and recommending wellness services, among others. Through the Early Alert system, advisors can identify students who are at-risk of failing a course and provide tutoring recommendations to keep them on track. The IPEDS 150 Cohort follows the IPEDS definition of 150 percent completion time and includes all full-time, credential-seeking students enrolling for the first time in a given fall term. The TruSuccess Cohort includes all credential-seeking students that are new to credit enrolling for the first time at any point of an academic year. Unlike the IPEDS definition, students must obtain a credential or transfer to a four-year college within four years. The Completion Initiative has been a significant factor in improving student completion outcomes at Truman. In the 2019-2020 academic year, the IPEDS Completion rate was 28 percent for the fiscal year 2017 Cohort. This is a 9-percentage point increase from the 2017-2018 academic year when the rate was 19 percent for the fiscal year 2015 Cohort.

**Spoon River College** began auto-awarding certificates in Spring 2015 to increase student completion rates, and to increase retention of students in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that consist of multiple certificate and degree options. The programs reviewed for auto-awarding increased each term until Fall 2016, and at that time all certificate programs offered at SRC were included in this initiative. Auto-awarding of CTE certificates ensures that students earn a credential for each program in which they complete the requirements. The Information Technology (IT) Department at Spoon River College developed a program that allows the Registrar to choose one or more classes from a list of courses and then run a report to show all students who have completed the chosen courses by the end of a specified term. The Registrar reviews each student record to verify the completed coursework, and if all program requirements are met, confers the certificate. The student is informed of the certificate completion, and the appropriate notation is made to the education record and student transcript. The Registrar completes the auto-awarding program at the end of each term. From implementation of auto-awarding through academic year 2020, Spoon River College has conferred 1,236 certificates to eligible students.

*Auto-awarding of CTE certificates ensures that students earn a credential for each program in which they complete the requirements.*

**Lincoln Trail College** (LTC) committed to its retention goals by transitioning its part-time retention position to full-time in Fall 2018. The new Retention Coordinator identified several issues with the College's retention processes, including 1) faculty did not understand the retention process or the situations in which they should submit reports, 2) faculty submitted a relatively low number of progress reports compared to the number of D, F, and W grades at the close of each semester, and 3) faculty submitted the majority of progress reports mid to late semester. To counter these challenges, between the Fall 2017 and Fall 2021 semesters, the LTC Retention Coordinator made strategic changes in the retention reporting process to increase the number of progress reports submitted by faculty, encourage earlier progress reports, and reduce the number of low grades each semester. The Retention Coordinator embarked on a retention campaign that increased faculty



knowledge about and increase their participation in the retention system. The Coordinator spoke at faculty workshops, campus-wide meetings, and frequently sent emails at strategic times to improve results. Additionally, the Coordinator worked with the College's Marketing Office to create retention guidelines that suggested when and how to submit reports. The progress report system at LTC and its three sister colleges is built into the district's student management system. Once submitted, the Retention Coordinator contacts each student to develop a plan.

## **RECRUITMENT AND/OR MARKETING EFFORTS TO STEM ENROLLMENT DECLINES FOR AT-RISK AND/OR UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS**

Illinois Community College System enrollment in fiscal year 2020 is reflective of the current pandemic challenges and consistent with national community college enrollment declines. Credit-generating enrollments and noncredit enrollments are the lowest of the most recent five years ([Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Enrollment and Completions Report](#)). Colleges have been reaching out to new students or students at risk of dropping out via marketing campaigns. Recruitment also targets high school students and adults returning to college. Incentives such as scholarships, flexible course scheduling, curriculum and program updates, and free short-term training that lead directly to an employment are included in outreach efforts to stem enrollment declines.

### **Recruitment/Marketing Campaigns for New/Re-enrolling Students**

**Highland Community College** launched the *Get Ready for Fall* campaign in March 2020. The campaign strategy was to increase awareness of Highland's affordability, scholarships, flexible schedule, degree/certificate choices, and success rate; blanket the district with the messaging to targeted audiences through multi-media resources; and increase new student enrollment and returning student retention. The campaign was directed to students at risk of dropping out, or those with fear of starting college during the pandemic. The Community Relations Department executed a multi-media marketing campaign, including digital audio, outdoor poster display, print media, and direct mail. Recruitment also hosted two "Get Ready, Virtual Meeting", two Facebook Live events, a phone call campaign, and text messaging to drive express registration attendees. Other recruitment and retention efforts that took place included direct texts to students who were enrolled for Spring 2020, but not registered for Fall 2020, and virtual 'drop-in' zoom meetings with advisors.

