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**FISCAL YEAR 2023**  
**ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM**  
**SELECTED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**  
**FOR**  
**UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS**

**FOCUS AREA:**  
**IMPROVED EQUITY OUTCOMES RELATED TO**  
**ACCESS, RETENTION, AND COMPLETION RATES**

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*March 2024*

Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

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Compiled by ICCB

Nathan R. Wilson, Deputy Director for Research and Information Technology

Jay Brooks, Associate Deputy Director for Research and Analytics

Michelle Dufour, Director for Research and Analytics

Cecilia Elhaddad, Data Analyst

Mitchell Gaffney, Data Analyst

Jana Ferguson, Consultant, Data and Research Services

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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Introduction .....	4
Key Findings .....	5
Demographic Information.....	6
Disability Status .....	6
Gender.....	7
Age.....	7
State of Illinois’ Race/Ethnicity Distribution .....	7
Race/Ethnicity Distribution in Community College System Credit Programs.....	8
First-Generation College Students.....	10
Credential Attainment.....	11
Graduation and Advancement Rate (Graduation/Transfer/Retention) by Race/Ethnicity	13
Adjusted Retention Rate (Fall-to-Fall Retention or Graduation) by Race/Ethnicity.....	15
Employee Diversity .....	16
Best Practices .....	19
Academic Advising.....	19
Accessibility of Content.....	23
Adult Education Initiatives .....	24
Assessment of Student Learning.....	26
Bridge Initiatives.....	27
Come Back Scholarship.....	32
Developmental Education and Placement Initiatives .....	33
Enhance DEI Knowledge for Faculty and Staff .....	36
First Year Experience .....	38
High School Partnership Initiatives .....	39
Mentoring/Counseling .....	41
Professional Development .....	43
Student Support Services .....	44
TRIO Student Support Services.....	50
Student Support Services for Ethnic Minority Students .....	52
Student Support Services for Students with Disabilities .....	54
Transitional Initiatives .....	56
Tutoring.....	56
Workforce Preparation Initiatives.....	57
Bibliography.....	68

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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 residents 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 topic: *Improved equity outcomes related to access, retention, and completion rates*.

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 childcare needs, which 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 Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

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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### KEY FINDINGS

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- Nearly one-half (46.9 percent) of students enrolled in Transfer and two-fifths (41.6 percent) of students enrolled in CTE programs were members of a minority group.
- Hispanic/Latino students accounted for the largest minority group enrollments in the Transfer program areas (23.9 percent) and also in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs (21.3 percent). African American students made up 11.8 percent of enrollments in Transfer programs and 12.2 percent in CTE programs.
- Minority students accounted for 42.8 percent of Transfer graduates, compared to 41.6 percent of all CTE graduates in fiscal year 2023.
- Compared to five years ago, the total number of minority completers increased 15.7 percent.
- Nearly two out of three minority first-time, full-time students enrolling in Fall 2022 were retained or graduated in Fall 2023 (64.7 percent) compared to over seven out of ten White students (71.2 percent).
- Over six in ten minority first-time, full-time students enrolling in Fall 2020 at Illinois community colleges graduated, transferred out, or were still enrolled by Summer 2023 (61.2 percent) compared to over seven in ten White students (72.2 percent).
- The advancement rate of African American students increased by nearly ten percentage points compared to last year.
- Over the past five years the graduation rate of Illinois minority first-time, full-time students who completed within 150 percent of catalog time increased each year from 22.4 percent (Fall 2016 cohort) to 29.2 percent (Fall 2020 cohort).
- Nearly two out of five students in the Illinois Community College System are first-generation college students.
- During fiscal year 2023, Illinois community colleges served 15,979 students with disabilities (3.9 percent of all credit enrollments).
- Females comprised 54.6 percent of the student population in fiscal year 2023 and accounted for 54.9 percent of all 2023 completions.

Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

- Compared to fiscal year 2022, the number of minority faculty and staff increased by 5.3 percent in fiscal year 2023.
- Hispanic/Latino faculty members (5.9 percent) are the most underrepresented minority group in comparison to the student population of the same race/ethnicity (27.5 percent).
- Strategies in improving equity outcomes related to access, retention, and completion rates of students from underrepresented groups include academic advising, mentoring, counseling, scholarships, high school partnership initiatives, student support initiatives, and workforce preparation initiatives in inclusive environments and educational equity.

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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 2023, Illinois community colleges served 15,979 students with disabilities (3.9 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 = 14,393) used supportive services offered by colleges. Only about one in ten students with disabilities (9.9 percent, N = 1,586) did not use supportive services during fiscal year 2023.

Based on the unduplicated count of students with disabilities who self-reported and used supportive services, specific disabilities identified were learning, including ADHD, (53.6 percent of reported disabilities); auditory (2.1 percent); medical, including acquired brain injury and systemic/chronic health problems, (9.0 percent); mobility (2.5 percent); psychological (28.5 percent); visual (1.8 percent); and other, including speech/language impairment, deaf-blind, and developmental, (1.9 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 89.9 percent of reported disabilities. Of those services used, based on unduplicated count, more than one-half (53.6 percent) were used by students with learning disabilities, including ADHD ([2023 Student Disability Table](#)).

Census figures show a substantial number of Illinoisans with disabilities. In the 2022 Illinois census estimate, among Illinois' civilian non-institutionalized population, 7.6 percent between 18

and 34 years of age and 11.2 percent between 35 and 64 years of age had a disability. More than one fourth (28.2 percent) of the Illinois population age 16 and over with disabilities was employed ([2022 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 54.6 percent of the student population in fiscal year 2023. The percentage of Male students has averaged 44.6 percent over the past five years. Census data show little change in the proportion of Females in Illinois with 50.5 percent estimated in 2022 versus 51.0 percent in 2010 and 2000 ([ICCB FY 2023 Annual Student Enrollment and Completion Report](#), [U.S. Census 2000 Illinois](#), [U.S. Census 2010](#), [2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates](#) Table [S0101](#)). From 2019 to 2023, the number of Female students completing degree programs increased 7.7 percent, while the number of Female students enrolled in Illinois community college credit courses decreased 16.9 percent ([ICCB FY 2019 and FY 2023 Annual Student Enrollment and Completion Report](#)).

## Age

The average age of Illinois community college credit students was 26.3 years in fiscal year 2023, which is a slight decrease from fiscal year 2022 (26.4 years). The median age was 21.6 years in fiscal year 2023, which is also slightly lower than last year (21.7 years). According to the 2022 population estimates, the median age of all Illinoisans was estimated to be 39.1 years. The latest census estimates also show that over three-quarters (78.4 percent) of all Illinoisans were 18 years of age or above ([ICCB FY 2023 Annual Student Enrollment and Completion Report](#) and [2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates](#) Table [S0101](#)).

## State of Illinois' Race/Ethnicity Distribution

State census data show that Illinois' population was 12.58 million in 2022 compared to 12.81 million in 2020, 12.83 million in 2010, and 12.42 million 2000 ([U.S. Census 2000 Illinois](#), [U.S. Census 2010 Illinois](#), [U.S. Census 2020 Illinois](#), and [2023 Index of Need Table 1](#)). These detailed Illinois census data indicate that the state's population grew 1.3 percent between 2000 and 2022. The state population, however, decreased 1.9 percent between 2010 and 2022, and 1.8 percent between 2020 and 2022. Illinois' 2022 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 2022, as the percent of Caucasians decreased from 73.5 percent to 68.0 percent of the population ([U.S. Census 2000 Illinois](#), [U.S. Census 2020 Illinois Table P1](#), [U.S. Census 2020 Illinois Table P2](#), and [2023 Index of Need Table 1](#)).

The race/ethnicity data collection methodology changed for the 2000 census and changed again for the 2020 census. The 2022 state census data showed that 5.8 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 2022 data in the table. These duplicated

Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

Hispanic/Latino population counts show substantial growth, from 1,530,262 in 2000 to 2,303,725 in 2022 ([U.S. Census 2000 Illinois](#) and [2023 Index of Need Table 1](#)).

Illinois' largest minority group in 2000 was African American and in 2022 was Hispanic/Latino. Compared to 2000, African American counts in 2022 decreased from 15.1 percent to 14.0 percent, whereas Asian American counts increased from 3.4 percent to 5.7 percent, Native American from 0.2 percent to 0.3 percent, and Hispanic/Latino from 12.3 percent to 18.3 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%
2022	68.0%	14.0%	5.7%	0.3%	12.0%	18.3%

\*Includes Pacific Islander

\*\*Includes two or more races

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

†The way how Census collected race and ethnicity data changed from the previous collection

SOURCE OF DATA: U. S. Census Bureau (2000, 2010, and 2020) & 2023 Index of Need, Table 1.

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

Overall, in fiscal year 2023, minority students accounted for 50.3 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 2023 data show that minority representation increased from the prior year (fiscal year 2022 = 48.7 percent).

*Students identifying themselves as Hispanic/Latino—108,070 in fiscal year 2023—accounted for the largest number of minority enrollments in the Illinois Community College System.*

Fiscal year 2023 results are above the five-year average (48.0 percent). Students identifying themselves as Hispanic/Latino students—108,070 in fiscal year 2023—became the largest minority group in 2000, and have been each year since, except in fiscal year 2012, when African American students were the largest minority group. African American students—49,665 in fiscal year 2023—constitute the second largest minority group in the latest data. Asian American students—22,493 in fiscal year 2023—constitute the third largest minority group enrolled in the Illinois Community College System. The fiscal year 2023 proportionate representation by Hispanic/Latino students was higher in comparison to the prior year (27.5 percent in fiscal year 2023 versus 26.4 percent in fiscal year 2022). The fiscal year 2023 African American student proportional representation was the same in the prior year (12.6 percent in fiscal year 2023 versus 12.6 percent in fiscal year 2022). 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 African American (-22.6 percent), Hispanic/Latino (-8.1 percent), Asian American (-7.9 percent), Native American (-2.9 percent), and Two or More Races (-1.2 percent), while an increase was noted among students



Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

identifying themselves as Pacific Islander (+26.5 percent). U.S. Nonresident students experienced no change in enrollments over the past five years.

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 (71.5 percent) of the individuals enrolled in community college Adult Education coursework. In fiscal year 2023, Hispanic/Latino students accounted for over two-fifths percent of Adult Education enrollments and African American students for one-fifth of those enrollments (44.1 percent and 20.8 percent, respectively). Additionally, minority students accounted for approximately four out of every five (79.1 percent) individuals enrolled in community college ESL coursework during fiscal year 2023. Hispanic/Latino students accounted for over three-fifths (61.2 percent) of the community college ESL students, followed by Asian American students (8.4 percent) and African American students (4.7 percent).

**Table 2**  
**Fiscal Year 2023 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>U.S. Nonresident</i>	<i>Native American</i>	<i>Pacific Islander</i>	<i>Two or More Races</i>	<i>Minority Subtotal</i>
<b>ABE/ASE %</b>	<b>20.8%</b>	<b>44.1%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>71.5%</b>
Number	3,600	7,629	669	131	44	23	290	12,386
<b>ESL %</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>61.2%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>79.1%</b>
Number	1,318	17,209	2,357	1,145	14	53	152	22,248

**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 2023, minorities comprised nearly one-half (46.9 percent) of Transfer enrollees. An examination of each minority race/ethnicity group’s representation across the Transfer program area indicates that Hispanic/Latino students accounted for the largest minority group enrollments (23.9 percent), followed by African American students (11.8 percent), Asian American students (6.4 percent), students of Two or More Races (3.6 percent), U.S. Nonresident students (0.9 percent), Native American students (0.3 percent), and Pacific Islander students (0.1 percent). [Table 3](#) also shows that over two-fifths of students enrolled in CTE programs were members of a minority group (41.6 percent). Hispanic/Latino students also had the highest representation among minorities in CTE programs and accounted for 21.3 percent of the population. African American students had the second largest CTE program enrollment (12.2 percent), followed by Asian American students (4.3 percent), students of Two or More Races (2.7 percent), U.S. Nonresident students (0.7 percent), Native American students (0.3 percent), and Pacific Islander students (0.1 percent).

**Table 3**  
**Fiscal Year 2023 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>U.S. Nonresident</i>	<i>Native American</i>	<i>Pacific Islander</i>	<i>Two or More Races</i>	<i>Minority Subtotal</i>
<b>Transfer %</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	<b>23.9%</b>	<b>6.4%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>3.6%</b>	<b>46.9%</b>
Number	26,178	52,997	14,132	1,905	581	331	7,959	104,083
<b>CTE %</b>	<b>12.2%</b>	<b>21.3%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>41.6%</b>
Number	12,631	22,121	4,417	714	318	137	2,833	43,171

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 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 2019 through fiscal year 2023) on first-generation college student enrollments. Fiscal year 2023 first-generation college student enrollment decreased by 5.8 percent compared to last year and decreased by 26.2 percent compared to fiscal year 2019. The overall enrollments increased 3.6 percent compared to last year and decreased 17.8 percent compared to five years ago. Nearly two out of five students (36.0 percent) in the Illinois Community College System were first-generation college students in fiscal year 2023.

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

**Table 4**  
**First-Generation College Student Enrollment in the Illinois Community College System  
Fiscal Years 2019-2023**

	<b>FY 19</b>	<b>FY 20</b>	<b>FY 21</b>	<b>FY 22</b>	<b>FY 23</b>	<b>One-Year % Change</b>	<b>Five-Year % Change</b>
First-Generation College Student Enrollment	200,555	184,041	157,826	156,966	147,913	-5.8%	-26.2%
Annual Enrollment	500,477	472,478	405,444	396,958	411,217	3.6%	-17.8%
<b>Enrollment Rate of First-Gen. College Students</b>	<b>40.1%</b>	<b>39.0%</b>	<b>38.9%</b>	<b>39.5%</b>	<b>36.0%</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 2023. [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 2023. [Table 6](#) provides a comparison of fiscal year 2019 through fiscal year 2023 completions in the Illinois Community College System by race/ethnicity.

[Table 5](#) shows that during fiscal year 2023, more minority graduates completed CTE degrees and certificates (N = 15,609) than Transfer degrees and certificates (N = 10,913). Minority students accounted for 42.8 percent of Transfer graduates, compared to 41.6 percent of all CTE graduates. The majority of the

*Minority students accounted for 42.8 percent of Transfer graduates, compared to 41.6 percent of all CTE graduates in fiscal year 2023.*

Transfer credentials earned by minorities was Associate in Arts degrees (49.5 percent, N = 5,401), while 30.2 percent (N = 3,300) was the General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) Credentials. Hispanic/Latino students accounted for the largest group of Transfer minority graduates (24.1 percent) followed by African American students (8.5 percent), Asian American students (5.4 percent), students of Two or More Races (3.5 percent), U.S. Nonresident students (0.9 percent), Native American students (0.3 percent), and Pacific Islander students (0.1 percent). The fiscal year 2023 proportional representation of the Hispanic/Latino Transfer graduates (24.1 percent) was lower by 0.2 percentage points from the prior year (24.3 percent). Hispanic/Latino students also accounted for the largest minority group for completions in CTE programs (21.7 percent), followed by African American students (11.9 percent), Asian American students (4.3 percent), students of Two or More Races (2.9 percent), U.S. Nonresident students (0.5 percent), Native American students (0.2 percent), and Pacific Islander students (0.1 percent). The fiscal year 2023 proportional representation of the Hispanic/Latino CTE program graduates (21.7 percent) was higher by 1.1 percentage points from fiscal year 2022 (20.6 percent).

**Table 5**  
**Fiscal Year 2023 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>U.S. Nonresident</i>	<i>Native American</i>	<i>Pacific Islander</i>	<i>Two or More Races</i>	<i>Minority Subtotal</i>
<b>Transfer %</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>24.1%</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>42.8%</b>
Number	2,177	6,146	1,376	233	70	23	888	10,913
<b>CTE %</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>41.6%</b>
Number	4,470	8,133	1,598	205	83	48	1,072	15,609

**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 2023 totaled 65,248. Four in ten (42.4 percent) of all degrees and certificates in fiscal year 2023 were awarded to minority students (nonwhite) whose race/ethnicity was known. Compared to last year, there was an increase in minority completions among students of Pacific Islander students (29.8 percent), Two or More Races (9.1 percent), Native American students (8.8

Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

percent), Asian American students (6.8 percent), African American students (5.1 percent), and Hispanic/Latino students (2.6 percent). A decrease in completions was noted for U.S. Nonresident students (-0.8 percent) since last year. Compared to fiscal year 2019, the total number of minority completers increased 15.7 percent.

**Table 6**  
**Student Completers in the Illinois Community College System by Race/Ethnicity**  
**Fiscal Years 2019-2023**

<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<b>FY 19</b>	<b>FY 20</b>	<b>FY 21</b>	<b>FY 22</b>	<b>FY 23</b>	<b>One-Year % Change</b>	<b>Five-Year % Change</b>
<i>African American</i>	6,951	7,331	6,131	6,700	7,044	5.1%	1.3%
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	12,181	14,564	13,684	14,460	14,830	2.6%	21.7%
<i>Asian American</i>	2,589	2,791	2,719	2,871	3,065	6.8%	18.4%
<i>U.S. Nonresident</i>	513	477	485	473	469	-0.8%	-8.6%
<i>Native American</i>	165	130	142	147	160	8.8%	-3.0%
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	56	63	49	57	74	29.8%	32.1%
<i>Two or More Races</i>	1,464	1,572	1,730	1,867	2,036	9.1%	39.1%
<b>Minority Subtotal</b>	<b>23,919</b>	<b>26,928</b>	<b>24,940</b>	<b>26,575</b>	<b>27,678</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>15.7%</b>
<i>Unknown</i>	1,626	1,647	1,660	1,808	1,837	1.6%	13.0%
<i>White</i>	36,697	37,132	35,183	36,414	35,733	-1.9%	-2.6%

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

Table 7 contains trend data (fiscal year 2019 through fiscal year 2023) on student completers by gender. Females accounted for 54.9 percent of all 2023 completions. The number of male completers increased 2.3 percent, and the number of female completers decreased 1.3 percent compared to the previous fiscal year. When compared to fiscal year 2019, the number of male completers increased 0.5 percent, and the number of female completers increased 7.7 percent. Gender classifications are aligned with U.S. Department of Education collection and reporting standards. Unknown or Another Gender accounted for 0.4 percent of completions in fiscal year 2023.

**Table 7**  
**Student Completers in the Illinois Community College System by Gender\***  
**Fiscal Years 2019-2023**

<i>Gender</i>	<b>FY 19</b>	<b>FY 20</b>	<b>FY 21</b>	<b>FY 22</b>	<b>FY 23</b>	<b>One-Year % Change</b>	<b>Five-Year % Change</b>
<i>Male</i>	29,014	29,954	25,985	28,514	29,159	2.3%	0.5%
<i>Female</i>	33,228	35,753	35,798	36,283	35,802	-1.3%	7.7%
<i>Unknown or Another Gender</i>					287	--	--

\*Gender classifications align with U.S. Department of Education collection and reporting standards.

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

### **Graduation and 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. Research suggests a higher completion rate for those that transferred with a credential from a two-year college than those that transferred without a two-year degree ([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. Nationally, 43.6 percent of community college transfer students from the Fall 2015 cohort earned a community college credential prior to transferring to a four-year institution ([Tracking Transfer: Measures of Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students to Complete Bachelor's Degrees](#)). The federal formula for calculating graduation rates does not include these transfer-outs prior to credential 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 8a contains information on number and percent of first-time, full-time students at Illinois community colleges who graduated within three years (150 percent of catalog program time) of entry by race/ethnicity. Nearly three in ten minority students from the Fall 2020 cohort graduated by Summer 2023 (29.2 percent) compared to over two in five White students (43.9 percent). Over the past five years the graduation rate has increased each year for both minority students and White students. Nationally, for cohort year 2019, the graduation rate within 150 percent of catalog program time for all students at public two-year postsecondary institutions was 31.2 percent ([NCES Trend Generator](#)), and for White students was 36.1 percent ([NCES Trend Generator](#)). This is based on 885 institutions, limited by Sector of institution. Illinois has a higher graduation rate for all students at 34.0% (cohort year 2019) compared to the national average ([NCES Trend Generator](#)). Examining Illinois race/ethnicity subgroups, Asian American and U.S. Nonresident students accounted for the highest graduation rate among minority students entering in Fall 2020 (38.2 and 36.8 percent, respectively), followed by Pacific Islander students (36.4 percent), Native American students (31.9 percent), Hispanic/Latino students (30.5 percent), students of Two or More Races (30.5 percent), and African American students (19.7 percent).

