



**FALL 2023 ILLINOIS
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
OPENING ENROLLMENT
REPORT**

October 2023

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SYSTEMWIDE HEADCOUNT ENROLLMENTS INCREASE 5.7 PERCENT FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR AND REGISTER SECOND LARGEST FALL-TO-FALL INCREASE IN THIRTY YEARS

Overall, the Illinois Community College System opening Fall 2023 enrollments had an increase in both headcount (+5.7 percent) and Full-time Equivalent (FTE) (+5.2 percent) from the previous year. The opening enrollments reflect the end of the regular fall registration period which is usually the 10th day of class. The preliminary counts derive from the web-based ICCB Fall 2023 Enrollment Survey.

The Fall 2022 to Fall 2023 increase of 5.7 percent is the second largest Fall-to-Fall enrollment growth in the last thirty years. Only the Fall 2008 to Fall 2009 increase of 7.4 percent during the Great Recession was higher. The pandemic had a profound effect on enrollment and Illinois community colleges continue to aggressively recruit and retain students. A variety of newly funded initiatives targeting programs in high-demand fields have assisted in attracting students, such as the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) and Pipeline for the Advancement of the Healthcare Workforce (PATH). Other innovative initiatives like the Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) are expanding high demand training opportunities and increasing enrollment and expanding opportunities for minority students in at-risk communities.

Illinois community colleges also continue to utilize high school partnerships and are offering even more dual credit courses and programs that will lead high school students on a pathway to college or a credential directly to the workforce. The availability of in-person instruction to pre-pandemic levels has additionally had a significant positive impact on enrollment in instructional areas dependent on it, such as Career and Technical Education, Vocational Training, and Adult Education. Finally, Illinois remains a national leader for students enrolled in community college transfer to four-year institution programs. Much of this can be attributed to the strong statewide articulation mandate (the Illinois Articulation Initiative) that facilitates transfer of courses between community colleges and Illinois four-year institutions.

The Fall 2022 to Fall 2023 rate of enrollment incline for the Illinois Community Colleges System is outpacing growth nationally. According to a [Report](#) released by the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) Research Center, a nonprofit organization that tracks postsecondary enrollment patterns, public 2-year sector (i.e., community colleges) Fall 2023 enrollment nationally increased 4.4 percent from the previous year as compared to the 5.7 percent growth in Illinois.

Significant findings from the ICCB Fall 2023 Community College Opening Enrollment Report include:

- Fall 2023 headcount enrollments (+5.7 percent) and Full-time Equivalents (FTE) enrollments (+5.2 percent) both increased significantly from the previous year.
- Thirty-six community colleges experienced an increase in headcount enrollment from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023, while twelve community colleges had a decrease.

- Instructional areas often dependent on in-person instruction increased headcount enrollments in Career and Technical Education (+10.4 percent) and Vocational Skills Training (+6.3%) in Fall 2023 compared to the previous year. Student enrollment in Transfer programs also had an uptick compared to the previous year with an increase of 1.8 percent.
- Adult Education, which is also mostly dependent on in-person instruction, increased headcount by 20.8 percent from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023. Adult Education serves a significant number of at-risk students, and the pandemic exacerbated issues for that population.
- For Dual Credit, which allows academically prepared high school students to simultaneously earn credits that count toward a high school diploma and a college degree, headcount enrollments increased 8.4 percent in Fall 2023 compared to Fall 2022.
- While the number of distance education students decreased in Fall 2023 as compared to the previous year, it remains a prevalent and flexible form of course delivery with 42.3 percent of students enrolling in at least one online course in the current Fall as compared to Fall 2019 (pre-pandemic) at 24.3 percent.

Table 1 provides systemwide comparative fall census enrollment counts for the last five years. Fall 2023 headcount enrollments increased but remain below pre-pandemic enrollments in Fall 2019. The Fall 2022 (N = 233,758) to Fall 2023 (N = 247,178) increase in enrollment represents the second consecutive year of growth after a low in Fall 2021 (N = 230,490). The FTE figures reflect the total number of credit hours being taken by students divided by 15, which is the number of semester hours traditionally considered a full-time class load. The FTE enrollment was 139,764 in Fall 2023. Statewide FTE enrollments are up the equivalent of 6,851 full-time students (FTE +5.2 percent) from Fall 2022.