**Elgin Community College (ECC)** conducted two student enrollment call campaigns for near completers within the 2019-2020 academic year. The purpose of the call campaigns was two-fold. Collaborating with the ECC Foundation, student services and development, student financial services, and institutional research, the primary goal was to encourage students to re-enroll and to urge those who had earned at least 45 credits to complete their credential. The secondary objective

*Elgin Community College conducted two enrollment call campaigns in the 2019-2020 academic year to encourage students to re-enroll and to urge those who had earned at least 45 credits to complete their credential.*

was to build relationships with members of the ECC Foundation who volunteered to make the calls. Calls were conducted between April 15-18, 2019 and November 11-12, 2019. The call campaign contacted 870 students during open registration for the Spring 2020 semester. Looking at the data in terms of underrepresented groups, 53 percent of these students were White, while 44 percent identified as Native American, Asian, African American, or Hispanic/Latino. In addition, 67 percent were 24 and older, while 35 percent were 23 or younger. ECC Hispanic/Latino and African American students enrolled and completed at higher percentage rates for both the Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters than the College's other races and ethnicities. In terms of ECC adult students 24 or older, each subgroup had modest re-enrollment and completion for Spring 2020 and Fall 2020. These results further reinforce that high touch tactics do result in re-enrolling students and had a larger impact on the students of color, and positively impacted the adult students.

**Joliet Junior College's** marketing methods include strategic outreach with community partners recruiting students from underrepresented groups. A targeted marketing campaign featuring program benefits and student success stories has been shared through a variety of print and digital methods. The marketing outreach includes the distribution of flyers, brochures and email campaigns to Joliet Junior College's community partners as well as posting to the College's website and social media channels. <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/65480/>

The purpose of the Platinum Chef High School Cooking Competition is to creatively enhance the skills and strategies of Culinary Arts Program students while raising awareness of the degrees and certificates at **Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC)** and supporting recruitment efforts. Initially, the competition began in the spring of 2008 at the Red Bud Campus, but due to the overwhelming success and increased student interest, an additional event that focused on culinary students was implemented at the Sam Wolf Granite City Campus, which serves a student population that is predominantly made up of students from underrepresented groups, as the surrounding communities and school districts are considered socio-economically disadvantaged. SWIC chose strategies, such as partnering with local chefs and industry professionals, providing mandatory workshops, and coordinating a job fair, which provided current culinary students with opportunities to build their core competencies, increase their self-efficacy and establish connections with external employers. All students participating in the competition must be enrolled in CUL 115 Table Service Class. This class is a part of the program's graduation requirements.

**Waubonsee Community College** launched the Adelante newsletter in the fall of 2019. The purpose of this marketing effort was to reach the Hispanic/Latino community with a quarterly bilingual newsletter with engaging and informative content regarding Waubonsee and its educational options from adult education offerings to certificate and degree programs. The newsletter also presents the community with information regarding the student and career services, including Hispanic/Latino student clubs and motivational stories of successful Hispanic/Latino graduates from Waubonsee. Waubonsee partners with A+ Media who carefully curates the list of households from within the College's district to deliver the newsletter. Each quarter an estimated 20,000 households receive the newsletter.

*Waubonsee Community College launched the Adelante bilingual newsletter in the fall of 2019 to reach the Hispanic/Latino community.*

## Recruitment/Marketing Targeting High School Students

**Lincoln Trail College** (LTC) collaborated with Southern Illinois University (SIU) School of Medicine to offer a program to high school students from four counties in southeastern Illinois and current LTC students called “Community College Pathways to Medicine.” The program aimed to introduce students to the diversity of careers in health care, education requirements, academic preparation for health-related careers, expectations of medical school and higher education application processes, and costs. LTC implemented its first Community College Pathways to Medicine program in Fall 2018, and the program continued successfully up until the stay-at-home order in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The group met twice each semester with periodic special events, including Health Awareness Day and a field trip to SIU School of Medicine in Springfield. The program featured case studies, guest speakers about various careers, virtual panels with current medical students, and panels with admissions representatives from SIU School of Medicine. All nine students who attended the field trip said that the experience made them more aware of the medical profession and its careers and solidified their desire to pursue medical professions.

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In an effort to ensure the declining enrollment trends for first-generation, low-income African American and Hispanic/Latino students get addressed, **Harold Washington College** (HWC) focused on earlier, enhanced engagement for its prospective students during the exploration phase. HWC’s top Chicago Public School feeder schools include schools that are primarily African American or Hispanic/Latino with a high concentration of low-income students. Cultivating a welcoming climate for both current and prospective students that supports success is a strategic priority for the College. During the recruitment cycle in 2020, HWC began revamping virtual and on-campus tours, as well as the overall visitor experience, working more closely with top feeder schools to inform and guide the campus experience. Moreover, HWC looked to Chicago Public Schools top feeder high schools’ feedback around what critical information prospective students need and when they need it—which has guided the timing and strategy around marketing (social media and paid advertisement), communication, and the printed collateral that is created and shared. Targeting these schools has allowed HWC to serve the students from these neighborhoods comprehensively by (1) creating tailored communication plans for students by academic interest, (2) strengthening the college’s distinctive identity and deepening relationships with key leaders at each school, and (3) streamlining the admission processes to improve efficiency across all onboarding departments and ensure more of the students from these schools can move through the admission funnel successfully and optimize enrollment.