**Table 8a**  
**First-Time, Full-Time Students Enrolling in Fall and Graduating within Three Years of Entry at Illinois Community Colleges**  
**Fiscal Years 2017-2021**

<i>Race/Ethnicity*</i>	Fall 2016 Summer 2019	Fall 2017 Summer 2020	Fall 2018 Summer 2021	Fall 2019 Summer 2022	Fall 2020 Summer 2023
<i>African American</i>	492/ 3,456 14.2%	520/ 3,429 15.2%	501/ 3,245 15.4%	518/ 3,131 16.5%	408/ 2,070 19.7%
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	1,664/ 6,520 25.5%	1,896/ 6,918 27.4%	1,865/ 6,917 27.0%	2,031/ 7,348 27.6%	1,794/ 5,882 30.5%
<i>Asian</i>	308/ 1,072 28.7%	323/ 1,005 32.1%	392/ 1,133 34.6%	421/ 1,152 36.5%	403/ 1,056 38.2%
<i>U.S. Nonresident**</i>	39/ 177 22.0%	64/ 224 28.6%	82/ 236 34.7%	110/ 256 43.0%	49/ 133 36.8%
<i>Native American</i>	21/ 67 31.3%	14/ 58 24.1%	12/ 47 25.5%	20/ 70 28.6%	30/ 94 31.9%
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	10/ 34 29.4%	3/ 22 13.6%	5/ 24 20.8%	5/ 17 29.4%	4/ 11 36.4%
<i>Two or More Races</i>	203/ 866 23.4%	211/ 886 23.8%	252/ 961 26.2%	262/ 941 27.8%	247/ 811 30.5%
<b><i>Minority Subtotal</i></b>	<b>2,737/ 12,192 22.4%</b>	<b>3,031/ 12,542 24.2%</b>	<b>3,109/ 12,563 24.7%</b>	<b>3,367/ 12,915 26.1%</b>	<b>2,935/ 10,057 29.2%</b>
<i>White</i>	5,679/ 14,803 38.4%	5,838/ 14,605 40.0%	5,702/ 14,179 40.2%	5,928/ 14,411 41.1%	5,750/ 13,105 43.9%

\*Race/ethnicity classifications align with U.S. Department of Education collection and reporting standards.

\*\*Due to changes in the racial/ethnic terminology by U.S. Department of Education, Nonresident category was renamed to U.S. Nonresident.

SOURCE OF DATA: ICCB Centralized Data System - Annual Enrollment and Completion Data and IPEDS

Note: Table 8a of the FY 2019-FY 2023 Underrepresented Groups Report aligns with federal reporting for IPEDS. Prior reports used methodology developed by Complete College America (CCA).

Table 8b 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. Over six in ten minority students from the Fall 2020 cohort graduated, transferred out, or were still enrolled by Summer 2023 (61.2 percent) compared to over seven in ten White students (72.2 percent). Asian American students accounted for the highest advancement rate among minority students entering in Fall 2020 (79.1 percent), followed by Native American students (64.9 percent), Pacific Islander students (63.6 percent), U.S. Nonresident students (63.2 percent), students of Two or More Races (62.3 percent), Hispanic/Latino students (60.2 percent), and African American students (54.4 percent). The advancement rate of African American students increased by nearly ten percentage points compared to last year.

**Table 8b**  
**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 2017-2021**

<i>Race/Ethnicity*</i>	Fall 2016 Summer 2019	Fall 2017 Summer 2020	Fall 2018 Summer 2021	Fall 2019 Summer 2022	Fall 2020 Summer 2023
<i>African American</i>	1,616/ 3,456 46.8%	1,539/ 3,429 44.9%	1,475/ 3,245 45.5%	1,405/ 3,131 44.9%	1,127/ 2,070 54.4%
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	3,754/ 6,520 57.6%	3,868/ 6,918 55.9%	3,835/ 6,917 55.4%	4,034/ 7,348 54.9%	3,540/ 5,882 60.2%
<i>Asian</i>	808/ 1,072 75.4%	771/ 1,005 76.7%	855/ 1,133 75.5%	855/ 1,152 74.2%	835/ 1,056 79.1%
<i>U.S. Nonresident**</i>	85/ 177 48.0%	115/ 224 51.3%	149/ 236 63.1%	164/ 256 64.1%	84/ 133 63.2%
<i>Native American</i>	38/ 67 56.7%	28/ 58 48.3%	23/ 47 48.9%	37/ 70 52.9%	61/ 94 64.9%
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	24/ 34 70.6%	17/ 22 77.3%	14/ 24 58.3%	11/ 17 64.7%	7/ 11 63.6%
<i>Two or More Races</i>	509/ 866 58.8%	486/ 886 54.9%	567/ 961 59.0%	533/ 941 56.6%	505/ 811 62.3%
<b><i>Minority Subtotal</i></b>	<b>6,834/ 12,192 56.1%</b>	<b>6,824/ 12,542 54.4%</b>	<b>6,918/ 12,563 55.1%</b>	<b>7,039/ 12,915 54.5%</b>	<b>6,159/ 10,057 61.2%</b>
<i>White</i>	10,231/ 14,803 69.1%	10,062/ 14,605 68.9%	9,661/ 14,179 68.1%	9,787/ 14,411 67.9%	9,466/ 13,105 72.2%

\*Race/ethnicity classifications align with U.S. Department of Education collection and reporting standards.  
\*\*Due to changes in the racial/ethnic terminology by U.S. Department of Education, Nonresident category was renamed to U.S. Nonresident.

SOURCE OF DATA: ICCB Centralized Data System—Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1) Data, Fall Enrollment (E1) Data, and National Student Clearinghouse (NSC)

Note: Table 8b of the FY 2019-FY 2023 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. Nearly two out of three minority first-time, full-time students enrolling in Fall 2022 at Illinois community colleges were retained or graduated in Fall 2023 (64.7 percent) compared to over seven out of ten White students (71.2 percent). Asian American students accounted for the highest fall-to-fall adjusted retention rate among minority students enrolling in Fall 2022 (79.1 percent),

Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

followed by Pacific Islander students (69.6 percent), Hispanic/Latino students (67.6 percent), students of Two or More Races (64.9 percent), U.S. Nonresident students (62.2 percent), Native American students (61.5 percent), and African American students (50.1 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 2019-2023**

<i>Race/ethnicity*</i>	Fall 2018 Fall 2019	Fall 2019 Fall 2020	Fall 2020 Fall 2021	Fall 2021 Fall 2022	Fall 2022 Fall 2023
<i>African American</i>	1,482/ 3,209 46.2%	1,470/ 3,107 47.3%	1,000/ 2,051 48.8%	1,048/ 2,116 49.5%	1,200/ 2,396 50.1%
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	4,535/ 6,764 67.0	4,511/ 7,246 62.3%	3,758/ 5,764 65.2%	3,911/ 5,991 65.3%	4,587/ 6,785 67.6%
<i>Asian</i>	853/ 1,096 77.8%	861/ 1,119 76.9%	789/ 1,029 76.7%	827/ 1,081 76.5%	875/ 1,106 79.1%
<i>U.S. Nonresident**</i>	141/ 212 66.5%	167/ 230 72.6%	79/ 122 64.8%	152/ 233 65.2%	148/ 238 62.2%
<i>Native American</i>	27/ 47 57.4%	38/ 69 55.1%	55/ 92 59.8%	30/ 51 58.8%	40/ 65 61.5%
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	18/ 23 78.3%	10/ 16 62.5%	7/ 11 63.6%	11/ 18 61.1%	16/ 23 69.6%
<i>Two or More Races</i>	584/ 946 61.7%	570/ 927 61.5%	479/ 797 60.1%	473/ 769 61.5%	550/ 847 64.9%
<b><i>Minority Subtotal</i></b>	<b>7,640/ 12,297 62.1%</b>	<b>7,627/ 12,714 60.0%</b>	<b>6,167/ 9,866 62.5%</b>	<b>6,452/ 10,259 62.9%</b>	<b>7,416/ 11,460 64.7%</b>
<i>White</i>	9,754/ 13,920 70.1%	9,643/ 14,143 68.2%	8,765/ 12,833 68.3%	8,506/ 12,274 69.3%	8,729/ 12,259 71.2%

\*Race/ethnicity classifications align with U.S. Department of Education collection and reporting standards.

\*\*Due to changes in the racial/ethnic terminology by U.S. Department of Education, Nonresident category was renamed to U.S. Nonresident.

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-FY 2023 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, 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),



Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

Brown-Glaude (2009), American Association of Community Colleges (2013), and Bitar, Montague & Ilano (2022) found that a diverse faculty promotes a positive learning environment for both minorities and Caucasians.

**Table 10**  
**Fiscal Year 2023 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>
<b><i>African American %</i></b>	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>14.7%</b>	<b>15.4%</b>	<b>24.9%</b>
Number	713	1,148	1,326	554	609
<b><i>Hispanic/Latino %</i></b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>12.2%</b>	<b>16.1%</b>	<b>16.2%</b>
Number	352	779	1,100	581	397
<b><i>Asian American %</i></b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>
Number	243	611	304	125	35
<b><i>U.S. Nonresident%</i></b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>
Number	11	38	39	16	17
<b><i>Native American %</i></b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>
Number	14	31	21	8	12
<b><i>Pacific Islander %</i></b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>
Number	5	10	9	0	4
<b><i>Two or More Races %</i></b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>
Number	60	119	157	47	26
<b><i>Minority Subtotal %</i></b>	<b>22.9%</b>	<b>18.6%</b>	<b>32.9%</b>	<b>37.0%</b>	<b>45.0%</b>
Number	1,398	2,736	2,956	1,331	1,100

**SOURCE OF DATA:** ICCB Centralized Data System—Annual Faculty, Staff, and Salary (C3) Data and African American/ Asian American/ Hispanic/ Native American Employment Plan Reports.

Table 10 shows that in fiscal year 2023, minority faculty and staff accounted for 11.7 percent of tenured faculty/officials and managers, 7.8 percent of non-tenured faculty, 14.7 percent of professional staff/protective service workers, 15.4 percent of office and clerical/paraprofessionals, and 24.9 percent of service maintenance employees. Compared to fiscal year 2022, the number of minority faculty and staff increased by 5.3 percent in fiscal year 2023. The largest increase in the minority employee count from the previous year was noted for office and clerical/paraprofessionals (9.7 percent), followed by service maintenance (5.8 percent), professional staff/protective service workers (5.3 percent), non-tenured faculty (3.8 percent), and tenured faculty/officials and managers (3.7 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 2019 and 2023**

<b>2019</b>	Percentage of Student Representation	Percentage of Faculty Representation*	Percentage Point Difference
<i>African American</i>	13.4%	9.1%	<b>-4.2%</b>
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	24.5%	4.8%	<b>-19.7%</b>
<i>Asian American</i>	5.1%	4.1%	<b>-1.0%</b>
<i>U.S. Nonresident</i>	0.9%	0.4%	<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>	2.6%	0.9%	<b>-1.7%</b>
<i>White</i>	53.3%	80.4%	<b>27.1%</b>
<b>2023</b>	Percentage of Student Representation	Percentage of Faculty Representation*	Percentage Point Difference
<i>African American</i>	12.6%	9.6%	<b>-3.0%</b>
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	27.5%	5.9%	<b>-21.6%</b>
<i>Asian American</i>	5.7%	4.4%	<b>-1.3%</b>
<i>U.S. Nonresident</i>	1.0%	0.3%	<b>-0.8%</b>
<i>Native American</i>	0.3%	0.2%	<b>-0.0%</b>
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	0.1%	0.1%	<b>-0.1%</b>
<i>Two or More Races</i>	3.1%	0.9%	<b>-2.2%</b>
<i>White</i>	49.7%	78.6%	<b>28.9%</b>

Race/ethnicity classifications align with U.S. Department of Education collection and reporting standards.

Includes only students and faculty whose ethnicity was known.

\*Includes Tenured Faculty/Officials and Managers and Non-tenured Faculty

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/ Native American Employment Plan Reports.

Across a five-year period, Hispanic/Latino faculty and student representation both increased over the period of five years, but the increase was smaller for Hispanic/Latino faculty (4.8 percent in fiscal year 2019 vs. 5.9 percent in fiscal year 2023), than the increase for the Hispanic/Latino students (24.5 percent in fiscal year 2019 vs. 27.5 percent in fiscal year 2023). Across the same time frame, African American faculty representation increased by 0.5 percentage points (9.1 percent in fiscal year 2019 vs. 9.6 percent in fiscal year 2023), while the African American student representation decreased by 0.8 percentage points (13.4 percent in fiscal year 2019 vs. 12.6 percent in fiscal year 2023). Asian American faculty and student representation both increased over the period of five years, but the increase was slightly smaller for Asian American faculty (4.1 percent in fiscal year 2019 vs. 4.4 percent in fiscal year 2023) than the increase for Asian American students (5.1 percent in fiscal year 2019 vs. 5.7 percent in fiscal year 2023).

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## BEST PRACTICES

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This following section provides information from the Illinois Community College System about strategies for improved equity outcomes related to access, retention, and completion rates of underrepresented groups in fiscal year 2023. 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.

Pursuant to [Public Act 102-1046](#), Illinois institutions of higher education are required to develop and implement an equity plan and practices that, at a minimum, close gaps in enrollment, retention, completion, and student loan repayment rates for underrepresented groups, including minority students, low-income students, working adult students, rural students, and students with disabilities. The following practices reported by Illinois community colleges describe these practices.

### Academic Advising

African American and Hispanic students lag in earning credentials or transferring to a four-year institution within three years of enrolling. To improve success rates for these students during the Spring 2023 term, **Richard J. Daley College's** Office of Research and Planning, President's Executive Council, and Institutional Research and

*Richard J. Daley College implemented Students Success Daily, a culturally responsive comprehensive year-round model, with the goal to increase African American, Hispanic, and first-year students' retention and success rates 55 percent by 2032.*

Practice Committee designed and implemented Students Success Daily, a culturally responsive comprehensive year-round model, with the goal to increase African American, Hispanic, and first-year students' retention and success rates 55 percent by 2032. To support students' development, Students Success Daily provides both academic and non-academic support. The academic support includes advising, tutoring, caring instructors, cohort-based courses, developmental math and English, extended/adjusted enrollment management model, financial aid, peer-leaders, and transfer completion. The non-academic support includes clothing, college-to-career exploration, English proficiency, employment, food, health care, internships, social/emotional wellness, stable housing, and technology. For African American, Hispanic, and first-year students who started their academic journey with the college during the Fall 2022 term, Daley College experienced a 7.5 percent, 1.4 percent, and 1.2 percent increase in its fall-to-fall retention rates, respectively.

**Harold Washington College** made a concerted effort to improve retention among a cohort of African American first-year students identified in the late spring of 2023. Over the summer, student services staff organized a campaign of direct outreach to students who joined the college in the summer and fall of 2023 but had yet to register for the Fall 2023 term. This included email reminders, text messages, and phone calls. In addition to encouraging registration, these conversations began to identify and, when possible, address individual barriers to enrollment. Because students typically register shortly before a term starts, staff must decide which students to pursue knowing that many already plan to register. Maintaining a list of high-priority students

who are expected to be less likely to register was useful to them. The fall-to-fall retention rate among African American first-year students rose from 41.3 percent in the academic year 2021-2022 (i.e., students starting in Summer/Fall 2021 and retained in Fall 2022) to 44.9 percent in academic year 2022-2023.

In the ongoing commitment to enhance the fall-to-fall retention of African American students, **Wilbur Wright College** remains dedicated to the expansion of programming within the Black Student Success Network (BSSN), which represents a cross-functional, inclusive initiative that centers on enhancing the success of African American students, aiming to align their recruitment, retention, and graduation rates with those of their peers. The use of "Black" instead of "African American" in the program's name underscores its inclusivity, encompassing individuals of the entire African Diaspora. The BSSN framework revolves around six vital domains for programming, each geared toward bolstering African American student success (community involvement, culturally relevant programming, mental health awareness, retention/completion/transfer, student engagement and involvement, and student stories) Wright's overarching goal is to foster a stronger sense of student connectedness and belonging within the campus community. This emphasis on connectivity and belonging is a strategic initiative designed to not only increase retention rates, but also boost overall student experience among the African American student population. Most likely, BSSN played a role in increasing Spring 2023 to Fall 2023 retention of African American students by ten percentage points (63.6 percent to 73.6 percent). Fall-to-fall retention of African American students also increased 7.2 percent from 48.4 percent among Fall 2021 students to 55.6 percent among the Fall 2022 cohort.

The Avanza program is a Transitional Bilingual Learning Community (TBLC) Program implemented in Fall 2021 with the goal to increase degree attainment among Hispanic, first-generation, and low-income students. This initiative, catalyzed through a grant with Northeastern Illinois University, adopts **Wilbur Wright College's** holistic and inclusive advising model with one to one-and-a-half-year cohorts. Avanza looks to promote English language acquisition for Spanish speaking students transitioning from English Language Learner/English as a Second Language (ELL/ESL) programs in high schools from across the Chicago metropolitan area and who are looking to continue pursuing a higher education. It specifically targets a cohort of incoming first-year students who are bilingual in Spanish and not yet comfortable in academic English, providing them with a seamless transition from high school to college during their first academic year. The program currently serves two populations of students--those who score a three or 33 on CCC Read to Write (RTW) placement exam and those who score a one or 11 on the RTW. This modification to the program was implemented to make the program more academically inclusive and provide students who need more support the resources to succeed. Avanza TBLC is dedicated to creating a welcoming and supportive college environment for ESL students. Staffing, communication, language, and structure are designed to increase a student's sense of belonging. The program offers academic and social resources, specialized courses, and workshops to support bilingual students on their academic journey. Avanza ensures a smoother transition for ESL students from high school to college, reducing the challenges and uncertainties they might face. Avanza has grown from an initial cohort of 11 students to more than 50 by the spring of 2024. Data indicates that Avanza student retention is contributing to the retention of Hispanic first-year students. All students in the Fall 2021 cohort were retained to Spring 2022 and eight of eleven were retained to Fall 2022. Two-thirds of the students in the initial cohort completed college-level

English in their first year compared to an overall rate of 53 percent for all first-year students. Among the students in the Fall 2022 cohort, the college recognized an 88 percent fall-to-fall retention rate compared to an overall rate of 73.8 percent for first-year Hispanic students and an overall fall-to-fall retention of 51.5 percent for all students. More than half of the Fall 2022 cohort (56.3 percent) completed college-level English in their first year compared to an overall rate of 45 percent for all first-year students.

*The Appreciative Advising structure provides solid foundations for facilitating culturally responsive advising with the students at the **College of Lake County**.*

**College of Lake County (CLC)** recognizes the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion and culturally responsive advising training. During March and June 2023, CLC’s Academic Success Advisors (ASAs) and College and Career Navigators (CCNs) participated in two training

programs: The Appreciative Advising Institute and the Association of College and University Educators’ (ACUE) Fostering a Culture of Belonging Online Course and Micro credential for all ASA staff and Lead CCN staff. The Appreciative Advising structure provides solid foundations for facilitating culturally responsive advising with students at CLC. The advisor utilizes culturally competent advising strategies such as listening, becoming an active part of the student’s life by proactively communicating at regular intervals of time, and intentionally looking beyond the surface to identify what students really need. The Fostering a Culture of Belonging course from ACUE guided course-takers on how to prioritize equity and inclusion in their work with students and colleagues. It included practices, videos, and resources that non-instructional staff and campus leaders can learn from and implement allowing them to contribute to a culture of belonging across their academic institution. A qualitative research study has demonstrated that advisors who adopt the Appreciative Advising framework report enhanced effectiveness as professionals, stronger relationships with their students, as well as a positive impact on their personal relationships with co-workers, children, spouses, and friends ([Howell, 2010](#)). Recent institutional assessment of CLC advising services has demonstrated students who met with an ASA during their first term were more likely to be retained into their second term. When disaggregating by age and then by race/ethnicity, all populations demonstrated an increase in retention if they met with an ASA. Furthermore, meeting with an ASA seems to reduce the retention equity gap. The gap between African American student retention compared to overall student retention is 7.4 percentage points lower for those who meet with an ASA (6.9 percentage point equity gap) compared to those who do not (14.3 percentage point equity gap). The gap between Hispanic student retention compared to overall student retention is 2.1 percentage points lower for those who meet with an ASA (0.6 percentage point equity gap) compared to those who do not (2.7 percentage point equity gap).

To enhance student success and bridge achievement gaps, the **College of Lake County (CLC)** implemented a full-scale redesign of the student recruitment, onboarding, first year experience, and advising model that features College and Career Navigators (CCNs), new orientation modules and a new student convocation, required College Success Seminar (CLC 120), Academic Success Advisors (ASAs), and EAB Navigate360 software. One of the central features is the introduction of CCNs, tasked with recruiting, onboarding, and advising new students. Their role extends to guiding students through application processes, class registration, and orientation. Notably, 69 percent of new students engaged with a CCN during the Fall 2022 term, with students of color displaying a higher likelihood of such interactions. To fortify the transition into college life, CLC

introduced new orientation modules and a student convocation. These initiatives offer essential information, answer queries, and facilitate connections. Two orientation modules follow CCN assistance with class registration, delving into topics such as financing education and preparing for the first day of classes. The New Student Convocation serves as an official welcome, providing a platform for critical information dissemination. A pivotal component of the redesign is the implementation of the required College Success Seminar (CLC 120) in the first semester. CLC 120 serves as a foundation for overall success, focusing on academic success, growth mindset, self-advocacy, self-identity, and the utilization of college resources. Successful completion of CLC 120 is considered a momentum metric, contributing to the overarching goal of improving three-year graduation rates from 29 percent to 45 percent for the Fall 2024 entering cohort. ASAs, specializing in students' fields of interest, play a crucial role in providing holistic advising from the first day through completion. Students who met with their ASA in the first term demonstrated a 12 percent higher retention rate compared to those who did not. Importantly, data suggests that meeting with an ASA reduces the retention equity gap for African American and Hispanic students. Additionally, students engaging with ASAs in their first term exhibited higher GPAs, with an average of 0.43 points higher than those who did not, a trend observed across all races and ethnicities. EAB Navigate360 software serves as the backbone, connecting various strategies through academic planning, appointment scheduling, communication, and data analysis. This platform aids in coordinating efforts to enhance student success by streamlining administrative processes and fostering a comprehensive approach to student support. The redesign, guided by a thorough examination of existing programs, processes, and institutional data, aligns with CLC's participation in Achieving the Dream, Illinois Equity in Attainment, and Partnership for College Completion initiatives.