Table 1
SUMMARY OF OPENING FALL ENROLLMENT IN
ILLINOIS PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES FROM 2019-2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Headcount	271,336	233,777	230,490	233,758	247,178
% Change from Previous Year	-4.3%	-13.8%	-1.4%	1.4%	5.7%
FTE	157,873	138,237	132,358	132,913	139,764
% Change from Previous Year	-4.0%	-12.4%	-4.3%	0.4%	5.2%

Data Source: ICCB Fall 2023 Enrollment Survey and ICCB Centralized Data System–Fall Enrollment (E1) Student-Level Submission for Fall 2019-2022.

Opening Fall Headcount and FTE Results by College. Table 2 provides comparative information by college for Fall 2019 through 2023 headcount enrollments. A one-year comparison

between Fall 2022 and Fall 2023 among the 48 community colleges shows that nearly three-quarters of the colleges reported an enrollment gain. Ten colleges reported headcount decreases of one percent or more. Thirty-four colleges exhibited headcount enrollment increases of one percent or above. Four of the colleges experienced little or no change (less than +/- one percent).

Table 3 provides college level comparative data on FTE enrollments for the most recent five-year period. Over the past year, FTE decreases are posted by nine colleges, and 36 colleges reported increases. Three of the colleges experienced little or no change in FTE (less than +/- one percent).

Opening Fall Headcount Online Enrollment Statewide and by College. Online instruction is an important part of the delivery of instructional programs in the community college system. Fall 2023 is the sixteenth year that online enrollments have been reported from all colleges in the Opening Fall Enrollment Survey. Tables 4 and 5 provide unduplicated and duplicated headcount online enrollment for Fall 2019 through Fall 2023. There are 210,354 duplicated online enrollments and 104,506 unduplicated online enrollments for Fall 2023. Duplicated online headcount enrollments decreased 4.3 percent (-9,414) from Fall 2022, while Fall 2023 unduplicated online enrollments decreased 5.5 percent with 6,073 fewer students than Fall 2022. Based on unduplicated beginning of term counts, in Fall 2023 online headcount enrollments (unduplicated) accounted for 42.3 percent of overall headcount enrollments, which is lower than last year (47.3 percent). Figure 1 represents the statewide proportion of online student enrollments (i.e., students enrolling in at least one online course) versus on-campus only students. Online students accounted for 42.3 percent of the overall student population in Fall 2023. Similarly, in Fall 2022, online student enrollments represented 47.3 percent of all students, in Fall 2021 represented 56.8 percent, and in Fall 2020 represented 61.9 percent. In contrast, prior to the pandemic, online enrollments represented only 24.3 percent of the population in Fall 2019.