The purpose of the Student Success Luncheon is to increase enrollment and retention of minority students by working collaboratively with Peoria Public Schools (District 150) in providing pre-college services capped off by a one-stop-shop advisement, enrollment, and orientation session at **Illinois Central College** (ICC). The program was implemented with enhanced components during the 2009-2010 academic year and has continued each year thereafter apart from the pandemic year

(2020). The Success Luncheon includes high school seniors at three Peoria public high schools. Transportation is provided to bring the students to ICC for a full day of activities which include meetings with advisors, course enrollment, presentations by key college personnel, college student panels, college and housing tours, issuance of student ID cards, scholarship information, financial aid support, and a lunch and social event. Pre-assessment testing, college preparation workshops, and student interactions with the ICC Admissions Representative take place in the months prior to the luncheon event. The event is scheduled during spring semesters with two full days set aside for each school. The College found an overall increase in District 150 student enrollment at ICC following the implementation of the Student Success Luncheon program. The event remains an effective strategy for recruiting and enrolling students of color.

The Admissions and Recruitment Department at **McHenry County College** (MCC) collaborated with MCC's district K-12 schools to provide informational presentations and tours to their at-risk and/or underrepresented students in the academic year 2019-2020. The goal is to encourage students to start thinking about themselves as college students as early as possible and provide them with the information and resources they need to remove barriers to entrance. Presentations focused on age-appropriate information about what it is like to be a college student and how to get started, including career options aligned with the federal Career Clusters, different types of programs and certificates available to meet their end goals (employment or transfer to a 4-year college) and admission requirements. Presentations were offered in Spanish, when requested, and many of the tours were focused on specific careers. When MCC complied with the stay-at-home order in mid-March 2020, the Admissions and Recruitment Department shifted presentations and information sessions to a virtual format, typically using Zoom. The department recently added a question to MCC's application asking for self-reporting as a first-generation college student. Consequently, the College will be able to customize the welcome letter for this targeted group and send them information that may be of special interest.

The first College Readiness Day event at **Moraine Valley Community College** in March 2020 was designed as an opportunity to engage high school students in better understanding the transition from high school to college. The event was planned as an outreach effort focused on providing critical information geared toward prospective first-generation and underrepresented/diverse students. Although focused on increasing access, College Readiness Day also provided information beneficial to retention and completion. Sessions were presented based on input from students, high school counselors, and Moraine Valley faculty and staff who work with new students, and included information about the placement test, tutoring center, financial aid, and advances in STEM fields and cybersecurity. All students were taken on a tour of the campus. Approximately 270 high school students attended, which was significantly higher than was expected for this first event, and 199 of these students provided their contact information. As of January 2021, 83 of the students applied to Moraine Valley, and 31 students have since registered. This is particularly impressive since only 47 high school seniors who attended provided their contact information. The remaining students who provided contact information included 53 juniors, 78 sophomores, and 21 freshmen. The college will continue to track all attendees for future enrollment success.

Historically, recruitment activities at **Prairie State College** (PSC) were the responsibility of academic advisors, who visited high schools, attended college fairs, and hosted tours on campus when time permitted. Many PCS students are first-generation students. PSC's district includes seven public high schools, and at six of these the majority of students are minorities (African American and/or Hispanic/Latino). The Recruitment and Outreach Office was established in March 2020 to focus resources on creating and attending recruitment events both on- and off-campus to reach potential minority and first-generation students. It has two full-time employees dedicated to recruitment activities and building relationships with potential students, high school counselors, and the community. Shortly after the creation of the Recruitment and Outreach Office, PSC moved to a virtual campus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and recruitment events and activities that had traditionally been offered face-to-face were reworked for a virtual world. For instance, staff attended virtual high school visits hosted by the local high schools. Town Hall meetings and information sessions were offered virtually for both high school students and returning adult students. Additionally, the department coordinated a virtual Open House. Since virtual programs started, there has been an increase in the number of potential students reaching out to the department at the suggestion of their high school counselors or because of attending a virtual event. The department has also seen an increase in the number of meetings with students to discuss the application and admission process. The college's relationship with high school counselors has become stronger as a result of holding more regularly scheduled meetings with them.