The Just One More enrollment, retention, and success initiative utilized national scholarship on student enrollment trends and outcomes, in addition to **Elgin Community College (ECC)** data, to develop and implement a data-informed academic advising campaign to improve student outcomes by encouraging enrollment in additional credit/classes.

*Elgin Community College developed and implemented a data-informed academic advising campaign to improve student outcomes by encouraging enrollment in additional credit/classes.*

The initiative was formally launched for the Summer and Fall 2023 advising/enrollment period beginning March 6th, 2023, and continued through early Fall 2023. [National research](#) suggests college students enrolled in higher numbers of credits are more likely to be successful, in part due to the effects of more regular contact with faculty and on-campus engagement, increased speed in credit accumulation, and development of higher levels of confidence in academic abilities. This initiative is supported by ECC data, a review of which described that of the nearly 10,000 new students joining the College in a seven-year period, the chance of fall-to-fall retention increased by 12 percent for every additional credit a student enrolled in. This retention benefit was compounded for many students, as most classes are three credits (improving fall-to-fall retention likelihood by 36 percent for each additional three-credit class a student enrolled in). Disaggregation of data by race and age showed even stronger correlations in number of credits attempted and success rates: African American students who attempted seven credits or more were successful in their courses at a rate of 64 percent, compared to the 57 percent of successful completion of their counterparts who enrolled in six credits or fewer. Seventy-three percent of Hispanic students enrolled in seven or more credits were successful, compared to just

60 percent of their lower-enrolled peers. Even more compelling, African Americans aged 25 and older who attempted between seven and eleven credits in their first term were 47 percent more likely to be retained into the spring semester than their counterparts who enrolled in six or fewer credits. Equipped with this data, the academic advising department engaged in a deliberate campaign to encourage eligible students (based on data-informed criteria and parameters) to stretch beyond what may be their credit/class comfort zone and enroll in “Just One More” class. Of the 9,800 student visits to advising by 6,490 students during this campaign timeframe, some promising preliminary results were observed. Students who met with an advisor were, on average, enrolled in one more credit than students not seeking advising services. Compared to the same period in the prior year, more students enrolled full-time, an overall increase from 32 percent to 34 percent. Overall, ECC’s total credit hours enrolled was up 7.7 percent from Fall 2022. Based on the strength of the underlying data, the equity implications and opportunities, and the promising preliminary results, the “Just One More” advising initiative is continuing and being built upon at ECC.

**Prairie State College** has steadily improved its academic advising services. Recently, the College introduced assigned pathway advising which allows students to become more familiar with their advisor and have an advisor that has a stronger understanding of the program of study. This is a shift from walk-in advising where students could have a different advisor each visit. As a result of the Student Satisfaction Inventory, it has become clear that this is the preferred method of advising for the students. Pathway advising has expanded to provide students with a holistic approach to advising that mirrors their program of study as well as provides additional support based on demographic information, such as race/ethnicity, athletics, and international status. Students are assigned a specific advisor who provides coordinated outreach and helps to guide students through the process of course selection as well as has a familiarity with additional demographic needs, like managing the lived experiences as a student of color or navigating managing school course work and athletic schedules. The advising has expanded upon the existing model that was altered in 2020 to offer high-touch outreach on a schedule to ensure students are meeting certain milestones. In addition to reinforcing connections with faculty, conducting wellness checks, mid-term checks, and encouraging the use of resources like tutoring and the writing center, the advisor focuses on demographics and provides outreach and programming to meet the student support needs of these populations. Advisors use research-based information to guide students in course selection and provide guidance on other needs like use of the alternative financial aid or accessibility concerns.

### **Accessibility of Content**

The ADA Coordinators at each of the **Illinois Eastern Community Colleges** (IECC) conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis that identified the need to procure software that would enable students to convert learning materials into various formats and languages. The ALLY software was purchased with the Perkins grant in the fall of 2022, with initial rollout in the spring of 2023. The ALLY addition to Canvas LMS is a tool that helps students access course materials in different formats like audio or braille. It also checks for accessibility issues and helps instructors make their materials more accessible for all students, including those with disabilities. IECC uses ALLY to make sure its courses are accessible to

*Illinois Eastern Community Colleges purchased the ALLY software that helps students access course materials in different formats.*

everyone. Students can choose the format that works best for them and their personal learning style. ALLY checks the accessibility of course content and provides instructors with feedback on how to improve their accessibility score. The tool helps reduce the time and effort needed to make course content accessible and supports the college's commitment to providing an inclusive learning environment. The IECC Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) maintains ALLY and can monitor usage through the reports available in ALLY.

### Adult Education Initiatives

In the spring of 2023, **Carl Sandburg College** began offering an Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) program with its Certified Nurse Aid (CNA) class in partnership with the local Regional Office of Education (ROE #33). The aim of the ICAPS program is to provide an accelerated pathway to an industry-recognized credential through

*The aim of the ICAPS program is to provide an accelerated pathway to an industry-recognized credential through training partnerships to serve adult education students, including English language learners, while they are completing their State of Illinois High School Diploma and/or improving their English language.*

training partnerships to serve adult education students, including English language learners, while they are completing their State of Illinois High School Diploma and/or improving their English language. The administrators, team teachers, and career navigators involved in the ICAPS initiative play an essential role in student success. The courses are team taught and student success navigators are embedded into the course to support student learning and to promote transferable workplace skills, study skills, financial literacy skills, and more. These activities establish additional transition points into the program and will prepare students for pathway specific training into the workforce, through technologically advanced and industry aligned training. Innovation Bridge and Transition grant funding will also help support these initiatives by ensuring work-based learning labs are current and reflect industry standards. Also, the ICAPS program results in an enhanced student experience to support greater opportunities for educational attainment and employment. The program also adapts student pathways and provides additional transition points into Career and Technical Education (CTE). Participation numbers have started small with less than ten students participating in the first ICAPS CNA program offered last spring. However, efforts to expand the program continue. Sandburg recently submitted its automotive program for approval to start in fiscal year 2024 and has an ongoing goal of expanding ICAPS further, with at least one additional ICAPS program submitted for approval in fiscal year 2024. The Sandburg Director of Workforce Development and Community Education and the Dean of CTE, along with the Director of Adult Education for ROE #33, presented a breakout session at the Forum for Excellence. The presentation focused on collaboration and best practices to launch a successful ICAPS.

The goal of this strategy is to increase the post-testing rates of adult education students at **Harry S Truman College**. By doing so, the College hopes to increase the percentage and raw number of students who make their level gains and help more students see successful outcomes after their time in the adult education program. The adult education department started off the year with a general kick-off to let adult educators know the increased focus on post-testing rates and gain buy-in. Additionally, the department transitioned part-time testing specialists to full-time employees, which allowed testing specialists to walk students from their classrooms to take their tests when



needed. The increased work hours and intentional engagement with students about post-testing were a significant part of the success of this strategy. The department also started to track and monitor this process more deliberately. Alongside the testing specialists, the department had a testing coordinator who sent out reports to adult educators at the start of each session about which students needed to test. The added visibility and communication with adult educators allowed the post-testing process to run smoothly. Additionally, because the department offered more courses in-person last academic year, it made it easier to ensure that students took their post-tests. The academic year 2022-2023 had the highest post-test rate (72 percent) Truman has seen since the academic year 2010-2011, and it was four percent higher than the post-testing rate in the academic year 2021-2022 (68 percent). Additionally, this increase in Truman's post-testing rate coincided with an increase in the level gains rate, as the college saw its second highest rate of students making their level gains since the academic year 2010-2011.

The purpose of the Adult Education and Literacy Program at **Danville Area Community College** is to provide students with a variety of educational opportunities by helping students improve reading, writing, and math skills; prepare to earn a State of Illinois High School Diploma; transition into a career or postsecondary pathway; offer Integrated Career and Academic Preparation Systems (ICAPS) affording students to obtain an Illinois high school diploma while simultaneously enrolling in college-level vocational programs in a high demand career field; improve speaking, writing, and/or other basic skills for non-native English speakers through its English as a Second Language classes; and improve job readiness and professional development skills needed in today's workforce.

**Harper College** has several initiatives to transition adult education students to college and career. New adult education students are asked about their areas of interest. Throughout the semester, resources and presentations are made to students about these opportunities. In the spring Harper offers two "College Experience Days" which allow transitioning adult education students to interact with the facility spaces and staff within different career departments at Harper College. A specialized adult education advisor builds relationships throughout the academic year with students at the highest levels, providing students information about potential college and career programming. Tours and the college experience events are arranged throughout the year to allow the adult education students to feel comfortable, motivated, and part of the Harper College community. Harper provides an adult education "completion" scholarship which pays the tuition and fees for a completing adult education student's first credit class. Bridge courses and Integrated Education and Career Programs (ICAPS in Illinois) are offered in the high-employability fields including careers in health, office administration, and logistics. Adult education students are considered eligible for all services at Harper. During fiscal year 2023 there were 34 State of Illinois High School Diploma completers and 120 ESL completers. Of these 154 completers, 48 transitioned to postsecondary credit or academic ESL during the following semester (Fall 2023). In Fall 2023, 17 of 29, or 59 percent, of students receiving institutional grants enrolled in a course in the ESL/LNG Department. They passed at a rate of 95 percent. As of December 19, 2023, 71 percent of these students persisted to the spring semester. Two students enrolled in non-ESL courses, and two are co-enrolled with ESL courses this spring. Ten students are enrolled exclusively in academic ESL courses for Spring 2024. One student successfully completed ESL in Fall 2023.

**South Suburban College (SSC)** is committed to providing adult education services to all populations. SSC is currently a Predominantly Black Institution (PBI) and is designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). In fiscal year 2023, Midlothian Library, one of SSC Association of Private Colleges (APC) partners, requested more classes at the facility. This APC member has dedicated space for English as a Second Language (ESL) classes twice a week and once on Saturdays. This is the first time the program has run on the weekend to provide additional avenues and opportunities for students to attend class. In fiscal year 2024, the College anticipates running classes out of a new workplace site and starting GED® classes at the Riverdale and Midlothian Library. SSC started a community outreach campaign to add more APC partners and evaluate if they need adult education classes at their sites. This year, 38 students were served at Midlothian Library, and the average score increase was 4.2 (this translates to two grade levels of attainment). In the spring of 2023, SSC piloted an online synchronous High School Equivalency (HSE) for ESL course to offer the same in-person strategies at a distance. Due to increased demand, an evening HSE for ESL class was added for the first time. This class assists students who have advanced out of ESL but still need some English language acquisition skills to be successful in their preferred college or career pathway. In fiscal year 2023, SSC hired a daytime bilingual (Spanish speaking) student support specialist available throughout all class and office times. This is a great asset to the program as Spanish language speakers are the largest population of ESL the College serves. This increase in bilingual staff has made registration, enrollment, and recruitment much easier.

*Adult Basic Education (ABE) Classes target students whose educational functioning level is below a ninth-grade level to provide instruction in language arts, math, science, and social studies. Each section has workplace skills, job readiness, critical thinking, and career exploration built into the curriculum. The goal is to help students pass high school equivalency leading to college and career.*

### **Assessment of Student Learning**

In 2020, **Elgin Community College (ECC)** launched Advancing Equity through the Assessment of Student Learning, a Quality Improvement Project (QIP) with the Higher Learning Commission. Its purpose is to make equity a lens through which the College approaches learning outcomes assessment and define systemic opportunities to improve teaching and learning to foster student completion. At the heart of the QIP is the creation of faculty cohorts and equity-focused frameworks designed to provide the time and space to exchange ideas, share successes, and resolve challenges. A new faculty cohort begins every semester and works together for a period of four semesters. They are supported by professional development workshops designed especially for the QIP. To date, seven workshops on equity-focused assessment have been created with a focus on asset thinking, interpreting data, and identifying interventions. The QIP targets gateway courses with high enrollment and low success. The faculty examine learning gaps among different student groups, which are defined by demographics of interest: race/ethnicity, Pell status, gender, and age. Faculty commit to examining data over a four-semester period with a goal of reducing gaps. Between Fall 2021 and Spring 2023, 261 course sections, representing every academic division, have engaged in assessment through this new process. During this time frame, 20,551 unique assessments of student learning were collected that aligned with the general education student learning outcomes. Academic departments review and discuss assessment results to inform changes to instruction and curriculum to improve student learning. For example, in Economics,

faculty created vocabulary guides to correct misconceptions at the start of units and instituted policies to meet one-on-one with students once their grades dipped below a certain level. These interventions directly resulted from faculty studying their outcomes assessment data with colleagues and committing to minor and major changes to improve learning.

### **Bridge Initiatives**

The Heartland Academy for Learning Opportunities (HALO) provides a higher education experience for students ages 18 to 28 with intellectual and/or developmental disability or other learning challenges and connects them with additional campus resources. In fiscal year 2023, **Heartland Community College (HCC)** added an Expansion/Transition Year program to its HALO initiative. The HALO Expansion/Transition Year was designed to assist students transitioning out of the HALO program or students who are interested in college but may not be college ready following high school to answer the question “What Next?” in their life. Students who completed the HCC two-year HALO Program showed growth in social skills and life skills but often did not have a definitive plan for the future. In addition, some others were graduating high school and disclosing that they did not feel fully ready or supported to attend college. With an awareness of a gap that was present to HCC’s young population with disabilities, a four-course, year-long program was created to assist students in identifying a plan for their future through preparing them for college courses or supporting them through the process of being more gainfully employed. Through the ICCB Innovative Bridge and Transition Grant, courses such as Social-Emotional Development and Transition to College or Workforce were developed to begin the planning process and understand who they are and what they are interested in. A three-credit Life Success course is about the pace of a college course and the important content it provides, and a Professionalism course demonstrates how professionalism can span across all areas of life. In Fall 2023 the HALO Expansion/Transition Year enrolled 11 students, which increased the overall HALO numbers from 24 to 35 students. Nine of the students were HALO graduates and two of the students had never taken HCC Courses or HALO courses. All the students enrolled in the Fall 2023 semester also re-enrolled in the Spring 2024 semester.

Get Set is a five-day summer bridge program at **Illinois Valley Community College** designed to help at-risk students proactively prepare to start college or re-start a semester feeling more prepared. Class sessions include college knowledge (login/technology support, connection to academic support providers, information about college start up policies and procedures), basic academic strategies for textbook reading, note-taking, and test preparation, time management skill-building, goal setting and career exploration, and self-regulation and coping strategies. Students are paired with staff or student mentors for the semester following their Get Set classes. Students are to meet with mentors at least five times throughout the semester to review progress, refresh course skills/strategies, and ask questions. A stipend of up to \$300 is offered based on attendance in class and mentor sessions. Fall 2023 marks the third session of Get Set. A total of 50 students have participated in the program to date. Their average GPA is 2.64. The retention rate to Spring 2023 was 96 percent. Students feel more prepared to start the semester. Ninety-five percent of survey respondents say their college knowledge increased very much.

**John A. Logan College (JALC)** implemented the Readiness Bridge program from July 1st, 2022, to June 30, 2023. The objective of the program was to establish a year-long recruitment program that would identify 50 district high school seniors from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds and provide them with additional support for acquiring the skills, resources, experience, and confidence necessary to overcome barriers to their successful transition to JALC. The Readiness

*The Readiness Bridge is a year-long recruitment program with the objective to identify 50 district high school seniors from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds and provide them with additional support for acquiring the skills, resources, experience, and confidence necessary to overcome barriers to their successful transition to **John A. Logan College**.*

Bridge program comprised a comprehensive, hands-on college preparedness curriculum modeled on JALC's mandatory first-year seminar and a two-week, for credit summer bridge program. To get the program running took good coordination and various collaborations, internally and externally. It integrated academic affairs/math and English faculty and other student affairs and campus support services, Institutional Research and Effectiveness Office, and Human Resources in recruitment of students and staff and in day-to-day management and implementation. The program also partnered with district high schools, alternate high schools, SIU-Carbondale, and other external institutions, community groups/organizations, and non-profits to better understand local needs and provide targeted students with further social and economic support to assist their transition and success at JALC. Distributing a "College Bridge Fact Sheet," combining advisement and counseling, and collaborating with participants and their parents, high school counselors and principals was a great communication plan. Taking measures to cultivate self-awareness and confidence is essential to overcoming imposter syndrome among underrepresented students, and providing them with learning tools, financial support, and technology resources reduced economic anxiety and increased their ability to begin to see themselves as "college material" and set appropriate success goals. Data collected was shared with stakeholders and is expected to be utilized in the implementation of the college-wide enrollment and retention plan and JALC's equity plan. The initial goal of the grant was to enroll 30 students into the summer bridge program. However, the matriculation and retention/completion rates exceeded expectation by enrolling 113 students into the program. The data indicates the program enrolled 26 percent of the entire fall cohort, 431 students (averaged over five years) compared to 32 percent of the entire Fall 2017 cohort, 357 students. Ninety-one percent of the students passed the summer bridge course (103 students). Of the 113 originally enrolled in the summer bridge, 101 (89 percent) were enrolled on the 10th day of the semester. Of the 103 students who successfully completed the summer bridge course, 97 (94 percent) were enrolled on the 10th day of the fall semester.

**John Wood Community College (JWCC)** implemented a college bridge grant/scholarship program in 2022. The program is designed to provide access for adults and high school concurrent enrollment students that are first-generation, low-income, or underrepresented. It assists in removing barriers that would normally keep students from starting their educational journey. The last dollar tuition assistance (after financial aid and other outside scholarships were applied), transportation reimbursement, and more opportunities for tutoring and free childcare during the College's Student Success Nights were available for the Fall 2022 semester, and the scholarship assisted ten adult students with tuition assistance (\$20,500). For the Spring 2023 semester, nine adult students received tuition assistance (\$21,338). Nine of the ten Fall 2022 students that

Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

received the scholarship returned for the spring semester (those nine students earned an average 3.28 GPA for the Fall 2022 semester). An academic advisor checked in regularly with the students throughout the semester to improve assistance and retention. An admissions advisor assisted new adult students through the admissions process and connected them with the scholarship opportunity. Two JWCC students were hired to provide childcare during Student Success Nights. The scholarship provided access to college courses that most high school students in JWCC district area do not normally have, due to factors such as funds to pay for college courses (concurrent enrollment students cannot receive financial aid). In Fall 2022, JWCC assisted 40 high school concurrent enrollment students with bridge scholarships and spent \$21,117.50. Around 12 percent of the total high school population for Fall 2022 met need-based requirements with around 62 percent falling in the category of first generation and free/reduced lunch. In Spring 2023, JWCC assisted 72 high school students and spent \$38,440.00. Around 16 percent of the total high school population for Spring 2023 met need-based requirements with around 72 percent falling in the category of first generation and free/reduced lunch. In Summer 2023, JWCC assisted 34 high school students and spent \$13,365.50. Around 44 percent of the total high school population for Summer 2023 met need-based requirements with around 74 percent falling in the category of first generation and free/reduced lunch.

Due to intentional work over the last two years, **Kankakee Community College (KCC)** has seen a 40 percent increase in the Hispanic student population. In response to the increase, it was necessary to reassess the services and resources offered to this population and determine if there were any gaps. Through insights from KCC internal team and conversations with local educational partners, it was noted that there is a gap in supports for college-ready students who desire to pursue a degree or certificate from KCC but lack the English proficiency to be successful without language support. It is essential to distinguish between this program and the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) funded grants that fund ESL programming. AEL ESL prepares students for college and career readiness, whereas intensive English language learning supports students who are otherwise college and career ready. KCC implemented an Intensive English Language Learning (IELL) course in January 2023. The Hispanic engagement coordinator and faculty from the English department created this new transfer-level English course, designed to be taken as a co-requisite to any other transfer-level course. It provides students the chance to have additional language support as they work toward the communication skills necessary for professional and academic achievement. Students receive instruction and practice in professional and academic communication, both verbal and written, with a focus on situational and interpersonal communication. Students may repeat the course up to three times if necessary. In the first cohort to complete the IELL co-requisite course, 19 students were enrolled. All these students were retained until the end of the course, and 90 percent successfully completed the course. The average grade for the cohort was 3.0 out of 4.0. The college also retained 74 percent of the students for the next term. The college will continue to track the success and retention of these students into further semesters.

