

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LINCOLN LAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S OPEN DOOR MENTORSHIP PROGRAM RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE IN WORKFORCE EDUCATION.

SPRINGFIELD – Today, Dr. Karen Hunter Anderson, executive director of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), visited Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC) to recognize the college's Open Door Mentorship Program as a statewide model for community college engagement and alignment with business. The visit was part of a statewide tour to unveil the ICCB's Workforce Education Strategic Plan and highlight best practices across the state in workforce training.

Anderson was joined by college president Dr. Charlotte Warren who discussed how LLCC has developed an innovative partnership with local businesses to support the academic success and workforce goals of African American male students. The program provides these students with career exploration, internships, and mentorship that lead to employment opportunities in selected career pathways.

"Underrepresentation of African-American males has been a longstanding issue for our nation," said Warren. "Lack of education severely limits opportunity for these men, but it also represents an underutilized resource for our community. Thanks to the support of The Quantum Growth Partnership (Q5), the economic development partnership led by The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, LLCC has a chance to change that trajectory. Public, private and nonprofit sectors have come together not just with their dollars, but also with their time and commitment to help us positively impact educational persistence, retention and completion of these students. We are proud to be a part of their journey and hope to provide career opportunities and keep these talented young men right here in our community for years to come."

Since the program's inception, more than 30 local business and industry partners have signed on to mentor students, lead professional development sessions or offer internships.

"The Open Door Mentorship Program demonstrates a solid commitment by Lincoln Land Community College and area business and economic development partners to foster the academic and future workforce success for African American males," said Anderson. "As community colleges across the state implement recommendations in the Workforce Education Strategic Plan, LLCC's program sets the standard for strengthening connections with business and industry to improve student outcomes and grow the economy."

The Workforce Education Strategic Plan is the culmination of regional meetings held in each of the state's ten economic development regions with partners from across the education, economic development, and workforce sectors. The resulting plan identified four priority areas to be addressed over the next five years. These areas are:

1. Increase Early Career-Related Education and Exposure
2. Address Essential and Occupational Skill Gaps
3. Align Education and Training Programs to Employers' needs
4. Strengthen Connections Among Public Partners and Engagement and Alignment with Business

“The Workforce Education Strategic Plan will expand and enhance Illinois’ ability to attract, retrain and grow business and develop educational opportunities to support students’ success in the workforce,” said Jennifer Foster, ICCB Deputy Director for Adult Education and Workforce.

For more information, including a copy of the Workforce Education Strategic Plan, visit <http://www.iccb.org/workforce>. For more information on the Open Doors Mentorship Program visit www.llcc.edu/open-door-program.

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