*The Recruitment and Outreach Office was established in March 2020 at **Prairie State College**. Its staff attended virtual high school visits and conducted virtual town hall meetings and informational sessions for high school students and returning adult students.*

The purpose of the On-Campus Recruitment High School Visit Day events that started in Fall 2019 was to provide an opportunity for high school students to visit **Waubensee Community College** and learn more about what the College has to offer. Additionally, students who visit campuses are more likely to enroll. Waubensee Admissions created the events based on meetings with high school counselors from the college's eight top feeder high schools. Waubensee then coordinated with the high school counselors to arrange transportation for their students and high school chaperones to campus during their school day, as transportation can be a barrier for students, and is tied to one of the three pillars of Waubensee's Strategic Plan (Student Equity and Success). The program consisted of four key elements: (1) a tour of the campus, (2) a Programs-to-Careers presentation to help provide career and advising guidance, (3) an overview of getting started steps, and (4) a Financing Your Future presentation about financial aid and scholarships.

## **Dual Credit Courses**

In addition to offering informational presentations, college fairs, campus tours, and pre-college services to high school students, community colleges also create enrollment pipelines by developing partnerships with local high schools and providing dual credit courses to their prospective students. Dual credit is a program that offers high school students an opportunity to earn both high school and college credit. Dual credit courses meet the same quality and rigor expectations as courses taught on the college campus and students must meet the same course

prerequisites as other students. Data in the [Dual Credit in the Illinois Community College System Report](#) show that students in all race/ethnicity categories who took dual credit classes while in high school have substantially higher community college graduation rates and advancement rates than those students that did not enroll in dual credit coursework.

**Illinois Valley Community College** offers a tuition waiver to dual credit students qualifying for the State of Illinois' Free and Reduced Lunch Program. The goal of this initiative launched in fiscal year 2017 is to deliver dual credit instruction to students who may not be able to afford the reduced tuition rate, thus creating access to college courses for those students who have already been identified as economically disadvantaged. Additionally, college course work is made affordable to many who would otherwise not be able to participate in dual credit coursework. Dual credit hours in fiscal year 2018 increased 22 percent because of the new program in place. Further increases in credit hours were evident in fiscal years 2019 and 2020. In fiscal year 2020 tuition waiver adjustments totaled nearly \$90,000, and there was a 30 percent increase in dual credit hours since the inception of the program.

*Illinois Valley Community College offers a tuition waiver to dual credit students qualifying for the State of Illinois' Free and Reduced Lunch Program.*

Dual credit programs are provided to qualified high school students in partnership between **Elgin Community College** (ECC) and its District 509 school districts, which emphasizes minimal costs to students to promote access and participation. ECC expanded dual credit program options several times in recent years. The first expansion was in the 2016-2017 school year to allow high school students to enroll full-time in college classes that also satisfy their high school graduation requirements. The second major expansion was implemented in the 2019-2020 school year with two program changes. First, high school students were able to enroll in an expanded number of general education and career and technical education courses at the college campus. The second change was the expansion of dual credit courses to be delivered by qualified high school instructors at the high school building. As of the 2020-2021 school year, each of the four school districts the College serves has expanded student access to dual credit by identifying qualified high school instructors and delivering college courses on-site or remotely. The total number of participating students in fiscal year 2017 was 265, and by fiscal year 2020 it was 692 (161 percent increase). There has been a notable growth in the number of African American students (fiscal year 2017 to fiscal year 2021 increase from 17 to 32 students) and Hispanic/Latino (fiscal year 2017 to fiscal year 2021 increase from 49 to 90 students) student participation; however, the predominance of dual credit students continue to be White and Asian. Course success rates (grades A-C) show dual credit students not only are more successful than their non-dual credit peers, but this also holds true for each racial/ethnic subgroup with success rates ranging from 87-100 percent. The average GPA for all dual credit students has steadily improved from 3.19 in fiscal year 2017 to 3.50 in fiscal year 2021.

## Scholarships

**Morton College** approved the High School Equivalency Certificate (HSEC) Scholarship in 2009. The scholarship provides students with free tuition for 15 credits per semester for four semesters. The Adult Education Department initially offered the HSEC Scholarship to program graduates in

2011. This program aims to alleviate the burden that many adult education students face as they consider returning to school. To qualify for the scholarship students must have spent at least two terms (one semester) in adult education HSEC courses and pass all sections of the GED (or other eligible HSEC test) while enrolled in Morton College's adult education program. Graduates of the program are required to participate in the HSEC graduation. At the completion of graduation, these students receive their official scholarship letter. The college provides wraparound services to these students as they transition from the adult education program to the College. These services include high touch advising, financial aid support, access to a counselor and disabilities coordinator, and frequent check-ins with the Transition Specialist. The scholarship is open to students in both the Spanish and English language HSEC programs. Students must begin the scholarship in the fall semester immediately following their graduation from the HSEC program. The scholarship is then active in the three following semesters (excluding summer). In the last 3 years, 63 students have received the HSEC Scholarship. Of these HSEC students, two have graduated with associate degrees and five have graduated with career certificates.