As part of the **Kishwaukee College's** work on bridge programs, the goal of this initiative was to provide a seamless bridge from the adult education/ESL classrooms to information technology programs at the College and ultimately to a completed degree or certificate and improved workforce opportunities. Through the work of adult education/ESL trainers, faculty, and a dedicated advisor, students are mentored and provided support services, which include personal

Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

advising and coaching, college readiness support both before and during coursework, transportation support, and financial assistance. In its inaugural semester (September 2023), eleven students enrolled in the program. Five of the students transitioned out of the program, five of the students continued in ESL programming with the expectation of a transition in fiscal year 2024, and one student did not continue in the program. Out of the five students that transitioned out of the program, two students were promoted at their current workplace, one student completed the Google IT Specialist certificate and walked at the December 2023 commencement, one student entered the paraprofessional program, and one student completed his GED® and entered the Criminal Justice program.

The goal of the 3-for-FREE initiative implemented in June 2023 at **Lincoln Land Community College** was to give potential adult students, students that have no college experience, and students who have stopped out of college the opportunity to try college without financial risk and encourage them to enroll in the next term. The initiative offered enrollment in three free credit hours (no tuition, fees, or book costs) to students who were either adult learners or first-time college students or stop-out students (had not attended college since the pandemic). Funding for the initiative came from the ICCB Bridge Grant. Priority for enrollment of students meeting the criteria was given to students who additionally were in a minoritized population or had a low socio-economic status. Students were required to seek a degree or certificate. In addition to free tuition/fees and books, students who made a request received transportation assistance and laptop/hotspot loans. A total of 112 students enrolled in the 3-for-FREE program for summer 2023. Sixty-six percent of the students returned for Fall 2023, with a little more than 50 percent of those enrolling as full-time students in the fall.

To support first year marginalized students (including students of color, students from the LGBTQ community, students with disabilities, and students 25+ and/or experiencing financial hardship), **McHenry County College** (MCC) created a bridge program in August 2022 and titled it “MCC and Me College

*MCC and Me College Transition Program is a new bridge program that supports marginalized students at McHenry County College.*

Transition Program,” so students would easily find a connection with it. The program was created on three foundational pillars driving the goals of the program: academic (gaining skills to navigate the educational/academic system by hearing from and working with advisors, tutors, and faculty), social (expanding social networks through thoughtful social engagements with participants and current MCC students), and cultural (understanding identities to better advocate for themselves and each other). The first semester is the most critical as many students are learning how to be college students. To keep students engaged, they were asked to commit to attending weekly meetings with an assigned employee, attend two workshops or events per semester, and meet bi-weekly with their student mentor. Incentives were awarded to participants for fulfilling all commitments. Institutional Research pulled data on cumulative GPA, persistence rates, and course outcomes data for the Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 participants (including student leaders). In Fall 2022, there were 92 students served by the program with 83.7 percent of students having a GPA of 2.0 or higher. In Spring 2023, there were 93 students with 82.8 percent of students having a GPA of 2.0 or higher. Students who started in the fall continued into the spring. For the Fall 2022 group, 80/92 persisted from Fall 2022 to Spring 2023 (87 percent) and 60/92 (65 percent) persisted to Fall 2023. For the Spring 2023 group, 65/93 (70 percent) persisted from Spring 2023 to Fall

Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

2023. The overall college persistence rate for Fall 2022 to Fall 2023 was 47 percent, and the overall persistence rate for Fall 2022 to Spring 2023 was 73 percent. Based on the comparison, MCC and Me participants from the Fall 2022 group persisted at substantially higher rates than the general credit student population. In terms of Fall 2023 course outcomes for the MCC and Me participants, the group had a collective success rate of 70.7 percent and a retention rate of 85.1 percent. Comparatively, the overall success rate for Fall 2023 was 72 percent, and the retention rate was 89 percent (excluding dual credit).

The goal for the Bridge to Education through a Summer Transition (BEST) and Summer Start, two college success programs, was to provide high school students with exposure to career and transfer programs available at **Parkland College**. BEST ran from June 5 to June 29, 2023, and admitted 25 students who had graduated high school in 2023. Summer Start ran from June 5 to July 13, 2023, and admitted 25 rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors, adult education, and GED® students. The programs were supported by administrators specializing in the areas of budget and overall grant management, career exploration modules, dual credit, assessment, placement scores, digital literacy, and curriculum design. Four faculty were responsible for delivering classroom content for FYE 101 (Parkland's First Year Experience) and developing mentoring relationships with students, while nine program ambassadors assisted with daily coordination of activities. Additional faculty were allocated to the career exploration modules, connecting more than twenty experienced faculty to students in discipline-specific, hands-on presentations or workshops. One hundred twenty-nine total students applied for both programs, with over 72 percent students of color. A total of 50 students, 25 in each program, were enrolled with nearly 90 percent students of color. Forty-seven students completed the programs, again nearly 90 percent of students of color. Of the 47 students completing the programs, fifteen enrolled in the fall, either as degree-seeking students at Parkland or as dual credit students in their high school. The first year of the program was highly successful in engaging with the targeted population and increasing the number of underrepresented students completing the FYE 101 course and choosing to continue in college-level courses. The final day of each program offered the most immediate and telling feedback as students and their families celebrated the completion of BEST and Summer Start. In addition to giving their final FYE 101 presentations in the presence of friends and family, students participated in a completion ceremony, walking across the stage, and receiving their certificates. Parents, guardians, siblings, and friends cheered as each name was read, recognizing the accomplishments, talents, determination, and potential in each student. The Summer Start program will remain focused on engaging with underserved students while still in high school and will be repeated in Summer 2024 with plans underway to sustain the program going forward. Parkland's BEST program will act as a starting point for a more extensive program to support African American students as they transition to and complete their college work.

In Fall 2022, **Richland Community College** identified a significant area of concern in the retention of adult learners caused by barriers such as lack of family engagement, prior financial holds, insufficient digital literacy, little or no access to remote learning opportunities, and inability to navigate student aid options. Most of the adult learners affected by these factors are minority, first-generation, and low-income adults with families. Several campus stakeholders discussed the use of an existing first-year experience framework that would connect and expand available resources to provide a targeted program to re-engage adult learners and ensure a greater percentage of success in this demographic. Richland stakeholders began to identify students and build the

STDEV 100 (Introduction to College Success) course during the Spring 2023 semester. The College targeted an adult learner population of students who had stopped out during or before the COVID-19 pandemic and who have made progress toward program completion. Four sections of the STDEV 100 course were offered during the Summer 2023 semester (an eight-week online course). The adult learners were enrolled in the STDEV 100 course as a no-cost option to return to college. The objectives of the STDEV 100 course were to identify strategies to develop and enhance learning skills, identify multiple academic success strategies, and to understand how to navigate higher education and Richland/community resources. During the STDEV 100 course, students focused on topics that included transitioning to college, time management, reading and note-taking, study habits, mental health, and financial literacy. Additionally, the adult learners were simultaneously enrolled in PASS 200, Richland's New Student Orientation course. During the PASS 200 course, students learned about topics that included Richland support services and resources, Richland Foundation scholarships, and campus life at Richland. The College offered several incentives for the returning adult learners as additional support for the transition. The adult learners received a laptop to use during the Summer 2023 semester, and more incentives were made available to the adult learners upon successful completion of the STDEV 100 course. These incentives included the ability to keep the laptop for use during future semesters, coverage of prior financial balances up to \$600, a tuition waiver for a future three-credit course, a gift card to the campus bookstore, a gas card, and the coverage of internet expenses. The bridge program attracted fifty adult learners to Richland to enroll in the STDEV 100 course during the Summer 2023 semester. Thirty-seven adult learners successfully completed the STDEV 100 course, which is a 74 percent course success rate.

*Richland Community College created the Introduction to College Success course to target an adult learner population of students who had stopped out during or before the COVID-19 pandemic and who have made progress toward program completion.*

The purpose of the Summer Refresh program at **Triton College** is to provide minority, first generation, and low-income students including adults beginning or returning to college with the skills and resources to succeed as they transition into the community college. The Summer Refresh program was funded by the College Bridge Grant from ICCB and ran from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023. In this program students were assisted in their academic endeavors by reducing or even eliminating costs associated with summer courses. Adult students were allowed to retake a course they had previously unsuccessfully attempted. Overall, 225 students were served by the Summer Refresh program, and 42 percent of them registered for courses in the next fall semester.

### **Come Back Scholarship**

Starting in 2022, **John Wood Community College** (JWCC) has offered the Comeback Scholarship, a last dollar scholarship after financial aid, for stop-out students. They are students who dropped out of college during the COVID-19 timeframe (Fall 2019 to Spring 2022). The Comeback Scholarship provides them with

*John Wood Community College offers the Comeback Scholarship for students who dropped out of college during the COVID-19 timeframe.*

a funding avenue to specifically limit the cost of attending college barrier and assists them with finishing their degrees and certificates. The scholarship was funded with HEERF funds (Covid relief funds). The scholarship has continued with college funds, due to great success. In the Fall



2022/Spring 2023 academic year, the scholarship helped provide access for 74 stop-out students. Eighteen out of 74 students earned their degrees or certificates. Due to the success, the college funded the continuation of the Comeback Scholarship. So far for the academic year 2023-2024, JWCC has been able to assist 32 stop-out students' comeback and pursue their educational goals.

### **Developmental Education and Placement Initiatives**

**Black Hawk College** started to pilot co-requisite courses in the academic year 2020-2021 with implementing English co-requisites in the academic year 2022-2023. The College partnered with [Aspire](#) to participate in facilitated workshops. These workshops helped faculty to ask critical questions about their course curriculum and instructional design and its effect on student course success. The interdisciplinary work with math and English faculty assisting each other created a rich and meaningful environment for these difficult discussions. While the collaboration did not result in unanimous agreements among the faculty, consensus was built, and co-requisite math and English courses were delivered at scale in Fall 2023. English has decreased their developmental sequence to the co-requisite course only. Math has various co-requisite courses aligned with statistics, general math, and algebra, taught as a facilitated emporium style math course and intermediate algebra. Therefore, the sequence has been decreased to either one course or the co-requisite for all math pathways. The end of semester faculty debriefs have helped with the ongoing improvement of the courses. Overall success in developmental English increased from 61 percent (single course) in the academic year 2021-2022 to 77 percent in the academic year 2022-2023. The co-requisite course success was 80 percent as compared with the prior single course of 66 percent. When the data was disaggregated by demographics, minority student success in the co-requisite English class was 82 percent, White student success was 81 percent and unknown 56 percent. The single course is under review for withdrawal. Currently the data for Fall 2023 is not complete, although preliminary review looks promising. Overall success in developmental math increased from 54 percent in the academic year 2021-2022 (with nine different development math courses being offered that academic year) to 58 percent in the academic year 2022-2023 with five different developmental math courses being offered. When the data was disaggregated by demographics, minority students had greater success in the co-requisite courses in statistics and general math five percent and ten percent respectively. In the co-requisite for algebra minority students course success rate was three percent lower. The individual co-requisite math courses demonstrated improved success each academic year with the academic year 2022-2023.

For the academic year 2022-2023, a cumulative high school GPA of 2.7 or higher became the preferred placement metric at **Illinois Central College (ICC)**. [National research](#) shows that traditional placement testing “under-places” students, categorizing them at the developmental level when many would have demonstrated college readiness through other placement methods and would have completed college-level math with an A, B, or C. At ICC, African American students had been historically over-represented in developmental education courses. Before instituting this new standard, a Strategic Planning Team conducted research on the most appropriate cut score and GPA for college readiness by researching the correlation between high school GPA, placement test scores, and 100-level course success rates

*GPA proved to be the best indicator of college readiness and predictor of success in 100-level coursework. As a result, a cumulative high school GPA of 2.7 or higher became the preferred placement metric at **Illinois Central College** for the academic year 2022-2023.*

among approximately 1100 ICC students from recent academic years. As predicted, GPA proved to be the best indicator of college readiness and predictor of success in 100-level coursework. The multiple measures assessment decreased the need for prerequisites and time to completion, and students used less financial aid on non-credit bearing coursework. The Strategic Planning Team collaborated with the ICC's Academic Standards Committee to vet this data and design measures to monitor the effectiveness of these measures annually. Processes were adopted to monitor course success rates and adjust the GPA cutoff if necessary. The College's website and updated Testing Center processes reinforce the benefits of submitting high school GPA for placement. Advising staff received training on how to effectively review high school transcripts and apply multiple measures guidelines in student advisement. Next steps include MOUs with District 514 high schools to allow for the automation of transcript import to ICC systems to further aid in the ease of transcript review and GPA placement. There has been a 60 + percent sustained reduction in developmental placements in math and English since the multiple measures assessment initiative pilot. These reductions were realized among African American, Hispanic, and Pell eligible student populations. Further, there have been improved African American student success in gateway math from 64 percent to 85 percent in the last five years due to multiple measures initiatives.

**John A. Logan College (JALC)** provides supplemental instruction, such as coaching and tutoring, with special focus on racial minorities and working adult learners, to increase learners' course completion and success in co-requisite math and English courses, so more students are enabled to directly transition into college-level math and English credit-bearing courses. JALC sought a partnership with neighboring Southern Illinois University to hire graduate assistants to serve as peer tutors for the specific co-requisite courses. JALC student workers were also utilized to provide academic support. Math and English course data and enrollment were examined through an equity lens to determine obstacles experienced by students as well as tactics that proved successful in overcoming barriers. The disaggregated data included race, gender, age, and Pell/non-Pell status. Program implementation combined coordination and management by grant staff with collaboration from other JALC departments including diagnostic placement testing, tutoring, and coaching on learning styles; academic counseling; assessment and study strategies provided by the Student Success Center; and math and English faculty who provided individualized learning environments. The data collected confirmed what research indicates and aligned with JALC areas of concern for equity—that there are equity disparities in underrepresented students' course enrollment, retention, and pass/completion rates. As demonstrated by the grant report data, there was significant improvement (increased pass rate and retention) among minority participants (African American, Hispanic, working adults, and Pell recipients). The success can be directly attributed to the emphasis on wrap-around services provided to participants. The financial assistance provided for meals and other basic needs allowed students to come to campus more often for tutoring, mentoring, and coaching. Both the co-requisite and traditional developmental tracks had improved academic success rates from Fall 2022 to Spring 2023. The co-requisite math performance increased from 48 percent (Fall 2022) to 64 percent (Spring 2023) and English from 62 percent (Fall 2022) to 82 percent (Spring 2023). For the traditional developmental courses, the math success rate went from 62 percent (Fall 2022) to 84 percent (Spring 2023). It is important to note that the co-requisite model cohort had a higher pass rate in the college-level credit bearing courses (11 percent higher for math and one percent higher for English) in the first semester following the Fall 2023 developmental education grant period. Implications of these outcomes for the developmental education reform mandate are being examined. A closer look at drop-out rates

and a reassessment of math placement methods and scores will be helpful as JALC develops a continuity plan for its developmental education.

In Fall 2022, **Kishwaukee College** began the development of a co-requisite model for math courses including MAT 041 (Topics in Mathematics Support) and MAT 045 (College Algebra Support) with the goal of decreasing the number of African American students taking traditional, stand-alone developmental education courses. In Spring 2023, the College implemented pilot sections of MAT 041 and MAT 045, and began development of a co-requisite model for English Composition, ENG 093 (Composition I Support). In Fall 2023, this pilot was scaled to include additional co-requisite sections of MAT 041 and MAT 045 and new sections of ENG 093. As of Spring 2024, only three sections of developmental math remain and all students who would have previously placed into developmental reading and writing are now able to take English Composition I with the co-requisite support course. In fiscal year 2023, there were 56 African American students of 179 total students enrolled in stand-alone developmental education courses (31 percent). In fiscal year 2024, there were only 11 African American students of 46 total students in stand-alone developmental education courses (23.9 percent). The pilot and scale-up data reflect the fact that African American students are enrolling in stand-alone developmental education courses at a decreasing rate as they are able to enroll in the co-requisite courses. This means through additional support; students can earn college credit where previously they would have been in non-credit earning developmental education courses.

Co-requisite mathematics courses allow students to enroll in college-level mathematics courses with support and reduce the amount of time spent in developmental education courses. The goal of co-requisite sections is to reach the same degree of college-level success as non-co-requisite sections. The mathematics co-requisite program was implemented in 2019 at **Morton College**. The co-requisite program is a course design in which students who are assessed below college ready in math are enrolled in a first-year college credit bearing course and receive additional academic support or otherwise are instructed in college-level content and receive additional academic support concurrently with college-level material. Students are placed into developmental, or college-level math courses based on a multiple-measure assessment of their math ability. The co-requisite model involves students taking a developmental math course at the same time as a college-level math course. The pairs of courses are: 097 with 105 (College Algebra), and 096 with 102 (General Education Mathematics). During the academic year 2022-23, the success rate of the MAT 102 non-co-requisite sections was 66.7 percent while the MAT 096/102 co-requisite success rate was 65.4 percent. Since the implementation of the program in 2019, the average success rates for non-co-requisite and the co-requisite sections have been both 70 percent. This parity in success rates is an achievement since the co-requisite students were assessed to have lower initial math ability.

One of the goals in **Shawnee Community College's** College Readiness efforts was to fully develop and implement English and math co-requisite courses to decrease time to degree completion for students needing remediation. A second College Readiness goal was to be able to track student success by placement measure on the College's multiple measures placement chart. In Fall

*Co-requisite math and English courses, along with multiple measures placement, allow students to enroll in transfer-level math and English courses by the end of their first year in college.*

2022, math and English faculty, along with the Dean of Transfer and Adult Education Programs, developed and implemented three math and one English co-requisite courses which is what was reported in last year's Underrepresented Groups Report. Beginning in the Fall 2023 semester, a new design was implemented. Students who met one of the multiple measures placement criteria were able to enroll directly into the college-level English Composition I co-requisite, and/or one of the three select math co-requisites that provide remediation in the form of a lab while being enrolled in the college-level course. To track the success of the new design and the effectiveness of the measures, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness formed a cross-disciplinary team of key personnel from student affairs, academic affairs, and IT for participation in a multiple measures coding project in the College's ERP system (Colleague). The team worked collaboratively with a professional consultant from Colleague, and as of Fall 2023, Shawnee is now able to track student success by the exact placement measure from the multiple measures placement chart. In addition, new reports were created and placed on the internal dashboard so faculty can track the success rates of students placed into co-requisite courses. Multiple measures reports allow the College to track which measures are most used to qualify students for college level and student success by qualifying measure. Eventually, the goal is to determine which measures are the best predictors of success in college-level courses. Successful completion of co-requisites within the first year significantly increases fall-to-spring persistence. Additionally, placement into the English Composition I co-requisite in the first-year fall semester allows for placement into select general education courses with an English Composition I prerequisite. As a result, these two strategies significantly increase fall-to-spring, as well as fall-to-fall student persistence, leading to a higher percentage of degree completion. The use and tracking of multiple measures should reduce the reliance on standardized assessments as the sole determinant of college readiness.

### **Enhance DEI Knowledge for Faculty and Staff**

**Lewis and Clark Community College (L&C)** is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and has a responsibility to prepare all its team members for success in an increasingly diverse nation and globalized economy. To reflect these strategic planning goals, L&C has emphasized improving the college culture for diversity. Consequently, the College developed a DEI Blueprint and administered campus culture surveys that are linked to this Blueprint. The objectives of these efforts include increasing DEI-related communication and professional development and building capacity to prioritize DEI work. The culture survey and DEI Blueprint were integrated into L&C's strategic plan goals in Spring 2023 and the DEI Blueprint was approved by the Board in June 2023. As part of an ongoing action, the L&C's director of DEI has worked with team members to execute diversity training and draft policies related to DEI. The College has established DEI-focused teams, including the L&C Diversity Council. L&C now offers an annual ReConnect Summit for all team members and students and the Fall Multicultural Student Kickoff. Furthermore, the College is working to develop a DEI Collective team to actualize the DEI Blueprint and adding the Diversity, Equity, Inclusive Excellence and Anti-Racism policy into the staff manual and are working with faculty to add DEI objectives into the curriculum. As a result, campus involvement in DEI activities has increased substantially. The Diversity Council; the DEI Collective Team; and the Multicultural Recruitment, Engagement, and Retention Team are three new groups to support DEI objectives. Enrollment in the ReConnect Summits averaged 30 team members per session over eight meetings in 2023 and 2024, and four teams (student services, Dental Assisting and Dental Hygiene, Student Affairs, and the women's basketball team) participated in small group trainings. L&C Fall Multicultural Student Kickoff events have attracted a total of over 100

students. Furthermore, the efforts at improving the culture for diversity resulted in improved culture survey outcomes for 30 of 33 items within the diversity and inclusion dimension. The responses suggest that diversity is becoming more important to L&C team members; that L&C is becoming more inclusive and more committed to enhancing the diversity of faculty, staff, and students; and that team members feel more comfortable discussing DEI issues.

The purpose of the Safe Zone Ally Project is to make **Joliet Junior College (JJC)** a safer environment for all members of the campus community, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, through training allies. An ally is someone who works to end oppression through support and advocacy for an oppressed population. Since 2009, the Office of Student Activities has trained over 300 Safe Zone Allies. The three-hour training includes sessions such as Step up to Safe Zone, Safe Zone 101: Acting in Allyship, Safe Zone 102: Sexual Orientation, Safe Zone 103: Gender Identity, Safe Zone Front-line Staff Training, and Supporting Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students. Those who complete all the training sessions receive a Safe Zone Ally logo for their office, a Safe Zone Ally pin, and documentation for employee records. These individuals understand some of the issues facing people who are LGBTQ and are aware of LGBTQ resources.

