

REVISED

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 16, 2015

COMMUNITY COLLEGES DRIVING FORCE BEHIND ECONOMIC GAINS FOR STUDENTS, EMPLOYERS, AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

SOUTH HOLLAND – Today, Dr. Karen Hunter Anderson, Executive Director of the Illinois Community Board (ICCB), joined Clarissa Charles, a graduate of South Suburban College, and Cindy Brassea, Chief Operating Officer of Franciscan St. James Health, to draw attention to the impact of community colleges on increased earnings for workers and added skills to our workforce.

In discussing the economic impact of community colleges in the south Chicagoland region, the presidents of South Suburban College, Joliet Junior College, and Moraine Valley Community College highlighted earnings gains for students, a strong return on investment, and significant boost in tax revenues for local communities and the state.

Dr. Gregory Thomas, vice president of student affairs for Prairie State College, talked about the earnings potential for Illinois Community College graduates and the strong relationship between earnings and program completion. The report shows that on average, all students who completed their Illinois community college education in 2011 saw a gain of almost 43,587, a 30 percent increase in earnings over pre-enrollment wages.

"In fact, taking courses at an Illinois community college increases a student's earnings 25.3 percent over pre-enrollment wages," said Thomas. "These are significant figures that individuals should consider when deciding on where to pursue their education. The data on lifetime earnings for community college graduates speaks for itself."

Moraine Valley Community College President Dr. Sylvia Jenkins spoke about community colleges as a return on investment that pays dividends throughout a graduate's life. For example, the study found that a Moraine Valley student who earns an Associate of Applied Science or a Certificate will earn an additional \$625,000 during a 40-year working life. Over the student's life they are contributing to the local economy and enhancing the quality of life for not only their families but also their communities.

"Investing in a community college education is the best thing going," said Jenkins. "We give our community members an opportunity to realize their dreams and reach their goals."

Joliet Junior College President Dr. Debra Daniels stressed the important role community colleges play in developing skilled workers to meet labor market demand. In fact, the study found that nearly 9 in 10 community college students stay in Illinois for employment in the 5-year period after graduation.

"Our partnerships with business and industry are critical," said Daniels. "Our training and curriculum are successful because we engage in productive dialogue with our external partners and use their valuable feedback and insight. We know how important Joliet Junior College's programs are for adding skills to our workforce and boosting the competitiveness of area businesses." South Suburban College President Don Manning talked about the millions of dollars community colleges generate in taxes and the hundreds of jobs created as major employers and business entities. He also noted that community college graduates generate millions of dollars in local, state, and federal taxes.

"I believe the community at large understands the great impact colleges have educationally and culturally, but often times the least understood and least measured effect is economically," said Manning. "The detailed research that was conducted through this study revealed some eye-opening numbers relating to the economic value of community colleges in Illinois, and specifically here in the south suburban region. The tens of millions of dollars each community college district contributes to our local economies every year is just the tip of the iceberg of our overarching, positive impact."

During her remarks, Dr. Anderson noted that Illinois is home to 48 community colleges in 39 districts and has the third largest community college system in the nation serving nearly 1 million residents each year.

"Community colleges are vital partners for economic growth of local communities in the region," said Dr. Anderson. "Investing in Illinois community colleges pays considerable dividends to Illinois' students, employers, and local communities."

The Economic Impact Study was conducted by Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies. The study is unique from many other state and national higher education economic impact analyses because student-level data was matched with employee-level wage data to determine student economic impacts through their employment and earnings gains.

For more information, including a copy of the statewide report, visit <http://www.iccb.org/eis.html>.

###

Contact:

Matt Berry, Illinois Community College Board (217) 785-7411, matt.berry@illinois.gov

Kelly Rohder, Joliet Junior College (815) 280-2915, krhoder@jjc.edu

Patrick Rush, South Suburban College (708) 225-5846, prush@ssc.edu

Jennifer Stoner, Prairie State College (708) 709-3949, JStoner@prairiestate.edu

Mark Horstmeyer, Moraine Valley Community College (708) 974-5375,
horstmeyer@morainevalley.edu