The Richland Foundation, with the mission of supporting **Richland Community College** through fundraising and "friendraising," offers a robust scholarship program for students, with awards based on academic success and/or financial need. The Foundation recognized that student success during the COVID-19 pandemic might depend on additional support beyond purchasing textbooks or paying tuition.

*From July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020, 44 students received over \$11,000 from the **Richland** Foundation in the form of vouchers, direct payments to landlords and utility companies, and other venues.*

Utilizing a fund designated for student assistance, the Foundation established an easy-to-access application process to cover personal financial needs such as transportation, rent, or utilities assistance. The funds were supplemented by donations from the community and College employees. From July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020, 44 students received over \$11,000 in the form of vouchers, direct payments to landlords and utility companies, and other venues.

The Sauk Scholars Program was originally created as a way to bring the area's most dedicated students to **Sauk Valley Community College**. These students were either in the top 10 percent of their graduating class in their respective high schools or were ranked in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile for their composite ACT or SAT score. As Sauk students, they receive 12 hours of tuition waivers per term; however, they must meet several criteria to continue with the program. They must complete 24 volunteer hours each year at Sauk and in the community. Furthermore, these students must ensure that they maintain a GPA of 3.0. Financial aid, in the form of tuition waivers, helps the students focus less on financial concerns, and in turn take out fewer loans than the average Sauk student. The tuition waivers also allow hard-working, intelligent students whose families may not have been able to afford a college education to attend Sauk. The program was first implemented at Sauk in the 2003-2004 academic year. The tuition waivers were dropped to twelve credit hours during the state budget impasse.

## Flexible Course Scheduling/Curriculum and Program Updates

**Richard J. Daley College** identified the need to increase outreach to nontraditional students via modified scheduling enhancing amounts of classes on evening, weekends, and early mornings, and adding a five-week term. As a Hispanic-Serving Institution, Daley College serves a diverse student body to promote STEM programming. The credit program student body is composed of 60 percent of Hispanic/Latino, 20 percent of African American, 16 percent of White, and 3 percent of Other students. The purpose of modified scheduling is to increase the number of nontraditional students (age 25 or older) who are new, returning, and completing students, and to provide flexible offerings for students to maximize their ability to take and complete classes. Using enhanced/modified scheduling on the evening and weekends increases opportunities for working students to take more than one class at a time toward their goal. Modified schedules were introduced in the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020. Additionally, a term was added in January 2020 to offer “off-semester” time in between traditional semesters. In fiscal year 2021, due to COVID-19, this practice was slightly modified because of enrollment declines. It is Daley College’s intent to continue this practice in fiscal year 2022.

*Richard J. Daley College provides flexible course scheduling, so non-traditional students can maximize their ability to take and complete classes.*

To increase student success, which in turn increases retention and attainment of certificates and degrees, **John Wood Community College** revised its classroom initiatives in humanities in the 2019-20 academic year. Curriculum was revised in the philosophy courses that replaced longer research papers that students had difficulty completing in a successful manner with shorter, multiple versions that met the writing criteria but allowed students to better understand the material and writing. Rubrics were developed so students had clear understandings of expectations. To maximize learning and not just memorization, review sessions and notes were allowed for tests in humanities courses. Curriculums that tied the “real” world to the subject matter were created. Active learning with hands-on projects, such as painting and creative homework, allowed students to connect their studies with real life and provided an increased basis for success. The course success reports for the humanities and philosophy courses showed an increase of 5 to 10 percent from Fall 2019 to Spring 2020. The Humanities Department will continue to monitor the course success in each course as initiatives are put in place for a longer period. With the COVID-19 pandemic, a clear picture may not yet be available as many classes had to be provided in a more social distancing manner. As evidence is reviewed, further discussion will be held on the need for changes or if the initiatives will remain in place.

The upgrading of the Associate in Engineering Sciences (AES) program began at **Wilbur Wright College** in Fall 2015 with the initiation of a highly selective guaranteed admissions program with the Grainger College of Engineering at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign (UIUC Pathway). The goal of the program is to increase students’ success in Engineering and Computer Science. The program aims to provide equitable education and holistic student support to increase retention, associate and bachelor’s degree graduation rates, and decrease time to degree completion. The program also streamlines transitions from high schools to Wright College, and from Wright College to four-year transfer institutions. The program offers mentoring, co-advising, mandatory tutoring, and midterm and post semester reviews to track students’ progress to