*The Ally Training Program is a campus-wide program at **Joliet Junior College** that is designed to foster a more welcoming and affirming environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) students by creating a visible network of allies.*

**Waubonsee Community College** aims to improve student success and retention by training faculty and staff in diversity, equity, and inclusion with a focus on creating an inclusive environment, recognizing, and celebrating diversity, and fostering a sense of belonging among students, faculty, staff and community members. Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are a resounding success and a key part of Waubonsee's organizational culture. They greatly enhance a sense of community and belonging among the College employees. The ERGs, which have been created for these faculty and staff group are Asian American and Pacific Islander, African American, Hispanic, LGBTQ, and Women in Higher Education. Furthermore, implementing professional development opportunities for Waubonsee faculty and staff to better support underrepresented and marginalized students is vital. These trainings help equip faculty and staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment on campus. They include Safe Zone Training, a training opportunity to learn about LGBTQ identities, gender, and sexuality, and examine prejudice, assumptions, and privilege; Pronouns Workshop, an interactive workshop to learn easy ways to make one's everyday language more inclusive and welcoming for all; and Green Zone Training, a training that teaches about the experiences and challenges of military service members and veterans. This training aims to create a supportive environment for these students. To demonstrate Waubonsee's continued commitment to provide faculty with meaningful professional development to advance high-quality, effective teaching practices, the College has partnered with the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) to offer faculty the option to participate in the Fostering a Culture of Belonging course and the Certificate in Effective College Instruction. As of this fall, 28 faculty and staff members have completed the course in Fostering a Culture of Belonging, and 73 full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and staff have completed the certificate. Waubonsee worked with ACUE to complete a research project to assess the impact of the ACUE course in Effective Teaching Practices on

faculty and students. The impact that ACUE-certified faculty had on student outcomes during the ACUE course and one year after completing the course was analyzed, in comparison to non-certified faculty. The analyses found that there was a significant effect of the ACUE course on students' course completion rates. The predicted probability of course completion for students of Waubensee ACUE-certified faculty was 1.5 percentage points higher in the post period than otherwise expected had faculty not earned the ACUE certificate. The college intends to keep tracking the new cohorts to see if this increase grows as more faculty receive the credential.

### First Year Experience

The purpose of the Office of First-Year Experience (FYE) mentorship program is to provide support to Tier 1 and Tier 2 students. Students participating in the program receive guidance in academic, career, and personal development from **Kennedy-King College (KKC)** faculty/staff members who serve as mentors. Four staff members participated in the pilot

*The First Year Experience program (FYE) is designed to provide support in academic, career, and personal development to students in their transition from high school to college.*

to mentor two to three students each. This program was implemented in the Fall 2022 and continued in Spring 2023. A new cohort began in Fall 2023, and both cohorts can attend events together and engage with each other. Students received one-on-one attention from a mentor who provided guidance and support throughout the term. The mentors were accessible to students for help with college specific activities, requirements, advice, etc. through continuous communication. Mentors set high expectations for their mentees, frequently working with their mentees to determine what the program activities looked like and how they defined success. Mentors also incentivized students to participate in group activities and stay motivated with their studies through mentor and FYE provided incentives (food, free events, and KKC gear). Mentors communicated via email, phone, text, and had multiple (in-person) group and mentor-mentee activities, including attending campus events. Of the fifteen students who began participating in the FYE mentorship program in the Fall 2022 twelve are still enrolled at KKC and remain active in the program. Ten out of the twelve currently enrolled students have maintained a GPA above 3.0 or better since Fall 2022. The remaining two students have maintained a 2.0 GPA. Additionally, one of the students no longer enrolled has successfully transferred to a four-year Illinois university. One mentee graduated in Spring 2023 with a certificate in construction management. The success of this pilot program has allowed the program to increase in Fall 2023, with an 80 percent participant increase (27 mentees) along with an additional eight faculty/staff who signed up to mentor. Based on a 2023 survey, participants reported they were very satisfied with the mentorship program, and they felt the assistance from the mentors had a huge impact on their academics.

The First Year Experience program (FYE) is designed to assist students in their transition from high school to college. In addition to mentoring and academic support, the FYE encourages student participation in many co-curricular events (e.g., common reads, cultural excursions, and guest lecturers). Like other programs with wrap-around services, FYE employs a multilayered approach to support student success. However, the FYE program at **Olive-Harvey College (OHC)** differs by partnering with One-Million Degrees to combine mentoring, academic support, financial support, and access to mental health services both in-person and remote. This four-pronged approach is proving to be very successful in creating an environment of support that is beneficial to all students. OHC recognizes that beyond academic hurdles, there exists a myriad of social

barriers that impede student success. As a Predominately Black Institution (PBI) and an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), this is particularly true for OHC's student body. To focus on narrowing the achievement gap more keenly, the previously mentioned resources were packaged together to create a holistic approach for student support. This resulted in tangible elements of success. Prior to the implementation of FYE, first year students at OHC were retained from fall to spring at a rate of 59 percent. The following year (fiscal year 2023), the retention rate for first year students increased to 66 percent. Olive-Harvey saw a six-percentage point increase in the number of first year students who enrolled in and passed a college-level English course within their first year of attendance.

### **High School Partnership Initiatives**

To increase student success, a partnership was formed between the District 118 high school and **Danville Area Community College (DACC)** to form a seamless pathway to DACC and to meet the needs of students by providing additional services directly in the high school. Additionally, the district's goal was to increase engagement with its stakeholders to assess district needs, share in its successes, and encourage involvement. Often, due to transportation and other challenges, students are unable to travel to DACC's campus to meet one-on-one with advisors. Also, due to their school schedule, students are not able to call to get their questions answered about college and the matriculation process. The goal is to provide access to information for all, and more engagement and services to District 118 high school on a more regular basis.

*Lincoln Land Community College Black Student Union invited African American high school seniors to attend a recruiting event in the spring of 2023 to help them explore education options and enhance community connection and inclusion among African American students.*

**Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC)** organized a recruiting event on April 21, 2023, to help students explore educational options and enhance community connection and inclusion among African American students. LLCC BSU (Black Student Union) invited African American seniors attending a District 186 high school to attend the recruiting event. Participants toured campus; participated in sonography, poetry, or

natural hair care workshops; and heard from BSU alumni, faculty, and staff. The recruitment event covered two needs--to recruit more minority students to attend LLCC and to recruit students to join LLCC's BSU while attending the college. The overall event was geared toward helping students make sound financial decisions when deciding where to attend college. Students also learned about joining BSU and how to follow a quality educational path that involved little or no out-of-pocket expenses and then transfer to an HBCU (historically black college or university) as a junior to fulfill their educational dream. Community vendors, faculty and staff were invited to engage with the students and show the diverse environment that LLCC can build for its students to succeed. The BSU recruitment event was part of a series of minority recruitment efforts which led to an increase in first-time African American enrollment of 58 percent from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023.

The Office of Admissions and Recruitment welcomes the opportunity to invite prospective students from in-district high schools to visit campus and learn more about **McHenry County College (MCC)**. More recent efforts have been focused on tailoring programs to specific student population needs and requests. For example, one high school specifically requested MCC to create

a campus visit similar to Hispanic Student Meetup College Visit, but specifically for African American students. Prospective students want to experience a campus visit with other students who they share the same identity with. From feedback provided from prospective students, MCC is shaping student programming with a Diversity, Equity, and Belonging lens. The Admissions and Recruitment office partnered with the Office of Student Diversity and Inclusion to create a welcoming, information-rich, and affirming event on December 1, 2022, which connected African American-identifying prospective students with African American-identifying members of MCC college community. An intentional “brave space” was established to allow students to speak their minds regarding how their identities factor toward their high school and prospective college experience. Students shared stories of pride, discrimination, defeat, and opportunity. Students also received an in-depth tour of the college campus and learned about the wide range of program options and student services. After this event, the school counselor who organized the campus visit reached out to MCC and proudly reported that their students self-organized a Black Student Union identity group at their high school campus. Students who attended this visit also expressed a strong interest in getting involved in the Black Student Union at MCC, once they became a student. The voices of these students helped to solidify the change in MCC annual Latino Empowerment Conference to expand the event to include all underrepresented, marginalized, and/or first-generation identifying prospective-student groups and their allies. The event has been renamed to “Amplify Conference: Student Voices and Identities in Education.” This first iteration of this updated event was held on April 27, 2023. Sessions at this conference included topics surrounding personal identity and intersectionality, codeswitching, celebrating diverse identities in college, connecting with current college staff and students of diverse identities, and celebrating and living with one’s identity through their career. The second annual Amplify Conference is planned for February 23, 2024.

**Shawnee Community College (SCC)** strives to provide equity and access to all district high schools through enhanced course offerings and intentional cultivation of relationships with the district high schools. In January 2022, SCC created the Coordinator of High School Partnerships and Pathways. This role was to enhance growth opportunities and connection with district high schools. For the academic year 2023-2024, the College has concentrated on expanding early college high school partnerships with district schools. In Summer 2023, the College revised its Early College High School Agreement and piloted it with five of the twelve school districts. This agreement expanded courses to the College extension centers, and district high schools bussed students to the centers and main campus. Students had expanded access to [Type D](#) dual credit courses, taught by qualified SCC faculty so the College could reach some of its most underrepresented populations in the district, as these schools have difficulty recruiting and retaining faculty qualified for dual credit courses. The coordinator works with all local administration at Shawnee district high schools to determine need and/or available classes that are then incorporated into a tailored program pathway(s) for each school. Relationships were enhanced by open and regular communication with the stakeholders at each district high school, and dual credit offerings and teacher qualifications were reviewed to determine future course offerings. The College continues to expand its Early College High School model to additional school districts in the upcoming academic year and is currently negotiating agreements with tailored pathways. When SCC analyzed dual credit data and offerings at each district high school, it was exceedingly evident that there were many equity gaps within the district, as many schools did not have qualified teachers to offer Type A dual credit courses. Thus, SCC is helping to increase equity and access



to dual credit through the expansion of Type D dual credit courses offered at local extension centers and main campus. Due to teacher shortage, some district high schools did not have the qualified faculty to teach dual credit in their high school. SCC began working on developing Early College and dual credit offerings to help with the equity gap. The coordinator works with each school to ensure their needs are being met whether coming to one of the college campuses or having a qualified faculty member go to the district high school. SCC is working to expand this agreement to the remaining seven schools for fiscal year 2025. The coordinator also meets with any teacher at a high school district to ensure the Dual Credit Quality Act is followed by Professional Development Plans. While going into next year, the College is assisting the schools without dual credit qualified instructors with Type C courses to take advantage of the qualified dual credit instructors in the other high schools.

To assist high school students with planning for their academic futures, **Spoon River College** (SRC) partners with district high schools to offer on-site enrollment/registration events each spring semester. These on-site events allow high school students the opportunity to meet with SRC advisors at their high school which eliminates any transportation or scheduling barriers. This facilitates a smoother transition from high school to college by familiarizing students with the SRC environment and resources before students attend SRC. These meetings ensure equitable access to higher education, especially for first-generation students or those with limited exposure to the college application process. During the individualized on-site appointments, SRC advisors provide crucial guidance on course selection, academic planning, and career pathways as they assist students in making informed decisions about their future educational plans. During the meetings, SRC advisors explain college expectations and help prepare students for the differences in academic rigor. Advisors introduce students to available resources like financial aid, tutoring services, and extracurricular opportunities, enhancing their overall college experience. SRC has participated in on-site enrollment/registration events for a number of years and continues to increase the number of high schools that participate as well as the number of students who meet with an advisor during these events. Ninety percent of the high schools in the SRC district participate in the on-site events. During the Spring 2023 on-site events, over 100 students met with an academic advisor with most of those appointments resulting in summer and/or fall enrollment at SRC. Building relationships with an SRC advisor early fosters a sense of belonging and support, increasing the likelihood of student retention and academic success. The on-site enrollment/registration events demonstrate SRC's commitment to community engagement by actively reaching out to the high school students, fostering partnerships between SRC and their district high schools.

### **Mentoring/Counseling**

The **Malcolm X College** (MXC) I am an African American Male (IAAM) Mentoring Program aims to build a cohort of men of African descent to improve academic achievement, self-esteem, social competence, self-efficacy, student retention, and graduation rates. As such, its immediate goals are to provide positive male role models, encourage self-respect, create a sense of brotherhood, and build healthy relationships. Its long-term goal is to close the opportunity gap. Therefore, the cohort of MXC faculty and staff will serve as mentors for other students of African descent. The program mentees will thereby address inequities in education that affect this underserved population by fostering student growth and promoting the following core values: accountability, community, diversity, empowerment, learning, and respect. The MXC team piloted

Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

the IAAM mentoring program in Fall 2021, and the program has continued through the current term (Spring 2024). The primary elements of the IAAM program include one-on-one mentoring meetings, program workshops, and study abroad trips. IAAM mentors represent a cross-section of positions throughout Malcolm X College, including deans, program directors, faculty members, advisors, IT specialists, and security personnel. Their broad knowledge base, skill set, and dispositions give mentees access to a wealth of knowledge and insight into potential career opportunities. The mentors' workshops honor the program's goals by helping their respective mentees better understand how to achieve academic success, build life skills, and expand professional networks. A culminating event of the IAAM initiative is the annual Male Mentoring Empowerment and Leadership Conference, where mentees come together and share how they have grown. In addition, MXC and IAAM leaders have secured funding and are planning for a series of study abroad trips to Africa during Spring and Summer 2024. The trips will focus on the student learning outcomes of identity attainment, social emotional learning, and cultural competency. The Fall 2021 IAAM pilot program served 40 students and achieved a 93 percent (37/40) fall-to-spring retention rate. Of the 20 IAAM mentees enrolled as credit students in Fall 2022, nine were still enrolled as credit students in Fall 2023, and an additional seven completed a degree or certificate between Fall 2022 and Summer 2023. As a result, 80.0 percent (16/20) of IAAM mentees enrolled in Fall 2022 were either retained or had completed a certificate/degree one year later. In comparison, the overall rate of student completions/retentions for African American male students at MXC during this time was 46.8 percent (199/425).

To improve equity outcomes related to access, retention, and completion rates, **Highland Community College** began a peer mentoring program. The purpose of this program is to utilize students who have completed college classes and have experience to mentor their peers who need additional support(s) to be successful. Students can relate to their peers differently than staff. Peer mentoring has been used as a retention tool as it engages students socially. This program was implemented in the Fall 2022 semester. At the

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time the program began, there was one mentor. Since implementation, the mentors grew to 11 students by June 30, 2023, and increased to 24 students for the Fall 2023 semester. Multiple strategies were used to implement this program. First, Highland identified a diverse group of students with different strengths who wanted to help their peers to be successful in college. Mentors met with mentees individually, in groups, and in the classroom. The bilingual mentors were able to connect with the growing English as a second language population. During the Spring 2023 semester, the embedded mentors assisted new students who needed additional support. Mentors were utilized at events tailored for new incoming students to get to know the campus and the student life population. As students met the mentors, it provided familiar face(s) as they started their college journey in the Fall of 2023. It provided an opportunity for new students to ask questions to a peer that they may not have felt comfortable asking a staff member, in addition to receiving the college life experience from the mentor. These peer-to-peer interactions provide an authentic and relatable experience. Evidence of success was witnessed through students completing courses previously they would have withdrawn from and through students deciding to attend Highland after experiencing the peer mentor team's involvement. Students, who today are

mentors, stated they decided to attend the institution due to the impact they felt from the peer mentors and wanting the opportunity to give back to the community through mentoring.

**Rend Lake College** (RLC) established the position of Career and Technical Education (CTE) success coach/mentor in August 2022 to provide student support services to assigned CTE students. Since many of the CTE students are first generation students, or nontraditional students returning to school to gain workforce skills, closer contact is needed to help them to be successful. The goal is to provide a constant point of contact for RLC CTE students. This position assists students in educational and career planning through one-on-one meetings to assess student needs and challenges. They may also assist CTE students with enrollment and financial aid processes and procedures. To complement the efforts of the success coach, a CTE success center was created. This center is a place where students majoring in healthcare and career technical education programs can find a variety of services that will ensure students can be successful in their education goals, while keeping them up to date with industry needs and demands. RLC experienced improved completion rates of students who have participated and interacted regularly with their CTE success coach/mentor. Mentors are in close contact with students, therefore helping to resolve issues before they approach the point of failure.

### **Professional Development**

**Richland Community College** partnered with the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) to offer a course on Effective Online Teaching Practices. The focus of the course was to better equip Richland's faculty with the skills and experience to strengthen learning in their online courses and to better provide equitable online instruction, thus increasing retention and completion rates in those courses. Instructors who successfully completed the course received ACUE's Certificate in Effective College Instruction co-endorsed by the American Council on Education. The course was made available to all Richland instructors with 29 faculty members (a mixture of full-time and adjunct from various programs) choosing to participate in the course plus two members of the Teaching and Learning Center staff, who served as co-facilitators while also completing the coursework. The ACUE course opened on August 25, 2022, with the first module officially starting on September 5, 2022. The final module was originally scheduled to close on April 30, 2023, but in efforts to increase the completion rate, the end date of the course was extended with all assignments due by June 30, 2023. The course consisted of four blocks, each block containing six or seven modules including Inspiring Inquiry and Lifelong Learning in Your Online Course, Promoting Active Learning Online, Creating an Inclusive and Supportive Online Learning Environment, and Designing Learner-Centered and Equitable Courses. Each module identified the learning objectives and provided resources on multiple research-based practices, video demonstrations of effective teaching practices, expert interviews, and thought-provoking discussions. The modules within those blocks addressed various topics including motivating students online, embracing diversity in online learning, and preparing an inclusive syllabus. After interacting with the resources, instructors chose one teaching practice to implement and submitted a written reflection on their experiences with implementation. Twenty-seven of the original 31 course-takers completed the course and earned the Certificate in Effective College Instruction. Participant feedback was highly positive with most of the instructors planning to implement more practices learned from the course in future semesters. Fourteen of the course-takers have reported implementing practices, such as using Personal Identity Wheels to foster inclusivity in introductory courses, in their Fall 2023 courses.

## Student Support Services

The Student Development and Engagement Center (SDEC) at **Harry S Truman College** is designed to curate practices that enhance and support the student experience across the campus to help them achieve their goals. SDEC is a highly visible space on campus that provides students with access to resources that support their well-being and academic success in a centralized location. It can serve as a

*Harry S Truman College launched the Student Development and Engagement Center in September 2022 to provide students with access to resources that support their well-being and academic success in a centralized location.*

student's connection to resources like advising, tutoring, the Access Center (for students with a documented disability), mental health services, and more. SDEC operates from the premise that Truman can build a welcoming space where students feel connected, and then push in the resources and supports they need. SDEC provides students with a place to relax, get to know Truman staff members, and connect more with the campus. The center's staff provides students with day-to-day support, including academic planning and Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) appeals. Also, SDEC runs specialized programming that targets various student groups, including African Americans, Hispanic, females of color, and first-generation students. Since its launch in September 2022, SDEC has had several events and tested strategies for boosting student success. For example, staff have held several outreach campaigns for students needing academic or financial aid advising. Also embedded in the center are peer mentorship programs, such as TRUBassadors, and the "Ask Me Ambassadors" program, where leadership, staff, and student leaders welcome students and help them find classes during the first few days of the semester. Moreover, through its partnership with the Center for Teaching and Learning, an organization on campus that provides faculty support services, SDEC has launched innovation grants. Faculty and staff can apply for a small micro-grant to address an equity issue on campus. Students who interacted with SDEC in the academic year 2022-2023 had better outcomes in a variety of key performance indicators that City Colleges of Chicago track--multiple retention metrics, the rate at which first-year students take and pass college-level English, and the rate at which first-year students take and pass college-level courses. For example, students that interacted with SDEC had an 83 percent fall-to-fall retention rate versus students that did not interact with SDEC had only a 46 percent rate.

Start Smart Program and Tech seminars are designed to help students transition into college by addressing and removing barriers that students may have. Before the start of the semester, students had the chance to attend seminars focused on the technology (Brightspace, Student Portal, Navigate) they will use while enrolled at **Kennedy-King College (KKC)**. Students could also attend a Saturday program to receive additional support in other areas such as advising, financial aid, etc. The main goal was to ensure all students resolved any issues before the first day of class. Common barriers which Start Smart addressed included registration, financial aid, accessing academic support services, textbook ordering, and UPass/Ventra Card access. Start Smart helped mitigate issues listed above by connecting students with resources early on. Students learned how to use book vouchers and access financial aid, tutoring, and advising services. They also gained awareness of key deadlines, how to read a syllabus, and to understand different standards and expectations from instructors and administration. Students were more prepared to face common barriers expected within a student's first year. In Fall 2022, 200 students participated in a Start Smart Saturday program, and 95 students participated in the tech seminars. Eighty-six of the 95 students registered for classes. In Fall 2023, 73 students participated in the seminars, and of these

Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

students, 48 (66 percent) are currently enrolled for Spring 2024. During Fall 2023, 59 percent logged into Navigate, compared with 34 percent of overall credit students at the college and 38 percent across the district, as of early November 2023.

