



Press Release

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Statewide Task Force Outlines Plan to Expand Educational and Training Opportunities for Adult Learners

SPRINGFIELD – Today at a press conference at the state Capitol, the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) was joined by lawmakers to outline strategies for proactively responding to a future of work that will demand advanced skills and training. These strategies are embedded within the newly released Strategic Plan for Adult Education and Literacy that focuses on advancing models that combine basic skills and workforce training, leading to a credential and meeting employers' needs. The strategies developed in the newly released plan will guide Illinois' adult education system over the next five years to ensure all adult learners have access to and success across the services that are cohesive, coordinated, and innovative.

“Over the past six months, the Statewide Task Force on the Future of Adult Education and Literacy has been engaged in a strategic planning process focused on expanding and scaling comprehensive career pathways and integrated education and training programs that have been successfully implemented across the state to produce a trained workforce and improve wages,” said Dr. Karen Hunter Anderson, ICCB executive director and chair of the task force.

“Adult education can no longer be viewed as an end point or final state in the transition to work,” added Jennifer Foster, ICCB Deputy Director for Adult Education and Workforce. “Instead, adult education is the foundation of Illinois' career pathway system.”

The five-year strategic plan put forward by the task force addresses these critical needs through the identification of a set of four goals and related objectives developed to spur stronger overall system outcomes.

Goal 1: Improve outcomes by scaling effective models and strategies across the system.

Goal 2: Increase postsecondary transitions and credential attainment.

Goal 3: Strengthen college and career readiness.

Goal 4: Develop life-long career pathway systems and enabling technologies.

“I am proud to stand in support of this strategic plan. Community colleges and other adult education providers have always been the most adaptable and fleet-footed in responding to ever-changing needs of employers. I am pleased they will continue to focus on the need for skilled workers and, by doing so, continue to grow our own job opportunities in each region of Illinois,” said task force member State Representative Norine Hammond (R-Macomb), Minority Spokesperson for the House Higher Education Committee.

“We all agree more jobs in Illinois will solve a lot of problems. At the same time, we have job openings right now that aren't being filled because the education and training of many applicants doesn't match the needs of the employers,” said task force member State Senator Chuck Weaver (R-Peoria), Minority Spokesperson for the Senate Education Committee. “This strategic plan offers a way to bridge that gap and properly equip our workforce for the stable, good-paying jobs that are available, while enabling our businesses to expand and grow our economy.”

More than 1 million Illinois residents do not have a high school credential and approximately 1.8 million immigrants do not have the English literacy or other skills to enable them to meet social, educational, and work demands. At the same time, a more demanding economy means that 70% of all jobs in Illinois will require some form of education and training beyond high school. To confront these challenges, the Illinois General Assembly approved Senate Joint Resolution 40 to create a Statewide Task Force on the Future of Adult Education and Literacy.

For more information, including a copy of *Expanding Career Pathway Opportunities in Adult Education: Strategic Directions for Illinois*, visit www.iccb.org.

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

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