continuously develop personalized support to pathway students. The College added a similar transfer pathway to the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) in Fall 2019. Beginning in Summer 2019, the college added a six-week summer bridge program designed as a preemptive strategy to provide the near-STEM ready participants with an opportunity to improve their math and science skills, preparing them for the rigor of engineering curriculum. The bridge program provides underprepared students who are interested in engineering and computer science but who are not academically prepared to join the UIUC Pathway or the IIT/Wright College Engineering a second chance to participate. The college has found that 75 percent of the Fall 2015 cohort of students in the UIUC Pathway had transferred to UIUC or another four-year institution. As of May 2020, all students who transferred had completed a baccalaureate degree. In its first year of operation, 62 students were accepted into the IIT Pathway, and 15 students transferred from Wright to IIT. Among summer bridge students, of the 80 students who participated, 43 eliminated the need for remedial math and were placed directly into college-level. All 43 students completed the college-level math course with a grade of A or B and one student is on track to transfer to a four-year institution beginning Fall 2021. Through the pathway partnerships and summer bridge, Wright has increased the number of enrolled students in the Associate in Engineering Science from 25 students in Fall 2018 to 220 in Fall 2020. Of the 220 students enrolled in Fall 2020, 196 (94 percent) were retained to Spring 2021.

### **Workforce Development/Short-term Certificates**

[Workforce Equity Initiative](#) (WEI) is an Illinois grant program that focuses on improving workforce equity. The program offers training opportunities in short-term certificate programs for minority and at-risk students that lead to employment in high-demand, high-wage occupations. The WEI funding assists colleges with removing barriers to student success by providing free tuition, childcare, transportation, and educational supplies.

**Joliet Junior College** (JJC) implemented the Workforce Equity Initiative in September 2019. This grant funded program provides career training in the high-demand, high-growth occupations of Process Operator and Commercial Driver's License (CDL Class A). Participants in underserved populations are given priority registration. Collaboration with JJC's community partners has

*The Workforce Equity Initiative grant provides career training to underserved populations in the high-demand, high-growth occupations of Process Operator and Commercial Driver's License at **Joliet Junior College**.*

been an instrumental part of expanding the outreach for this initiative. The program covers all program costs, including textbooks and supplies, gas cards or bus passes to support students with transportation costs, as well as a stipend for successful completion. Career readiness training and the opportunity to earn the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) is also included with each area of study, providing students with career searching skills to find employment as well as soft/essential skills needed to retain employment. During this career training, Program Coordinators offer support bi-weekly focusing on attendance, grades, and program completion. Additionally, program coordinators assist students with job placement and continue follow-up with students who have received program credentials throughout their employment search. As of June 30, 2020, 62 minority students have enrolled in the program (34 in CDL and 28 in Process Operator). COVID-19 has delayed program completion for many participants. The CDL program

was shut down for four months and the Process Operator program transitioned to online teaching. Despite this unprecedented obstacle, seven CDL students have successfully completed the CDL training, receiving the industry recognized credential, CDL Class A License. The Process Operator students are progressing and remain dedicated to program completion. Throughout the program, student successes that included photos and articles to highlight their progress were shared. <http://www.trainingupdate.org/2020/09/28/jjcs-cdl-program-gets-students-in-the-drivers-seat/>

The Workforce Equity Initiative, which **Prairie State College** (PSC) implemented in September 2019, trains participants in high demand occupations, including Automotive Engine Repair, CDL Truck Driving, Certified Nurse Assistant, Dental Assistant, Dialysis Technician, Electrician, Emergency Medical Technician, Fire Science, Google IT, Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning, Home Inspection, Licensed Practical Nurse, Medical Billing and Coding Specialist, Real Estate, Solar Technologies, and Surgical Technician. The WEI initiative serves Illinois Community College District 515, which consists of southern Cook and northern Will counties. Of the 20 communities served by PSC, 80 percent experience poverty rates between 11.2 to 28 percent, well above the state's rate of 10 percent and Chicago's rate of 10.8 percent. The overall goal of the WEI project is to accelerate the time for the targeted population to enter and succeed in postsecondary education/training that leads to employment in high skilled, high pay, and in-demand occupations. The project addresses student needs through a comprehensive series of wrap-around support services (tuition and rental assistance, childcare, transportation, and books) combined with strong academic scaffolding. The PSC Workforce Equity Initiative program has had state recognized success in accomplishing its participant performance objectives, ranking as the top performing college program in five of six categories. For the 2020-2021 academic semesters, over 420 students averaged an 85 percent student persistence rate.

The purpose of the Open Door–Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) is to train individuals in occupations leading to immediate employment. WEI, funded through an Illinois Community College Board grant, aims to serve 102 low-income students, 75 percent of whom must be African American, and secure employment offers for 75 percent of program completers by June 30, 2021. The Workforce Equity Initiative will provide short-term, postsecondary education/training programs designed to help participants gain employment in high-wage and in-demand occupations. **Lincoln Land Community College** (LLCC) implemented the initiative in September 2019. Strategies for helping students remove barriers that would otherwise inhibit their ability and determination to complete the program include free tuition, books, supplies, and uniforms; background check, drug screening, and immunization fee assistance; transportation and childcare assistance; stipends; tutoring; career and employment support; and essential skills training. 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

*The Workforce Equity Initiative helps **Lincoln Land Community College** students by removing barriers that would otherwise inhibit their ability and determination to complete the program.*

students are contacted monthly through mail, email, or a phone call for follow-up as a means to keep to date on their employment.