The Center for Student Success, which opened in August 2019, supports newly enrolled students and students who are currently on academic warning via a case management process, ensuring they have the knowledge, resources, and information they need to successfully pursue their educational goals at the **College of DuPage**. Student services specialists, internally known as navigators, are assigned a caseload of students each semester who meet with navigators a minimum of three times per semester to identify academic strengths, challenges, and needs. Navigators work with students to develop a success plan via the Starfish student success software and by using the LASSI assessment, work together to set goals that address the individual student challenges and needs, working toward building strengths via navigator visits and the use of campus support resources. Navigators also answer questions and monitor the students' progress throughout the semester. During the academic year 2022-2023, a total of 3,095 students met with navigators (including 857 first-generation students). In Fall 2022, 118 African American students and 428 Hispanic students met with navigators. For African American and Hispanic students that met with navigators, the fall-to-fall persistence was 4.17 and 5.15 percent higher, respectively, than for those African American and Hispanic students that did not meet with navigators. In Spring 2023, 79 African American students and 234 Hispanic students met with navigators. For African American and Hispanic students that met with navigators, the spring-to-fall persistence was 4.44 and 9.70 percent higher, respectively, than for those African American and Hispanic students that did not meet with navigators.

To help improve equity outcomes related to access, retention, and completion rates, **Highland Community College** uses the College Student Inventory (CSI) to identify at-risk students and link them to resources based on their individualized needs. The CSI is a retention tool for first-year, degree-seeking students. Highland started using the CSI during the 2018-2019 school year, and 51 students completed the inventory. Then, 290 students completed the CSI during the 2019-2020 school year, 197 during 2020-2021, 258 during 2021-2022, 294 during 2022-2023, and 277 during 2023-2024. The CSI student completion numbers have grown, which results in increased outreach and referrals to services. The CSI showed promise in providing earlier intervention and connection to support systems during its pilot with the TRIO student support services program, so the College expanded its use to all students enrolled in the First Year Experience Seminar (FYES). Several strategies are utilized with the data collected from the CSI. One strategy includes running the summary planning and summary observation reports. These reports provide demographic data, the top ten areas students are requesting assistance, overall risk index, predicted academic difficulty, educational stress, desire to transfer, receptivity to academic assistance, personal counseling, social engagement, career guidance, and financial guidance. The overall risk index report provides information on academic, motivational, and demographic factors that may influence students completing certificates and degrees. This information allows Highland to plan programs and interventions more effectively. Another strategy is to provide the CSI data to staff. Reports are created upon request for departments, which allows for outreach that is personalized and targeted to students with a higher receptivity to service. For example, Career Services provides information to students who score 25 percent or higher on the receptivity to career guidance reports. Success coaches put students on their intensive caseloads who score 70 percent or above on the overall risk

index report. Students with a score of 70 percent or above on the predicted academic difficulty and educational stress reports also receive outreach from the success coaches. The third strategy is directly providing student outreach and referrals utilizing CSI results. Advisors meet with students individually to review their results and make resource referrals based on the risk index and students' self-reported receptivity to assistance. In a recent administration of the RISC survey, students under 25 years old indicated a higher level of interactions with student service functions than benchmark institutions including the bookstore, enrollment services, testing, business office, and technology support. Students also reported that the staff were available, concerned, and effective during these interactions. Students frequently responded to an open-ended question about the college's greatest strength with comments about friendly staff, individualized attention, access to resources, and a sense of community. Highland's goal is to improve data collection to identify more clearly the impact of these early interventions on student term-to-term retention.

**Illinois Eastern Community Colleges (IECC)** District 529 recognizes that many college students face food insecurity and are working actively to help meet that need. All four IECC colleges have food pantries on their respective college campuses. The food pantry at Frontier Community College (FCC) was implemented by Fairfield First Baptist Church (FBC) in Fall 2019. LTCares Pantry at Lincoln Trail College began in March 2021. Olney Central College (OCC) implemented its food pantry in September 2022, and Wabash Valley College (WVC) implemented its FRESH Food Program in 2022. The FCC pantry is checked every couple of weeks, and then it is restocked with food from the FBC food pantry and bought items. It is visible to students, and it has been promoted. The need to restock is evidence of its use, and there have been students who said they are very appreciative. At LTC, they restock fresh food items every week. The LTCares Pantry supplies fresh meat, milk, bread, vegetables, fruit, eggs, butter, non-perishable canned and boxed items, personal care items, and household items. The pantry serves approximately 150 students per year but is open to all LTC students. There are no eligibility requirements. OCC students have a new place to relax and grab a snack between classes—The Keep Student Lounge. The newly dedicated student space includes study tables, comfortable chairs, a microwave, a fully stocked refrigerator, and a Keurig coffee maker. Students also have access to a food pantry with microwaveable meals and a variety of snack items. The room is available to all students from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. A service project of Phi Theta Kappa, its members have been working to transform the former office since spring semester. The room also features a Little Free Library cart where students can take and exchange books. Students also can view upcoming events on the room's bulletin board, and OCC clubs are encouraged to post announcements. The mission of the FRESH Food Program at WVC is to assist and provide for those facing food insecurity on WVC campus.

The advising redesign efforts launched the beginning of the new Student Advising Center at **Joliet Junior College (JJC)** on May 20, 2019. This redesign provides distinction and clarity of roles between academic advising and counseling (mental health support). Under the redesign, academic advising will be provided by advisors and coaches in the new Student Advising Center and will incorporate the college's move to guided academic pathway support for students. The goal of the Student Advising Center is to serve as a centralized department where students receive holistic academic advising, coaching, and guidance to support retention and completion of goals. As a result, Site Improve was purchased to verify 508/ADA web compliance for all JJC web pages. This significant work has placed JJC at the forefront in terms of proactively providing accessible

electronic media. This software service provides quality data regarding broken links, spelling errors, and language usage. Accessibility reports indicate where the JJC website does not meet 508 compliance standards per W3C User Agent Accessibility Guidelines (UAAG). This helps the website be more accessible for sight impaired users and avoid issues for individuals with seizure disorders. These accessibility improvements often help all users navigate the website. As a result of these efforts, JJC's website went from less than 60 percent accessible to nearly 95 percent accessible, well above the industry standard of 85 percent.

A math transition success coach position was created at **Kaskaskia College** in July 2022 as part of a Transitions Success Project with the overall goal of increasing the success rates of all students that place into remedial math courses to include increasing the fall-to-fall retention rate of these students and to increase the number of students who successfully complete their math course with a C or better. The initiative focuses on students that are at high risk of not reaching their educational goals. A combination of wrap-around support services will be utilized to help increase access and ensure the successful transition of at-risk populations with postsecondary education and training opportunities. The addition of the math transition success coach provided the ability to expand the opportunity for face-to-face remedial math support through direct instruction and on-demand tutoring. The implementation of the math transition success coach has contributed to a two percent increase in overall success rate, three percent increase in course completion, and a three percent increase in the number of students retained within math courses served by the program.

*Kaskaskia College created a math transition success coach position in July 2022 to increase the success rates of all students that place into remedial math.*

The Student Success Center is in the process of becoming more diversified in its services to serve a wider range of student needs at **Lake Land College**. The goal is to serve at least 10 percent of all Lake Land students each semester through the college services, emphasizing accommodated testing and various tutoring services and modalities. The changeover began in January of 2022 and continues. Some of the ways these services have been implemented is through the case management system in Navigate, switching to an electronic sign-in system, employing more tutors and test proctors, implementing more walk-in and pre-employed tutors, working with architects on future building changes to ensure space efficiency, and offering new modalities of tutoring through Zoom. The objective is to implement and utilize Navigate software in ways that will enable students a more seamless and user-friendly way to access Student Success Services. This is primarily focused through two ways, case management from faculty to tutoring services, as well as the implementation of options for self-scheduling tutoring through the app. Implementation of case management began in the summer of 2023 and continues. Implementation of appointments via Navigate started at the infrastructure phase in the fall of 2023 with an intended full implementation date of May 2024. The use of case management is designed to make students more aware of the need for services through their instructors and then allow the Student Success Center to reach out to those students with more directed help. Currently this aspect is fully implemented for report-running capabilities. The ability to run reports for other services, such as tutoring, will also be successful through the cooperation between departments and the creation of appropriate systemic mapping. Success can be seen through the ability to pull reports through this system, resulting in better access to services, increased retention, and increased graduation rates. The evidence of success can be seen by the increased numbers of students being served, as well as

through survey results. For instance, From Spring 2022 to Spring 2023 there was a 27 percent increase in usage of tutoring services. In Fall 2023, the center served the equivalent of 7.5 percent of full-time enrolled students for tutoring services. Usage of these services is tied to increased retention and higher rates of graduation for students.

**Rend Lake College** (RLC) established a laptop loaner program in July 2022 to improve student access. RLC campus is located in a very rural area, and the laptop loaner program gives students access to complete coursework from the privacy and convenience of their homes, without the expense of purchasing equipment. The laptops are loaned with a deposit that is paid at the time of acceptance, and the deposit can be charged to a student’s financial aid. Students meet with a member of the RLCares team, who performs a brief evaluation to see if the student could benefit from the use of a college loaned laptop. Details of the program are explained, and a loaner agreement form is executed for the student to complete. In the Fall 2022 semester, RLC loaned 53 laptops, with 15 of those (28 percent) going to minority students. In the Spring 2023 semester, RLC loaned 36 laptops with 12 of those (33 percent) going to minority students. Laptops can be renewed for additional semesters if the student remains successful. Most laptops are renewed for subsequent semesters which indicates that the student is being retained and moves forward with pursuing their educational goals.

*To improve student access without the expense of purchasing equipment, **Rend Lake College** established a laptop loaner program in July 2022.*

The **Rock Valley College** (RVC) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Office established a Social Justice Community-based Learning Academy in the spring of 2023. The first cohort examined the racial wealth gap and promoted the importance of financial literacy. RVC received a \$12,500 grant from the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois (CFNIL) to support the academy. RVC students, primarily students of color, and those who meet financial eligibility, attended a series of educational workshops and completed academic coursework focused on various financial skills in order to increase financial literacy, such as estate planning, entrepreneurship, stock and bonds investments, and property ownership, to address the racial wealth gap in RVC’s community. Students also completed a financial stress test and a financial personality profile in the Illinois Financial Wellness Hub and participated in a “Git Lit with Financial Literacy” Kahoot game. A total of 112 students attended one or more of the academy workshops, and 30 students completed all the workshops and modules in the academy. Eight participants were paired with a mentor to demonstrate the knowledge and real-world applications they gained throughout the series with a “Pecha Kucha” presentation during a half day DEI student symposium in March 2023. The keynote speaker for the presentation was Michelle Singletary, best-selling author and Washington Post Personal Finance Columnist. The students who participated in the workshops received an assortment of gifts and prizes including books of financial literacy, bookstore gift cards, and cash stipends for the presenters during the symposium.

One program that assists in facilitating student retention is the Starfish software utilized by **Southeastern Illinois College** (SIC). The program allows faculty to raise flags or markers attributing to issues concerning attendance, low course averages, missing or late assignments, low exam or quiz grades, and the need to withdraw a student for prolonged absence in a course. The flags are then transferred to an academic advisor or success coach on campus, that will then



Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

personally contact the student via phone, voicemail, or email to encourage the student to reach out to their instructor, make scheduled tutoring appointments, seek ADA accommodations, or offer resources to the student to be more academically successful in that course. The date of implementation ranges from August 2022 through May of 2023. Faculty members are given periodic surveys to complete, which can identify students demonstrating these behaviors. From there, if issued, the flag will then populate to advisers and retention staff for follow up. Once a flag is raised by a faculty member, advisers and retention staff members follow up, making phone calls, leaving voicemails, and sending emails to the students who were flagged. They also write notes in the Starfish system which are automatically sent to the original faculty member who issued the flag. These communications with students include encouragement and information on tutoring, advisement, and other intervention strategies. For Fall 2022 and Spring 2023, there were a total of nine ADA students receiving Starfish flags across 24 courses; 15 completed their courses with a “C” or higher, four dropped or withdrew from their classes, receiving a “W” or “WA,” and five finished the course but earned below a “C.” The program showed effectiveness of 62.5 percent retention among ADA students for courses flagged at-risk of dropping or withdrawing. The use of this early alert software demonstrates connection from the advisement and success coaching staff alongside students and will continue to be utilized in future semesters for students with disabilities to help retention and aid in supplying important resources and information.

The primary goal for implementing a mandatory online orientation at **Spoon River College (SRC)** was to better prepare students academically, both in using Canvas, the Learning Management System (LMS), and to understand overall expectations as a first-year college student. Other benefits included an introduction to the college and its culture, information regarding important services, and clarifying policies and procedures. An additional benefit to offering the orientation was that it took pressure off faculty to show students how to use the LMS. The first version of the Canvas Student Orientation focused primarily on navigating and using Canvas and launched in Spring 2020 at SRC. Due to the pandemic, the orientation was quickly revised for the fall of 2020 and included additional college information regarding services, informational videos from specific departments and welcome videos from administration. An unexpected outcome was that the orientation was truly helpful in getting new students prepared to go fully online in March 2020. The Director of Academic Support at SRC worked with SRC IT staff to program the orientation to make it mandatory. New students were automatically enrolled in the orientation based on specific criteria. Students could not access their courses in Canvas until the orientation was completed. SRC Student Success Coaches called students who had not completed the orientation one to two weeks before the semester starts. This allowed them to resolve any login issues, if necessary, but also gave them an opportunity to make a connection with the student and let them know they were there to help. A survey link was provided at the end of the Orientation. The typical return rate was about 50 percent of those who completed the orientation. Since the first offering of the orientation in the Spring 2020, an average of eight percent of respondents consistently said that they could complete the orientation without additional help from a staff member, faculty member, family member, or friend. Additionally, an average of 66 percent of respondents said they felt more prepared to start their classes at SRC. Overwhelmingly, respondents said they found all the information to be helpful and appreciated that there is a combination of text, images, and video. Students were also asked to rate their confidence in completing specific tasks within Canvas. The average percentage of students who were confident or highly confident in completing these tasks consistently ranged from 77 percent to 88 percent.

The CircleIn project delivered a virtual student community to **Waubonsee Community College** students in August 2022 to enable them to study together, apply problem-solving skills, build better study habits, and push others to succeed. It included tangible incentives such as the ability to win scholarships. This virtual community was intended to foster a sense of belonging for students and bolster their academic success. A pilot program that concluded at the end of the Spring 2023 semester included 1,421 users in 68 courses, 33 unique faculty members, five peer tutors who were trained to support the project/application, and three library technology assistants who were trained to support the project/application. Student employees were added to courses in CircleIn and were trained to support students using it. Also, a “Tutoring and Tech Help” community was made available for all students selected for the pilot. CircleIn users were more likely to be female and students of color compared to the control group and college averages. The most encouraging number from the combined data of Fall 2022/Spring 2023 term pilots was that CircleIn participants completed their classes rather than withdrawing, a 2.7 percent increase when compared to the control group. In Fall 2023, CircleIn became an option for all students in more than 1,000 course sections. A study of 4,204 students yielded the following: seventy-six percent of CircleIn students achieved GPAs between 2.0-4.0, matching the control group's performance. However, CircleIn students excelled in course completion with 75 percent earning grades of A, B, or C, just one percent below the control. Notably, 81 percent of CircleIn participants persisted to the next term, significantly higher than the 66 percent control group. Persistence appears to be the most encouraging result of CircleIn. Waubonsee will continue to monitor this program for adoption/engagement.

### **TRIO Student Support Services**

The goal of the [TRIO Student Support Services \(SSS\) program](#) is to help first-generation, low-income students, and students with disabilities graduate or transfer to a four-year institution. The TRIO SSS program also works to foster an institutional climate supportive of students traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education, including English as a

*The goal of the TRIO Student Support Services program is to help first-generation, low-income students, and students with disabilities graduate or transfer to a four-year institution.*

second language students, homeless children and youth, foster care youth, or other disconnected students. In the fall of 2020, the program at **Carl Sandburg College** enhanced its intensive advising services to combat the disconnection first-generation and low-income students often face, but which was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The TRIO SSS grant began at Sandburg in August 1997. The Sandburg TRIO SSS program is currently in its sixth grant cycle; the College was awarded a five-year grant that began in the Fall 2020 semester and will close in August 2025. All program participants meet regularly with their TRIO SSS academic advisor. These meetings allow program staff to inform participants of various pathway options, as well as transfer agreements with four-year partner institutions. Participants also plan out the required classes for their degree plan with their advisor, so they have the knowledge of course expectations and length of time for degree completion and can utilize their financial aid funds in a responsible manner. Transfer assistance occurs upon admission into the program and continues until students graduate/transfer. This process assists students in completing research on transfer schools, including major offerings, cost of attendance, and financial aid/scholarship packaging. Financial literacy is discussed during the program participant intake meeting. Education on financial aid

requirements and financing resources is conducted in one-on-one meetings with program staff. Outreach is made at the beginning of each semester to review participants' financial aid award letters and to assist with options for any outstanding balance. The program also assists with FAFSA/ scholarship applications. Peer mentors provide support to new and academically at-risk participants. The program also hosts a First-Generation Celebration Day speaker on the importance of grit and resiliency. The TRIO SSS program completes an annual report for the Department of Education that shows evidence of the College's successes. Sandburg's retention, graduation, and transfer rates are typically much higher than national persistence rates for first-generation and low-income students. In the most recent TRIO SSS program annual report, persistence was at 80 percent, good academic standing at 80 percent, graduation rate at 63 percent, and transfer with degree at 50 percent.

The TRIO Student Support Services program at **Harold Washington College (HWC)** provides a suite of services to under-resourced students using dedicated staff with low student-staff ratios. Services offered through TRIO include academic advising, financial advising, transfer coaching, mentoring, clinical counseling, and tutoring. While these services are offered elsewhere at HWC, TRIO is intrusive in encouraging students to use them. Students know TRIO staff and have access to them when traditional advisors are most time constrained. TRIO staff also act as advocates for students and help them resolve barriers to enrollment and continued success. To participate, students must meet eligibility criteria (U.S. citizenship, academic need, and either be a first-generation college student, low income, or have a disability). Students in TRIO opt-in to the program and embrace its goal of helping them persist and graduate or transfer. Once enrolled in TRIO, students stay in the program until they graduate, transfer, or choose to leave either the program or the college. There are about 160 students in the program at any point in time, and about 50 are added each year. Of the TRIO students who were enrolled in the Summer and/or Fall terms in 2022, 83.5 percent were retained in Fall 2023. Of students entering TRIO in the 2020-2021 cohort, 59.2 percent graduated by November 2023, and 31.1 percent graduated and transferred to a 4-year institution.

The **Moraine Valley Community College** TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) program works collaboratively with other college units to facilitate increased academic performance, retention, graduation, and transfer of eligible students. TRIO SSS staff provide individual assessment of needs, personal support, referral, and follow-up to enhance eligible students' academic success. In addition, staff document program activities to submit progress reports to the college and the U.S. Department of Education. To receive assistance, students must be low-income students who are first-generation college students or students with disabilities evidencing academic need. Two-thirds of the participants in any SSS project must be either students with disabilities or potential first-generation college students from low-income families. One-third of the participants with disabilities must also be low-income students. For fiscal year 2023, TRIO SSS was in year three of a five-year grant cycle and was funded to serve approximately 160 students. The TRIO SSS program successfully identified and maintained over 160 eligible students who actively participated in services to ensure success in postsecondary education. TRIO SSS was staffed with a full-time director, full-time educational case manager, part-time educational case manager, part-time administrative assistant, one student tutor, and one paraprofessional tutor. Consistent program services include academic and transfer course planning, tutoring, career development, college planning, financial aid/scholarship resources, college and cultural awareness activities, social

development, wellness workshops, community service/leadership development, mentoring, computer lab access, and financial literacy resources. These wrap-around services were designed to enhance the success of TRIO SSS students. Seventy percent of all students served in the reporting year by the SSS project will persist from one academic year to the next academic year or earn an associate degree or certificate at the institution and/or transfer from a two-year to a four-year institution by the fall term of the next academic year. Moraine Valley's TRIO SSS program attained an 88 percent retention rate. Seventy-seven percent of all enrolled TRIO SSS students served will meet the performance level required to stay in good academic standing. Moraine Valley's TRIO SSS program attained a 78 percent good academic standing rate. Thirty percent of new participants served each year will graduate from the institution with an associate degree or certificate within four years, and 20 percent of new participants served each year will receive an associate degree or certificate and transfer to a four-year institution within four years. Moraine Valley's TRIO SSS students attained a rate of 26 percent for both metrics. While just below the goal, TRIO SSS staff continue to celebrate the success of this at-risk student population. During fiscal year 2023, TRIO SSS served 171 unique students. Sixty-nine percent of students identified as female and 31 percent as male. In terms of race/ethnicity, 39 percent of students identified as African American, 35 percent as Hispanic, 19 percent as White, and eight percent as Other.