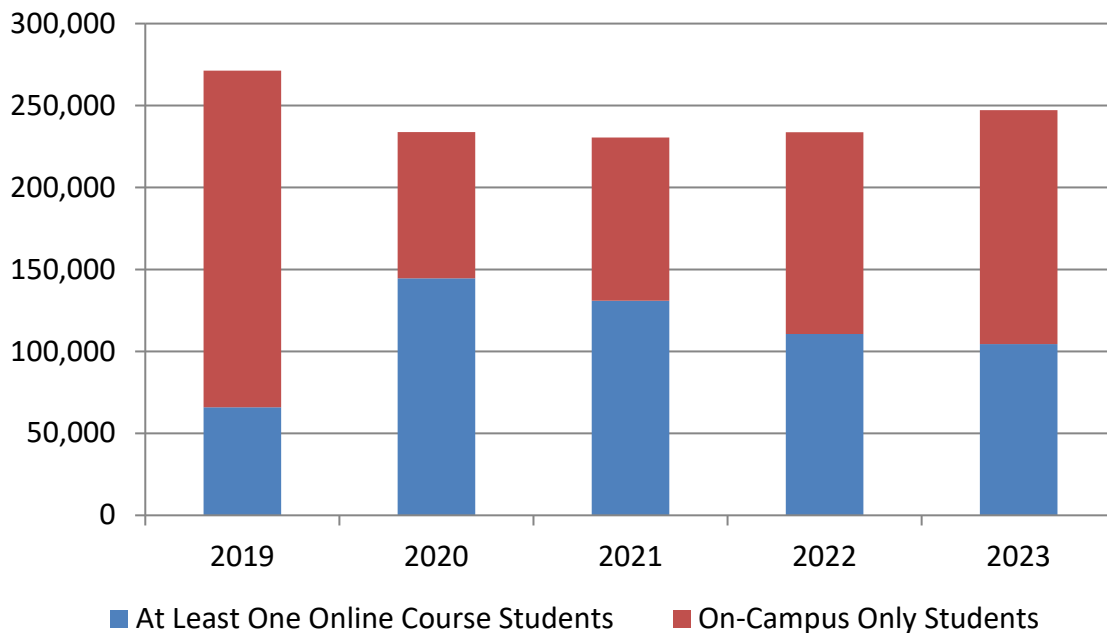


Figure 1: Opening Fall Headcount by Online Course Students versus On-Campus Only Students, 2019-2023

Table 6 provides opening online FTE enrollments for Fall 2019 through Fall 2023. There are 42,387 online FTE enrollments in Fall 2023, which is a decrease over Fall 2022 (-7.6 percent or -3,488 FTE). In Fall 2023, online FTE enrollments accounted for 30.3 percent of overall opening FTE enrollments, which is a drop from Fall 2022 (34.5 percent).

The Fall 2023 online unduplicated headcount is 93.9 percent of its corresponding 5-year average (N = 111,321). The Fall 2023 online duplicated headcount is also below its 5-year average (88.7 percent; N = 237,067). The online FTE for Fall 2023 is below its 5-year average (87.1 percent; N = 48,683).

Opening Fall Headcount Enrollment by Instructional Program Area Statewide and by College.

Table 7 provides Fall 2023 opening enrollments by instructional program area. This is a newer table within the report reflecting additional items collected for the first-time in 2021 as a part of the Fall survey process. The collection of more granular data at the instructional program area level will allow for a deeper understanding of enrollment trends. Transfer was the largest instructional program, accounting for 56.9 percent. Career and Technical Education was the second largest instructional program, accounting for 26.6 percent of enrollments in Fall 2023. Students in Adult Education (ABE, ASE, and ESL) comprised 9.9 percent of enrollments, while 5.2 percent of enrollments were in General Associates programs. Enrollments in Vocational Skills (1.1 percent) and General Studies (0.2 percent) programs represented only about one percent of enrollments in Fall 2023.

Figure 2 provides fall opening enrollment headcount by instructional program area for Fall 2019 through Fall 2023. Short-term, from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023, increases in enrollment occurred for students enrolled in the following curriculums: Adult Education (+20.8 percent), Career and Technical Education (+10.4 percent), Vocational Skills (+6.3 percent), and General Studies Certificate (+0.4 percent). These instructional areas, which primarily lean on an in-person and hands-on curriculum, were impacted substantially by pandemic and the necessity in moving many courses to remote or online modalities. With more in-person course options in Fall 2023, these instructional areas have an uptick in enrollment. General Associate (+2.8 percent) and Transfer (+1.8 percent) instructional areas also saw increases in enrollment from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023. Longer-term, from Fall 2019 to Fall 2023, nearly all instructional program areas experienced enrollment declines ranging from 6.1 percent in Career and Technical Education to 34.3 percent in General Associate. Only Adult Education showed enrollment growth (+7.4 percent) from Fall 2019.