**South Suburban College** (SSC) received \$1 million through the Workforce Equity Initiative grant to develop and implement a comprehensive project, designed to serve 300 constituents of District 510 with a focus on serving African Americans in ten communities that meet the criteria of “Disproportionately Impacted Areas.” 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, Community Healthcare Worker, Certified Production Technician, and Barber Technician. The WEI grant project provides comprehensive participant resources to achieve project goals in support of student success. The following project objectives were developed: (1) 300 participants are enrolled in the project of which 60 percent are African American; (2) 80 percent of project participants are awarded career certificates within 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 are 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 the student from recruitment through employment. SSC is committed to meeting the objectives of the grant project. Most of the objectives have been met or exceeded. Due to the impact of COVID-19 on enrollment, program completion and job placement were negatively impacted. However, progress towards goals are favorable.

The purpose of the Workforce Equity Initiative, which was initiated by **Southwestern Illinois College** (SWIC) on the East St. Louis Campus in September 2019, is to expand career pathway options for minority students in East St. Louis and surrounding communities, build and maintain external partnerships within the targeted communities to help facilitate student transition out of the specified programs and into the local workforce, engage in outreach activities during the timeframe of the program in order to positively impact enrollment growth, and maintain student retention rates within these programs using the College’s overall retention rates as a benchmark. SWIC partnered with internal and external entities to utilize the College’s existing student support structure and expand services to students. Students are also given access to career development resources, including career fairs, resume preparations, and online job portals. They benefit from scholarship opportunities and financial waivers. A stipend incentive is also available for graduates who obtain employment in their field within 90 days of finishing their workforce pathway. By June 2020 the program had enrolled 136 minority students (34 program graduates with 65 additional students on target to graduate in August). The initial focus was on four programs: Certified Nursing Assistant, Forklift Training, Phlebotomy, and Welding. The plan is to implement additional programming for WEI students, including Practical Nursing, Culinary/Food, and Heating/Venting/Air Conditioning/Refrigeration.

The goal of the Workforce Equity Initiative is to (1) increase the number of African American students from communities on the West Side of Chicago enrolling in and completing seven short-term training programs (Community Health Worker, Emergency Medical Technician, Cybersecurity, Swift Coding, Personal Fitness Trainer, Phlebotomy, and Sterile Processing) leading to jobs that pay at least 130 percent of the regional living wage and (2) further develop the

infrastructure at **Malcolm X College (MXC)** to sustain a system of intensive supports to ensure the retention and success of the College's most challenged populations. The activities of the WEI Grant are made up of four key components: (1) intensive student onboarding via Learning Support Communities; (2) "last dollar" scholarships; (3) professional exploration, preparation, internships, and coaching; and (4) strengthening institutional capacity to deliver services that support student success. MXC WEI met all its goals for implementation in fiscal year 2020 and exceeded some as well. The initiative received 396 unduplicated applications and exceeded the recruitment goal of 190. WEI was able to recruit 191 "Scholars" by quarter four of the grant with an ethnicity breakdown of these "Scholars" as 120 African American, 49 Hispanic/Latino, 9 Multi-Racial, 9 White, and 4 Asian. Fifty-seven percent (44/78) of African American students in WEI were awarded a credential. The basic certificate completer count is 78 students, of which 20 (26 percent) are employed. The WEI team is projecting another 58 completers by the end of Spring 2021, a significant stride toward the goal of 145 completers. The WEI team expects the job placement number to grow as the completer pool increases, as well as when Chicago recovers from the pandemic, resulting in job application and attainment becoming more available. This program is on-going and will run through June 2021.

The **College of Lake County (CLC)** was awarded a \$1.5 million workforce equity grant from ICCB to provide transformational opportunities for individuals in North Chicago, Waukegan, Round Lake, and Zion. The grant objectives were to enroll 182 African American and Hispanic/Latino students within the designated communities with short-term certificates in the spring of 2020 and then follow through with assisting in employment in the summer and fall of 2020. The Public Relations and Marketing teams were asked to develop a campaign to help recruit students into the program. The program enrollment goal was met; 1,800 students applied to the Transform Lake County Program. CLC accepted the full 182 African American and Hispanic/Latino students into the program. Due to the current COVID-19 circumstances, the College was only able to enroll 88 students during Fall 2020, given that many of the programs under this grant require hands-on learning, and the college had transitioned to remote learning during this semester. The remainder of the grant recipients are waiting for their classes to begin, with an anticipated start in Spring 2021. Furthermore, CLC has developed some long-term community relationships because of the research and outreach efforts that have advanced the College's Lakeshore campus beyond the Transform Lake County program.