The goal of the TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) program is to support students who identify as first-generation, low-income, or who have a documented disability. Currently, over 90 percent of all **Sauk Valley Community College** students qualify to participate in the TRIO Student Support Services program. The program's current capacity is 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. Academic coaching, tutoring services, and various academic workshops are available in-person and online. Further services include visits to four-year universities throughout the state, grant-aid scholarships, and priority registration for students who are on track to graduate. The TRIO SSS program has existed at Sauk for nearly thirty years. The program strives to create innovative programming that serves Sauk's most at-risk populations. This program is funded by grants through the U.S. Department of Education. Due to the many services provided by TRIO advisors, TRIO students have higher than average retention and completion rates in comparison to the general Sauk population (not including TRIO and Sauk Scholars). For the cohort that entered in Fall 2022, the fall-to-spring retention rate for TRIO students was 79.9 percent versus 70.7 percent for the general Sauk population. The fall-to-fall retention rate was 54.5 percent for TRIO students versus 45.0 percent for the general Sauk population. The completion/transfer rate was 28.2 percent for TRIO students versus 22.7 percent for the general Sauk population.

### **Student Support Services for Ethnic Minority Students**

PASO is a new student enrollment program at **Harper College** that seeks to strengthen communication and provide answers to questions for the families and supporters of incoming Hispanic students. By partnering with family members and supporters, PASO aims to form a welcoming community by which to engage and support Hispanic

*PASO is a new student enrollment program that aims to form a welcoming community at **Harper College** by which to engage and support Hispanic students through the admissions process.*

Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

students through the admissions process. PASO began in 2019 and has grown over time as new programming has been added. In 2022-2023, PASO held eight events that educated Hispanic families about higher education and Harper College while creating a sense of belonging. In addition, several of the events were focused on helping families through the biggest enrollment obstacle—paying for college. To address this hurdle, the PASO team held a session on Financial Aid named Making College Affordable and a Scholarship Workshop. PASO was able to connect with 141 students and 173 family members, and 87 PASO participants enrolled in Harper College for the Fall 2023 semester.

Under the five-year Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) grant, which runs from 2020 to 2025, **Oakton College** has established the Center for Organizing Minority Programs to Advance Student Success (COMPASS) with the goals of increasing enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students at Oakton. One out of every four students at Oakton self-identifies as AAPI. Of the Oakton students who identify as AAPI, 26 percent identify as Asian Indian, 23 percent as Filipino, 21 percent as Pakistani, and 11 percent as Chinese. In fiscal year 2023, the COMPASS program employs six unique strategies for student success: culturally responsive academic advising, endowment fund to reduce financial barriers for AAPI students, enhanced partnerships with district high school, AAPI data disaggregation and analysis, culturally responsive professional development for faculty and staff, and promoting women of color in computer science. A total of 3,415 students, employees, and community members have attended COMPASS activities. Sixteen student scholarships have been awarded through the Silk Road Scholarship Endowment. There has been a 24 percent increase in AAPI women enrolled in computer science courses over the last two academic years. Sixty-eight percent of AAPI students who are first-time college students and who started at Oakton in Fall 2021 have completed an educational plan with an academic advisor. The academic year 2022-2023 fall-to-fall retention rate for AAPI students is 62.3 percent compared to 53.4 percent for all students. This is an increase from Fall 2021-to-Fall 2022 retention for AAPI students which was at 56.9 percent. Also, fourteen podcast episodes have been produced highlighting AAPIs in Oakton’s district and Chicagoland, and 370 faculty and staff have been trained through COMPASS sponsored professional development workshops.

In the fall of 2022, twenty-eight scholars enrolled in the inaugural class of the Emory Williams Academy (EWA) for Black Men at **Oakton College**. Scholars and their supporters were invited to a welcome dinner at Good to Go restaurant in Evanston to meet one another and to meet faculty, staff, administrators, and board members who were invested in their collective success. As part of their onboarding process, scholars received induction certificates and Oakton branded items including a pin, t-shirt, hoodie, and a backpack to support a sense of connection among scholars and also increase awareness of the EWA brand. Technology resources including laptops and

*The Emory Williams Academy for Black Men is a new program designed to support the success of African American male students at **Oakton College**.*

hotspots were made available to scholars to support student learning. A dedicated Desire to Learn (D2L) page was also created so that scholars could stay connected with each other, receive updates, and build community. The age of the scholars ranged from 18 to 75 years old with sixteen scholars being “traditional-aged” students who were between the ages of 18 and 20 years old. Scholars are pursuing both short term credentials as well as associate degrees. Areas of study

included engineering, cannabis, music, human resources, marketing, and science/mathematics. Scholars expressed a strong need for community building during the Fall 2023 EWA orientation, leading to the creation of two new program activities, scholar circles and scholar study tables. The scholar circles, designed around openness, respect, and brotherhood, are a space for the scholars to come together and discuss their successes and challenges in their personal, academic, and professional lives. This program received positive feedback from the scholars who engaged in the program, and as a result, will be continued into future terms. In the Fall 2023 term some of the scholars mentioned their desire to participate virtually; therefore, virtual options for remote engagement for the spring term are being considered. Of the twenty-eight scholars enrolled in Fall 2022, twenty-two (79 percent) persisted to Spring 2023. Two new scholars joined the EWA during the Spring 2023 semester increasing the total number of scholars to twenty-four. At the end of the Spring 2023 semester, ten scholars (42 percent) ended the year in good academic standing with a GPA of 2.0 and above. When specifically asked on a survey, "As a scholar in the Emory Williams Academy, I feel a sense of belonging," 66 percent indicated they agreed/strongly agreed with the statement (the other 27 percent that responded to this question indicated "neither agree nor disagree").

Each fall, **Rock Valley College (RVC)** hosts 'Educate, Motivate, and Inspire: You Have What it Takes,' a one-day leadership conference for local high school and currently enrolled RVC minority male students. The main goal of the conference is to provide underrepresented and underserved high school male students with motivation, inspiration, information, resources, and a possible mentorship opportunity that will help them navigate societal issues and challenges they may face. In the event held on October 14, 2022, there were one hundred twenty-five males in attendance, representing 14 regional high schools and RVC. The day's agenda included a series of topics that included Effective Decision Making, Balancing Athletics and Education, The Power of You, Money Management and Friendship, Balancing School and Work, Mental Health, and Positive Mindset. Sessions were led by local, primarily minority male professionals that bring real world experience and practical advice. Mentorship and brotherhood were critical themes and conversation topics throughout the day. The conference has consistently received rave reviews from presenters, students, and staff regarding the impact that the conference has on the students.

### **Student Support Services for Students with Disabilities**

**Lake Land College's** Office of Accommodations fully implemented an online submission of accommodations application with automatic upload to shared workspace for professionals with a Fall 2022 semester start date to increase accommodations eligibility to qualified Lake Land College students with disabilities by streamlining the processes for (1) applying for accommodations and (2) coordination of services among professional staff. In preparation for the Fall 2022 semester, the Accommodations Office at Lake Land College developed a process whereby students could complete and apply for accommodation completely online. This enhancement allows students to immediately access the accommodations application, decreasing the time from inquiry to application by eliminating the need to request an application by mail, email, or in-person. This process also eliminates the need for a student to have access to a printer or other resources to download, print, or save the application prior to submitting it. Upon submission of the application, it is automatically delivered to the appropriate staff persons' CMS

*Students with disabilities can now apply for accommodations at **Lake Land College** completely online.*

(content management system) in the staff portal. CMS storage and access allows multiple staff persons to collaborate to coordinate accommodations for a single student simultaneously by eliminating the need to rotate or copy a physical file among staff members or to upload the file to an additional resource to allow access to multiple professional staff. In this way, for example, one staff member could be communicating additional information to the student about attendance accommodation, while another staff person is simultaneously hiring note-takers, and a third staff person is coordinating audiobooks. As such, not only is time to application decreased, but time to overall accommodations coordination is decreased as well. From fiscal year 2022 to fiscal year 2023, applications for accommodation increased 28 percent from 139 applications to 178 applications. (As a side note, applications for fiscal year 2024 total 240 to date). While this increase cannot be solely attributed to the change in process, it is likely that streamlining access to the application and submission process has contributed to an increase in the number of students submitting an application.

The mission of Disability Support Services (DSS) is to ensure that all students with a documented disability are provided equal access to academic and extra-curricular programs at **Sauk Valley Community College (SVCC)**. DSS and the SVCC community as a whole embrace and promote a diverse culture amidst students, staff, faculty, and administration. DSS provides coordination of services for students with documented disabilities. DSS engages in an individualized, interactive process with each student registered with DSS to determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations that effectively meet the student's needs. DSS promotes SVCC to in-district students with disabilities as an option for postsecondary education and career advancement. The DSS Director acts as a liaison with faculty, staff, and referral agencies to support the student's academic and career goals. The Director meets with individual students each semester and on an as-needed basis to implement appropriate and reasonable academic accommodations. DSS serves as a liaison between students, faculty, and staff to ensure accommodations effectively meet student needs. The DSS Director attends in-district IEP meetings, 504 Plan meetings, and transition planning conferences, when invited, for high school students who have expressed interest in attending SVCC. DSS participates in and provides information for New Student Orientation sessions, including in-person and online sessions. DSS has a technology lending program including digital voice recorders, LiveScribe pens, laptop computers and applicable software such as Read&Write by TextHelp. Course materials are offered in braille as necessary and ASL Interpreters are contracted to support students. Tutors are available through DSS and work in the Learning Commons Tutoring Center. DSS provides annual training to faculty to provide DSS updates. Frequent collaboration with the SVCC Instructional Designer and Information Technology Services (ITS) ensures online course offerings (including synchronous, asynchronous and hybrid courses) are accessible. During the Summer 2022 term, 10 students registered with DSS. During the Fall 2022 term, 93 students registered with DSS, and during the Spring 2023 term 69 students registered with DSS. The total number of (duplicated) students who registered with DSS during fiscal year 2023 was 172. These students attempted 510 credit hours and completed 413 credit hours (81.0 percent). The total number of degrees and certificates awarded to students registered with DSS at SVCC was 31.

**Southeastern Illinois College** offers physical and academic accommodations for at-need students on an individual case basis. The college makes sure students receive proper accommodations that comply with ADA guidelines for the academic year and have submitted proper ADA

documentation to the ADA coordinator with the purpose of communicating accommodation needs to the students' instructor(s), while also maintaining confidentiality to allow students inclusivity with anonymity free of stigmatization. This can be measured in the documentation submitted from students kept on file that tracked which students needed and were provided with accommodations. There were 19 students with ADA accommodations requested between July 2022 and May 2023 noted on file. Anecdotally, students from underrepresented groups seemed to indicate more confidence in their classes and an improvement in percentages due to the interventions implemented through meeting with advisors and getting accommodations after providing appropriate paperwork for documentation. Additionally, students gain confidence by understanding the academic process of not only their specific major but gain a better idea of how higher education works in general. This is specifically important for the underrepresented student, who, in the vast majority, also serves as a first-generation college student. Educators who worked with the reporting efforts responded favorably to the system and the positive changes that occurred from it as well, noting that students were walking into their courses better prepared due to a richer understanding of what the class is about and why they needed to have taken the class.

### **Transitional Initiatives**

Student transition into higher education can be a challenge for a myriad of reasons. As such, many institutions have instituted first-year seminar courses that are designed to acclimate students to the college environment. This is intended to go beyond academic support but to also provide them with the skills to navigate the bureaucratic nature of college as well as enhance their study skills and social connections which in turn supports persistence and college degree completion (Hunter, M.A. & Linder, C.W., 2005). **Prairie State College** (PSC) was one such institution that implemented a first-year seminar course called COL 101. Based on research collected at the College it became apparent that students who were enrolled in COL 101 fared better in terms of graduation rates compared to those who did not take the first-year seminar course. Between 2015 and 2022, on average, students who took COL 101 had a 10 percent higher graduation rate than students who did not take it. Consequently, PSC mandated in August 2022 that all first-year students enroll in COL 101 within their first year at PSC. The first-year students are connected to on-campus resources and are provided with facilitated opportunities to learn about the needs of college students and what skills they may need to enhance to smoothly transition from high school to college or from break in formal education to the day-to-day expectations of college life. Accurate retention numbers will be available after students who were enrolled in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 COL 101 graduate. While it is not entirely accurate, as it stands, Fall 2022 to Spring 2023 saw a retention rate of 66.98 percent, and Fall 2022 to Fall 2023 is 50.38 percent. The fall-to-spring numbers are slightly higher than previous years and the fall-to-fall is about the same.

### **Tutoring**

The Tutoring and Writing Center (TWC) at **Illinois Valley Community College** (IVCC) is here to listen to students and guide them to find the help they need with studying, asking questions, and making connections. Students feel supported, seen, and heard, and they find their success. The two pivotal keys include one-on-one access to a professional tutor in a welcoming environment. The Tutoring and Writing Center sent a

*The Tutoring and Writing Center at Illinois Valley Community College develops independent learners by providing a welcoming space because everyone deserves an accessible and free environment to study and learn.*



survey link via student email to 1,569 students who had attended IVCC in Fall 2022 and who were currently enrolled in Spring 2023. One initial email and two reminder emails were sent on March 14 through March 28. The TWC received 98 (6.2 percent) responses. Surprisingly, more students who had not used TWC services in the fall responded than those students who had received tutoring, although the split is very close at 51 percent “no” to 49 percent “yes.” “Yes” respondents represented tutored subjects in similar percentages to the population receiving services in the fall semester. Overall, the results show that the Tutoring and Writing Center is doing an excellent job serving IVCC students. Ninety-six percent of students indicated they were satisfied (very and somewhat) with the services they received in Fall 2022. The “best thing” about the TWC is overwhelmingly the tutors, while the “worst thing” with the most responses (besides “nothing”) deals with sessions—e.g., sessions being too short and sessions occurring in a very busy, sometimes distracting center. The Tutoring and Writing Center will take the feedback from this survey and work to provide the best service to even more students.

### Workforce Preparation Initiatives

Safer Foundation received a grant from the Department of Labor (DOL) called I- Matter. The goal of the grant was to improve employment outcomes for 18 to 24-year-olds who have been impacted by the justice system or who have left high school early. The training focused on high demand, high growth industries such as Advanced Manufacturing, Construction, Healthcare, Hospitality, and Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics. **Black Hawk College’s** Business Training Center (BTC) provided the Advanced Manufacturing training using the IGNITE system. IGNITE--Level 1 is an introduction to Advanced Manufacturing that includes an online tool for each segment that builds the basic knowledge, provides quizzes to measure learning, and provides hands-on training in the areas such as small automation cells, robot programming, CNC, electrical circuits, pneumatics, safety, basic measurement, and mini projects. BTC provided five classes for the total of 330 contact hours. Out of 24 served students 20 were successful completers.

*The purpose of the Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) grant is to accelerate the time for underrepresented individuals living in poverty to enter and succeed in postsecondary education/training programs that lead to employment in high-skilled, high-wage, and in-demand occupations.*

The Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) at **Malcolm X College** (MXC) focuses on serving African American students who reside in eight community areas on Chicago's West Side, recruiting students in short-term programs in nursing and health sciences that can be completed in one year or less. WEI consists of a comprehensive, integrated experience incorporating career planning (exploration), preparation (classroom, clinical, and co-curricular experiences), and development (ongoing

professional learning). Project participants obtain the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in their chosen career paths. MXC has served 184 students through the WEI program. All WEI activities function as a primary lever for retention and success. The three program elements are (1) expansive financial support for student participants, (2) student development and engagement through a supportive community and strategic partnerships, and (3) strengthening institutional capacity to deliver services that support student success. MXC removes all financial barriers to completion. Participants receive first-dollar scholarships to cover tuition costs and reimbursements for uniforms, background checks, and drug tests required by programs and clinical sites. WEI students receive assistance for transportation, as well as vouchers to cover book and

Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

school supply purchases. For fiscal year 2023, WEI-IV served 184 students during the grant cycle. Of the 184 served, 121 completed their program, earning a basic or advanced certificate finishing with a completion rate of 68 percent (121/184). Of the completers, 57 percent (70/121) are African American, 47 reside in West Side neighborhoods, and 53 percent of West Side completers (26/47) are African American. WEI has successfully engaged the target population: 61 percent of students are African American, exceeding the required metric of 60 percent, and 38 percent reside in one of the targeted West Side neighborhoods. Of the 121 completers, 52 percent are employed (64/121).

Career Grow Chicago is a workforce training program in partnership with the City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services. The goal of the program is to provide resources and access to short-term training certifications, work-based learning experiences, and apprenticeships; assisting up to 3,614 Chicago residents from September 1, 2022, through December 31, 2024. While not restrictive to race/ethnicity, the program targets African American, Hispanic, and female populations - predominately residing on south side. Participating **Olive-Harvey College** (OHC) students currently reside in one of the 15 identified high priority communities and are underrepresented in high earning/high demand occupations. Students who enroll in the program receive a stipend to assist with tuition, books, and fees. They also receive hands-on instruction, tuition services, industry certifications, career coaching, on-the-job training, mentorship, and professional development. OHC saw an increase in the Transportation, Distribution, and Logistic programs; specifically, Diesel Technology, Aviation, and Commercial Driver's License (CDL). This coupled with overall improved recruitment tactics has created an increased demand for CDL which will lead to an expansion of the program for the next fiscal year. Career Growth Chicago has developed partnerships with several industry leaders, resulting in expanded opportunities for placement of OHC students via work-based learning and post-completion jobs. Of the 292 completers, 42 percent are currently employed.

The Weekend Warriors Program in Manufacturing Engineering Technology at **Richard J. Daley College** in partnership with the Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) provides the opportunity to address violence in the southwest side of Chicago, which usually takes place on weekends, by engaging individuals who have had encounters with the criminal justice system. They are offered industrial manufacturing and welding classes throughout the weekend. This program began as a pilot in the Summer 2019 semester. Based on a formative assessment, the Weekend Warriors program has undergone some programmatic changes to best address the needs of the program's participants. The third iteration of this program ran three student cohorts in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023. At the end of the program students earn a basic certificate in advanced manufacturing. Daley provides the education content and credit bearing courses, while IMAN supports students with robust holistic and wrap around services. Education elements led by Daley include welding, blueprint reading, materials, and robotics. In addition, the College supports foundation skill development in math, writing, and computer literacy. Critical elements of the success of this program led by IMAN staff include participant recruitment, case management, coordination, counseling, transportation, meals, and supplies, as well as artistic and musical therapy programming. The racial/ethnic composition for the Weekend Warriors program is 81 percent African American, 12 percent Hispanic, five percent two or more races, and two percent Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. The highest percentage of students, 78 percent, are in the age range of 18-32, and the participant gender is 93 percent males and seven percent females. This program has

experienced growth from two to three cohorts, and enhancements have been implemented to meet the students where they are with additional support for success. Students applied to and have been hired into welding positions and manufacturing companies such as Coca Cola Bottling.

*Apprenticeships are hands-on training programs that blend practical work experience with classroom learning, offering individuals a direct pathway to acquiring specific skills and qualifications in various industries.*

Apprenticeships are hands-on training programs that blend practical work experience with classroom learning, offering individuals a direct pathway to acquiring specific skills and qualifications in various industries. They provide underrepresented populations with accessible and equitable opportunities to enter and thrive in well-paying careers by emphasizing practical experience, skill development, a college degree or certificate, and inclusivity, at no expense to

the apprentice while earning wages. Project Hire-Ed, implemented in Fall 2019 at **College of DuPage**, acts as a conduit between education and employers by providing access and tools to address skills gaps. Project Hire-Ed supports workforce extension, development, and acceleration, using apprenticeships and engaging communities intentionally to address needs of both employers and the future workforce. Apprenticeship opportunities have expanded from manufacturing into education, healthcare, IT, and business. These apprenticeships attract a broad range of participants, collaborating with over 30 regional employers, including Fermilab National Laboratory and Northwestern Medicine, and ensuring high-quality apprenticeship experiences. Apprentices receive case-managed support for career growth and development. This case-managed approach includes an intentional intake, onboarding and kick-off to their apprenticeship role, a first 90-Days on the Job Program, and continued support from a designated case manager. Ongoing support is available through direct access to a career coach available to assist with bridging career and education and gaining employability skills. Additionally, the case manager engages in assessment with both the employer and apprentice to ensure alignment and supporting access and referrals to wrap-around services to apprentices. Apprentices also have an on-the-job mentor to answer questions and provide support in the workplace. Mentors are provided training as a part of the apprenticeship program to ensure they are equipped to provide guidance to the apprentices at their workplace. During the 2022-2023 school year, with 65 percent of apprentices from diverse backgrounds, the program exceeded general college diversity by 10 percent, offering career pathways and livable wages while reducing barriers to starting postsecondary education. Achieving a 100 percent retention rate of apprentices showcases the program's commitment to apprentices' success. Furthermore, there was 100 percent program completion by apprentices, including achievement of a college certificate or degree.

The Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) is designed to expand skills gap training for minority students in distressed communities. The program removes barriers for students in poverty while they pursue short-term (one year or less) certificates in manufacturing, health care, business, information technology, and truck driving in order to gain skilled employment in high-demand occupations with wages 30 percent above the regional living wage. Participants must be low-income, and at least 60 percent of participants must be African American. The first WEI students at **Heartland Community College** were enrolled in courses beginning in the summer of 2022. Before acceptance into WEI, students have an intake interview with their WEI navigator to discuss the barriers they face and other academic and non-academic concerns. They must attend a

mandatory orientation, including hands-on computer training, before starting classes, and they are required to check-in monthly with their WEI navigator. Heartland provides support such as success coaching, mental health counseling, and tutoring to all students, but WEI navigators further assist WEI students in effectively utilizing these supports. Essential workplace skills training is available to all WEI students along with the Career Center support. WEI

*The first Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) students at **Heartland Community College** were enrolled in courses beginning in the summer of 2022. Out of 178 enrolled students, 139 (78 percent) were African American in the first year of WEI.*

students receive financial support for tuition, fees, textbooks, and personal protective equipment. They receive a stipend to reduce financial barriers such as transportation and to relieve the need to work extra shifts while in classes. Childcare support is also provided for those students who qualify. Students who owe a past-due balance to Heartland may be approved by the Dean of Students to register and have their debt forgiven after successful program completion. WEI navigators work closely with community support agencies to address student barriers such as housing and food insecurity, legal issues, and reentry following incarceration. Out of 178 enrolled students, 139 (78 percent) were African American in the first year of WEI. Seventy-two percent of WEI students who completed certificates were employed, with 51 percent of completers earning at least 30 percent above the regional living wage and 34 students continuing their college education. Twenty-two percent of certificate completers were employed on a pathway to 30 percent above the living wage by completing the first credential in a set of stackable credentials such as certified nursing assistant which leads into the registered nurse program. Due in large part to improved access through WEI, Heartland's overall African American enrollment increased from 632 in fiscal year 2022 to 730 in fiscal year 2023, a 15.5 percent increase. Enrollment of African American students aged 25 or older increased from 236 to 308 in that same period, a 30.5 percent increase.

The goal of the statewide Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) is to improve workforce equity in distressed communities and serve adults of poverty who face multiple barriers to training and living-wage job attainment. By design, at least 60 percent of the WEI participants must be African American. As lead college, **Illinois Central College** (ICC) created, supported, and expanded short-term workforce (credit and/or noncredit) training opportunities in these high-need communities focused on specific sectors with identified workforce gaps such as Health Careers, Manufacturing, Truck Driving, and IT. The ICC approach begins with an eight-week Workforce Readiness opportunity to meet individuals where they are with support in essential skills, social emotional learning, and applied math and English. Next, participants are provided with wrap-around support to earn credentials in one year or less that target occupations with documented workforce gaps. Upon completion, participants are connected with full-time, benefit-bearing jobs paying 30 percent above regional living wage. Through leveraging existing support systems in impacted communities to support students and providing high quality, supportive education, and intensive wrap-around services though credential completion and skill mastery, the College has exceeded the desired outcomes for the 2023 reporting period. Readiness training, stipend support for students, culturally competent student services and instruction, strong partnerships between ICC and community-based organizations, and commitments from local employers have all contributed to the success of WEI at ICC. In the academic year 2022-2023, the goal was to serve 167 students with the targets of 60 percent African American students, 60 percent completion rate,

Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

and 60 percent employed rate, and meet the target of earning 30 percent above the living wage. All these goals were achieved. A total of 207 students were served (124 percent of the goal) including 159 African American students (77 percent). The completion rate was 71 percent and the employment rate 72 percent, with the average Living Wage/Hourly Wage of \$20.05.

*For the academic year 2022-2023, 71 percent of the minority students served by Workforce Equity Initiative at Kaskaskia College completed their program of study. This is significantly higher than the Institution's most recent IPEDS graduation rate of non-white minority students of 16 percent.*

**Kaskaskia College** is in the fourth year of receiving the Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) grant through ICCB funding. The purpose of the grant is to create, support, or expand short-term (less than a year) workforce training opportunities in high-need communities focused on specific sectors with identified workforce gaps. The targeted population must include African American participants representing a minimum of 60 percent of the population served by the grant. The first year of the

grant began in November 2020 with staff being hired in the first part of 2021. To meet the objectives of the grant, three staff members were hired to carry out the goals that include a project lead, a coach/advisor, and a recruiter. Most recently, a partnership coordinator position was created, and staff hired. This partnership coordinator will build relationships with program specific employers and work to provide employment opportunities for completers as well as work with faculty of programs funded through WEI. The role of the coach is to oversee the student caseload and to provide wrap-around student services as well as act as the advisor for choosing programs and enrolling in courses. The recruiter is responsible for recruiting students into the programs and working closely with the coach/advisor. For the period of this report, 57 students were enrolled in certificate programs with 47 (or 82 percent) being African American averaging \$20.83 in hourly salary. The goal of the grant is to assist students with employment and in achieving a salary that is 30 percent above the living wage. The living wage during this period for Kaskaskia's area was \$19.51. Students in the program receive wrap-around support services to enhance student program participants opportunity for academic and career success. These services include intensive advising and check-ins, essential employability and soft skills training, and life skills development to prepare students to meet the academic and employment needs of regional business and employers. Free tutoring and access to timely care, an online therapy service, are also available. For the academic year 2022-2023, 71 percent of the minority students served by this program completed their program of study. This is significantly higher than the Institution's most recent IPEDS graduation rate of non-white minority students of 16 percent. Sixty-three percent of the students served by this program reported job placement in a position earning 30 percent above living wage.

**Kankakee Community College (KCC)** implemented career exploration and planning for unregistered students in Fall 2022. This program offers potential students career exploration and hands-on activities in a low-pressure, no-homework environment. The initial target demographic for the program sessions were students who had graduated from high school within the current and previous school years, were not enrolled in college, and were undecided on a particular career path. As the program developed and the College began to see an influx in Hispanics and relocated migrants, the target demographics shifted slightly to serve a broader range of recent graduates and those new to higher education or the district and unsure of a career path. In the fall of 2022, to

Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

respond to the "gap year" trend, KCC began programming for district students who had graduated from high school within the current/previous school years, were not enrolled in college, and were undecided on a particular career path. In this program, students conducted career exploration activities using resources and guidance from the KCC Career Services department. Students completed an interest assessment through the Career Services coach and discussed their results with the Career Services coordinator. The program culminated with a presentation from the Financial Aid and Academic Advising departments, allowing the students to ask any questions regarding funding opportunities and program requirements. For the program's second cohort, staff in the Hispanic Engagement Center intentionally recruited students who had visited the center during a term and would have some lag time before they could enroll in classes for the next term. These students were able to complete the career exploration prior to enrollment and were more educated about the programs at KCC. Additional support and attention were provided for those who speak English as a second language. Qualitative feedback collected from students was overwhelmingly positive, and it was agreed that the experience was helpful and insightful for students. Both cohorts were comprised of seven students. The first cohort comprised of one Hispanic student, one African American student, and four White students. Four of these students enrolled in the College prior to Spring 2024. The second cohort comprised four Hispanic students, one African American student, and two White students. Three students enrolled in undergraduate programs at KCC, and one student enrolled in adult education and bridge courses before Spring 2024. The College will continue to assess this program's effectiveness and monitor the success of the students who attend.

There is strong demand for highly skilled and credentialed employees in the modern workforce and education beyond high school that has become an economic imperative to achieving success in the workforce. Employers, educators, and policymakers are all focused on finding innovative ways for more students to access and complete

*Competency-based education (CBE) is an outcomes-based approach to earning a college credential that emphasizes advancement based on demonstrated learning rather than seat time.*

postsecondary education. Competency-based education (CBE) is one potential solution to this challenge. CBE is an outcomes-based approach to earning a college credential that emphasizes advancement based on demonstrated learning rather than seat time. In CBE, students work until they understand the content, rather than until course time runs out. To meet the increased enrollment of adult learners looking to "up-skill," **Lewis and Clark Community College (L&C)** introduced CBE welding courses in Spring 2022 with competencies embedded in conventional coursework linked with credit hours toward a degree or credential. In CBE, students' learning experiences are tailored to their individual needs. The program allows students to accelerate (or decelerate) the pace of credit accumulation to meet their evolving needs. Because CBE programs are focused on mastery rather than learning time, they can reduce the amount of coursework needed for a degree and decrease the costs of earning a credential. Amidst growing national concerns about student debt and the increased costs of higher education, CBE has the potential to lower costs to both the student and the institution. CBE can increase equity by making career pathways more explicit, thus increasing access and economic mobility for traditionally underserved populations such as racial/ethnic minority students and first-generation college goers. L&C's enrollment in CBE welding courses has increased over the past academic year, moving from 32 students in Fall 2022 to 42 students in Spring 2023. Further, the proportion of welding students

opting for the CBE track increased from 41 percent to 55 percent. Today, more than half of the College's welding students are enrolled in the CBE track. CBE success rates equaled or surpassed those in their traditional counterparts for 10 out of 14 courses in Fall 2022 and for seven of 12 courses in Spring 2023. L&C is now working to expand to additional courses (such as social media marketing) and programs (such as Early Childhood Education).

In 2019, Illinois Equity in Attainment initiative core team members reviewed college program offerings to identify potential certificate programs that would increase graduation rates for underrepresented students. This review focused on Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training, referred to as the "Basic Nurse Assistant Training" (BNAT) at **Moraine Valley Community College**. The primary purpose of the review was to determine the number of additional graduates the College could have awarded if Moraine Valley had offered a career certificate for the BNAT. During the 2011-2018 review period, the College could have graduated 1,925 additional unduplicated students had the BNAT certificate been awarded. The BNAT certificate was approved by ICCB to be awarded during fiscal year 2022, and fiscal year 2023 was the first full year the certificate was offered to students. Awarding a certificate provides students with the college graduation they deserve for meeting the competency requirements to become licensed CNAs. A strategy fully implemented for this initiative during fiscal year 2023 was the process of automatically awarding the BNAT certificate to successful course completers. Moraine Valley has an established process for automatically awarding some credentials (note: students are given the ability to opt out of their award), and the Records Office completes the graduation audit process for any BNAT student who earns a grade of "C" or better. In alignment with the equity-based review, this process has significantly increased the awarding of this certificate to underrepresented students, many of whom would not have continued to earn another certificate or degree at Moraine Valley. The following evidence was provided through a series of robust equity dashboards developed by the College's Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness. During fiscal year 2023, students enrolled in the BNAT program were more likely to be Pell recipients (31.9 percent vs. 20.8 percent for all students). Roughly 3.5 percent (vs. 4.1 percent overall) of BNAT students disclosed a disability to the Center for Disability Services. Approximately 49.3 percent of BNAT students were categorized as academically disadvantaged, economically disadvantaged, or both, while about 41.4 percent of all Moraine Valley students were categorized similarly. Even though BNAT students tend to be a diverse group of students with more academic and economic challenges, 539 students were awarded the Basic Nurse Assistant Training certificate during fiscal year 2023. In response to the success of awarding the BNAT certificate, Moraine Valley also began awarding the EMT-B certificate to students who successfully completed the Emergency Medical Technician course.

The goal of the **Morton College** One-To-One program is to expand access to digital devices in Career and Technical Education (CTE). The program was originally piloted under Morton's Nursing C.A.R.E. initiative during the academic year 2017-2018. In Fall 2021, the program was expanded to include CTE, developmental math courses, and College Study Seminar courses. The College recognized digital access as one of the barriers to learning for its student population. Morton focused on automotive, welding, and business courses under the CTE umbrella before expanding to the College's mathematics emporium courses and college success courses. Devices are offered to all students at no charge while enrolled in the course. In Fall 2022, the College deployed 43 iPads to students in the Automotive and Welding courses. These courses were chosen

for three reasons. First, these industries are technologically driven, and it is important for students to develop the technological capacity and adaptability to succeed in the field. Second, growth and innovation in these industries provides Morton's students with significant career opportunities. Third, these programs are led by instructors who embrace emerging technology. Also in Fall 2022, an additional 25 laptops were given to students in the developmental math emporium and Morton's College Success Seminar courses. In Spring 2023, the One-To-One program expanded to include students in English, math, and business courses. Forty-four laptops were given to students who participated in the One-to-One program. Again, iPads were distributed to students in the Automotive and Welding courses.

**Parkland College** hosts the IDOT Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP). The purpose is to support underrepresented groups in entering apprenticeships and expand the workforce for construction trades. The HCCTP pre-apprenticeship program aims to reach eligible underrepresented students to gain education and training that will prepare them to enter U.S. Department of Labor apprenticeship programs, specifically in trades that work on IDOT-funded infrastructure projects. Parkland's HCCTP program provides 450 hours of training to students that is composed of both classroom components and hands-on experiences. Topics covered include basic employment skills, financial management, job search skills, mathematics, and broad exposure to the construction field. Student tuition and participation expenses are fully paid for by the grant. Students also receive a \$10 per hour attendance stipend, which is paid weekly and meant to assist students in completing the program while possibly forgoing other employment for the duration of the program. The program runs two classes per year, with groups of 15 students attending classes for eight hours per day. The bulk of training occurs in Parkland's Construction Education Alliance, which was established in 2004 as a partnership between the College and the local trades to offer a shared training space and career exposure for community college students. The program is a blend of noncredit and credit-bearing instruction. Students obtain First Aid/CPR and OSHA 30 certifications through the completion of the program. Additionally, students complete two college courses including Introduction to Building and Construction and Introduction to Welding, resulting in four college credits earned at the time of program completion. These courses provide both relevant hands-on skills to participants, but also bridge into Parkland's Construction Management Associate Degree program should students choose that avenue after completion. The cornerstone of the HCCTP program's success is its close partnerships with the building trade unions. This provides the opportunity for students to learn from journeypersons actively working in the field and gaining exposure to the breadth of opportunities. Union representatives also comprise the program's advisory committee to ensure both relevance of programming and facilitate students' transition to employment as trade union apprentices. The HCCTP program outcome data demonstrates the program is fulfilling its mission. Since 2010, 33 cohorts of students have gone through the program resulting in 280 graduates. The program targets a 70 percent union placement rate. In fiscal year 2024, more than 70 percent of recent applicants were African American.



*Illinois Works seeks to prepare underrepresented persons to enter registered apprenticeship programs, utilizing training, legislative requirements, and bid credits. **Southwestern Illinois College** launched its version of the state program in July 2022.*

Illinois Works is a state program funded by a legislative initiative. The Illinois Works office is under the administration of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). The program seeks to prepare underrepresented persons to enter registered apprenticeship programs--union or non-union--utilizing a three-tiered strategy: training, legislative requirements, and bid credits. **Southwestern Illinois College** (SWIC) launched its version of the Illinois Works program in July 2022 with a cohort of eight students. Between July 1, 2022,

and June 30, 2023, the SWIC Workforce Development and Career Pathways department completed three cohorts of participants in the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program. Cohort 1 included nine enrollees, eight completers, and six reported transitions to the workforce or further educational opportunities. For Cohort 2, there were 11 enrollees, nine completers, and five known transitions. Cohort 3 included 15 enrollees, 12 completers, and eight reported transitions. Of SWIC's 35 enrollees during fiscal year 2023, 26 identified as African American, and one as Hispanic. There were eight women and four military veterans enrolled in the program during fiscal year 2023. The success of SWIC's Illinois Works program is linked to a combination of programmatic elements and institutional support and leverage. On a state level, Illinois Works is supported by two important incentives: 1) a legal requirement that contractors awarded state contracts estimated to cost \$500,000 or more must employ apprentices to perform at least 10 percent of the labor hours; and 2) a bid credit program for contractors who employ Illinois Works program completers as apprentices. This incentive structure is supported by a robust oversight infrastructure that includes program coaching; regular webinars, seminars, and conferences; and a performance-based model that requires training providers to meet program goals to receive 100 percent reimbursement of its expenses. Stipends, wrap-around services, and transition services serve as vehicles for retention and completion. Program requirements for career services and essential employability skills training improve participants' chances for success in transitions. SWIC provides its student success center, food and nutrition programs, technology assistance, career services, and access to free public transportation. College administrators coordinate and track the program, including the department director, career services coordinator, career and employment specialists, and a grant manager. The training programs are taught for college credit by adjunct instructors. None of the administrative or instructional salaries are charged to the grant, which allows SWIC to direct more of its allocated resources directly to serving program participants.

**South Suburban College** (SSC) received an award for the Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) grant. The grant is designed to assist students with short-term certificates within a year or less and to obtain employment at 30 percent above livable wage in high skilled, high wage, and in-demand occupations. With this grant, SSC has been able to have an impact within the African American community. The focus of the WEI grant is to service at least 60 percent African Americans, in which every year SSC has exceeded the metric in servicing approximately 80 percent to 82 percent of African Americans demonstrating the need within the College's communities. At least 80 percent being enrolled in the grant that are African Americans reside within at least ten communities that meet the criteria of unemployed, underemployed, and low income, "Disproportionately Impacted Areas". The project is designed to service 200 students with a focus

on employment sectors that are identified as workforce gaps in Pharmacy Tech, Nursing, Patient Care Technicians, Barber Technicians and CDL. Each year SSC expands the programs to offer additional short-term certificates and provide wrap-around services and resources to achieve the project's goal, which is to accelerate the time participants to enter and succeed in postsecondary education/training programs that lead to full-time employment in high skilled, high wage, and in-demand occupations paying at least 30 percent above the regional living wage (\$25.00/hr) or is on a pathway to a family sustaining wage. The college adopted a case management model with wrap-around services/activities to support students from recruitment, enrollment, retention, completion, and employment. Services include advising/counseling, student assistance program (mental health services), tutoring, financial support, progress monitoring, midterm-check-ins, essential skill workshops, career readiness boot camps, professional development and employer-spotlights/career fairs. Most of the objectives have been met or exceeded the 60 percent target. Eighty-two percent of the two hundred participants enrolled in the project are African American. At least 20 percent of participants transitioned to postsecondary education, 120 participants earned certificates, and 72 participants are employed.

**Triton College's** Skill Enhancement and Employee Development (S.E.E.D.) program, managed through the Center for Access and Accommodative Services (CAAS) in partnership with the School of Continuing Education, assists students with disabilities, specifically those on the autism spectrum or those who have cognitive disabilities, with obtaining the technical, academic, and social skills necessary to secure competitive employment, enhancing their capacity to live and work independently. Upon graduation, students may choose to join the workforce and/or begin or continue college-level studies. The S.E.E.D program launched in 2022 and was partially funded through an Innovative Bridge and Transition Program Grant through the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). The S.E.E.D. program was awarded ICCB IBT funding for a second year in 2023. A hands-on program culminating in a work-based learning experience, S.E.E.D. includes interactive lectures and discussions with an instructor as well as tools to regularly assess comprehension. Lesson topics include essential employability skills, including job expectations, teamwork, self-advocacy, problem-solving, professionalism, dependability, job accommodations, co-worker relationships, social communication, financial management, technology, public transportation, coping skills, and career skills, such as interviewing and resume and cover letter writing skills. The program can be completed in 30 weeks, which includes 120-hours of classroom instruction with hands-on employability skills training, a 30-hour on-campus work experience, and 75 hours of community work experience that students can complete through employer partners. Both work experiences feature the opportunity for students to work with their supervisor to identify skills they will be working toward improving while completing their hours. Upon program completion, students earn the Skill Enhancement and Employee Development Certificate through the College's School of Continuing Education. Students can take a credit or noncredit course of their choice while enrolled in the program. Students also engage with campus and community partners to increase their independence and advocacy skills. Grant funding has fully covered tuition, textbooks, and supplies, as well as an on-campus work stipend for student participants. In fiscal year 2023, 26 students enrolled in the program with 23 students (88.4 percent) completing all requirements for the S.E.E.D. Certificate. Of the 26 students, nine students (34.6 percent) were employed in their community at the time of completing the S.E.E.D. program. Thirteen students (50 percent) were enrolled in credit or noncredit courses at Triton College the semester after completing the S.E.E.D. program. Since July 1, 2023, the program has seen an enrollment of 24

Underrepresented Groups Report  
Fiscal Year 2023

students, with 12 students completing all program requirements and 10 students currently working on completing the requirements.

**Southwestern Illinois College** (SWIC) launched a Practical Nursing (PN) program in an underrepresented demographic area with the intention of leveraging opportunities for the participants to be able to enter a thriving industry. This program is designed to educate and train participants in a short amount of time and have them prepared to go directly into the field to support the increasing need for qualified healthcare professionals. This program was originally launched in 2022 and was active from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. After the first year of the program, SWIC's objective was to implement several strategies to improve the retention, completion, and licensure passage rates of its PN program. The College implemented a one-week mandatory boot camp for all incoming PN students. The boot camp educates students on time management, studying, and test preparation. It also helps identify at risk students and provide them with more in-depth tutoring, resources, and guidance to help prevent them from dropping or failing. Furthermore, students take pre-program Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI) assessments, which gives them the opportunity to learn and master nursing concepts and allows the team to identify students early on who could have barriers to being successful. SWIC hired a nursing-specific tutor for additional support services. The tutor has all the necessary resources to assist, including access to course content and participation in PN courses and labs. The program utilizes the College's existing student support systems to help program participants navigate the challenges of completing college-level courses. The program coordinator maintains relationships with the students, provides mentoring, and develops partnerships with local healthcare facilities to assist in the transition from the learning environment to the workplace, all of which promotes retention and success in the program. The Financial incentives attached to this program include fully paid tuition, books, and fees. Participants are provided clinical opportunities with local health care providers and their clinic uniforms. As a result of these interventions and barrier reduction support services that were added to the program, the program's NCLEX passage rates increased from 33 percent in academic year 2021-2022 to 75 percent in academic year 2022-2023. In addition, the student retention rate increased from 72 percent to 90 percent.

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