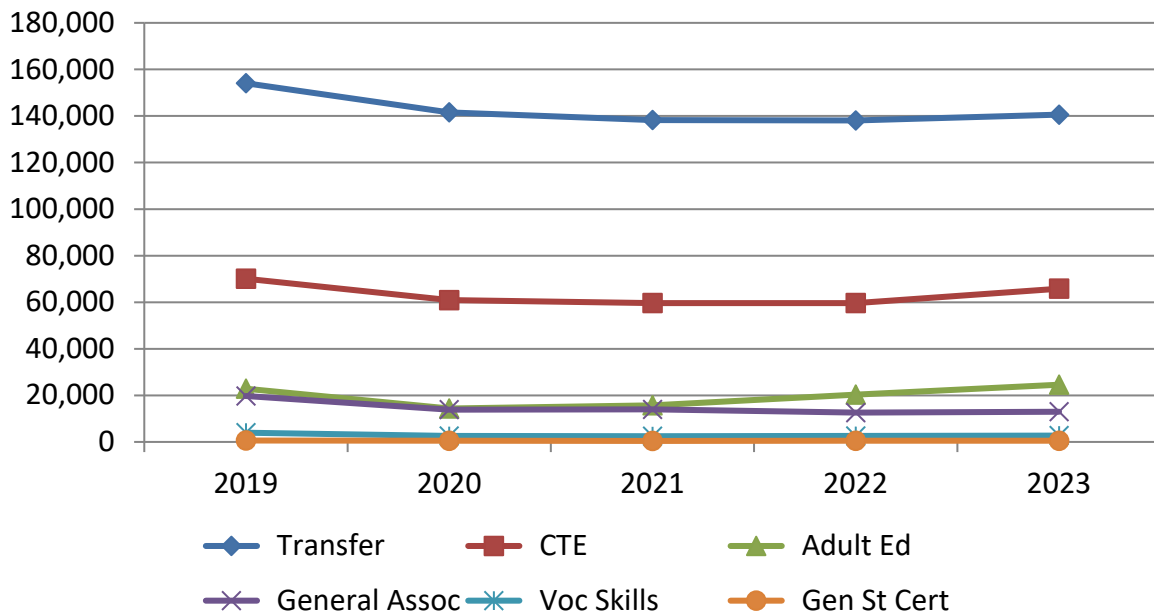


Figure 2: Opening Fall Headcount by Instructional Program Area, 2019-2023

Opening Fall Headcount Dual Credit Enrollment Statewide and by College.

Table 8 provides opening headcount enrollments of dual credit students in Fall 2023. Like Table 7, this table reflects the addition of new items collected in the Fall survey beginning in 2021. At the beginning of the Fall 2023 semester there were 41,946 enrollments for dual credit students, which represented about one in six enrollments (17.0 percent). Opening dual credit enrollments increased 8.4 percent from last fall and increased 18.9 percent from Fall 2021.

Additional Background. The Fall 2023 preliminary summary student counts in this report (Fall 2023 Opening Enrollment Report) derive from the web-based ICCB Fall 2023 Enrollment Survey. Beyond the survey, which allows ICCB and the Illinois Community College System to timely address stakeholder inquiries about fall enrollment, ICCB also annually collects student-level data from community colleges for the fall term. Upon finalization of the data in late fall, the nuanced data will allow ICCB to more fully analyze instructional areas, demographics, and other student characteristics.

It should be noted the counts in this report also only provide a "snapshot" of opening fall term enrollment for year-to-year and institution-to-institution comparisons. The diversity of the community college system and its students is not fully captured in these opening enrollment snapshot data. Community college flexible scheduling (e.g., accelerated course modules, intensive late start classes, etc.) is necessary to accommodate student schedules and compete successfully in the marketplace. Hence, enrollment trends are more fully captured through use of annual data. More complete annual data are available via [ICCB's Data Book](#). The joint ICCB-IBHE [Illinois Postsecondary Profiles](#) platform also provides pertinent trend information on Enrollment, Affordability, Progress, Advancement, and Completion for all 2- and 4-year higher education institutions in Illinois.