To meet the needs of community college district employers, **Danville Area Community College (DACC)** wants to increase the number of eligible, job-ready workforce members through acquiring credentials, intrusive retention strategies, and essential job skills training and resources. With the ICCB Innovative Bridge and Transition grant, DACC implemented two programs targeting undereducated, unemployed, and underemployed adults. The first, CNA I-Path, which started in Fall 2019, is a fast-track cohort program for adults completing both their high school equivalency and a Certified Nurse Assistant certification, and the second, Bridge to Careers, which started in Spring 2020, is focused on career students who are close to completion but lack the needed resources and support to complete their certificate or degree. Both programs are a result of collaboration of DACC Faculty, Adult Education, Vermilion County Works/American Job Center,

*Danville Area Community College has recently implemented CNA I-Path and Bridge to Careers programs to meet the needs of local employers.*

and local employers. The CNA I-Path program served 8 students in the fall and 8 students in the spring. The Bridge to Careers program served 27 students. The essential soft-skills training provided to participants filled a critical need/gap identified by the employers in the college district. They noted that a lack of practical understanding of how to be successful as employees and to advance in a job to supervisory level was severely lacking in the available workforce pool. Students were invited to participate in the Vermilion County Works program for additional support and resources. The College plans to duplicate and scale up both initiatives.

To address the digital divide, **Kennedy-King College** invested in an equity-focused information technology (IT) training initiative to provide underserved and underrepresented populations access to the IT industry. The Tech Launchpad formally began in August of 2019 and has evolved to the creation of several short- and long-term academic programs as well as industry partners all designed to directly support women and students of color. The Tech Launchpad plans to serve approximately 600 students pursuing academic pathways in the IT sector by 2023. The initiative is driven by two imperatives: social equity and workforce equity. To address each imperative, KKC has launched several traditional and nontraditional IT academic programs to provide Chicago residents with opportunities to pursue careers that lead to positive economic mobility and to close equity gaps in the industry. Leveraging resources from the Workforce Equity Initiative and other private funding, the Launchpad has served 56 mostly African American and Hispanic/Latino students (76 enrollments, duplicated student count based on students participating in multiple programs) since its start.

*Olive-Harvey College established the Project Evolve scholarship in Fall 2019 that focuses on completion of short-term certificate programs in Cannabis Dispensary Operations and Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics.*

In keeping with the efforts of narrowing the achievement gap, **Olive-Harvey College** continues to implement innovative strategies targeted at increasing access, retention, and completion for students. The Project Evolve (PE) initiative serves to further this mission by providing inclusive

support aimed at combating the socioeconomic barriers that often encumber academic success. As a Predominately Black Institution (PBI) and an emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), this is particularly true for OHC's student body. In full alignment with the Olive-Harvey Equity Plan, PE provides underrepresented minority students with the opportunity to advance their education and improve social mobility. Established in Fall 2019, the project focuses on the completion of programs in Cannabis Dispensary Operations and Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL). Seeded by the Workforce Equity Initiative Grant, PE provides full tuition waivers to underrepresented students for the duration of their program of study. Further support includes book vouchers, childcare and transportation assistance, and a loaner laptop program. With many of the programs offering short-term credentials, most students can enter the job market after only 16 weeks of coursework. In its inaugural term, PE garnered immense interest and accounted for one-third of the TDL enrollment. To date, nearly 85 percent of the enrolled PE students have completed their short-term program at OHC, surpassing the program goal of 80 percent completion.

The purpose of the Support for Workforce Training (SWFT) Program at **Parkland College** is to support underrepresented students, particularly African American students, in receiving free short-term training and credentials in more than 15 career areas that lead directly to an employment

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paying a family-sustaining wage. The program, which is funded by the statewide Workforce Equity Initiative, was implemented in September 2019, and renewed for a second year of funding in October 2020. In addition to receiving free tuition and fees, books, and a weekly stipend tied to attendance, SWFT participants receive wraparound supports, career services, and engagement opportunities, including interactions with employers and workshops. Once students complete their programs, Career Services are available to assist them in connecting with employers in their field about job opportunities. Community partners within the network are aware of the SWFT program areas and provide information regarding job openings within their organizations and within the community. In addition to meeting the requirements of the grant program, the SWFT program has brought together professionals from Academic Services, Community Education, and Adult Education to formulate a seamless approach to working with diverse students who might not otherwise access higher education, creating a single entry point for career training that does not require the student to “self” select into those historically separate categories. In its first year, the program served more than 150 individuals in the SWFT program, including 35 in newly created adult education bridge programs that allow individuals who have not yet obtained a high school credential to accelerate their path into the career of their choosing. More than 77 percent of the SWFT participants are African American, exceeding the 60 percent benchmark for the program set by the Illinois Community College Board.

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