



EQUITY WORKING GROUP FOR
BLACK STUDENT
ACCESS AND SUCCESS
IN IL HIGHER EDUCATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Illinois' higher education and workforce systems are failing Black students. Between 2013 and 2018, postsecondary enrollment for Black Illinoisans dropped 29.2%, indicating a crisis for Illinois and its Black students. Additionally, Black students in Illinois who do enroll in college are significantly less likely than their white peers to be retained by institutions and to complete with a degree or credentials.¹

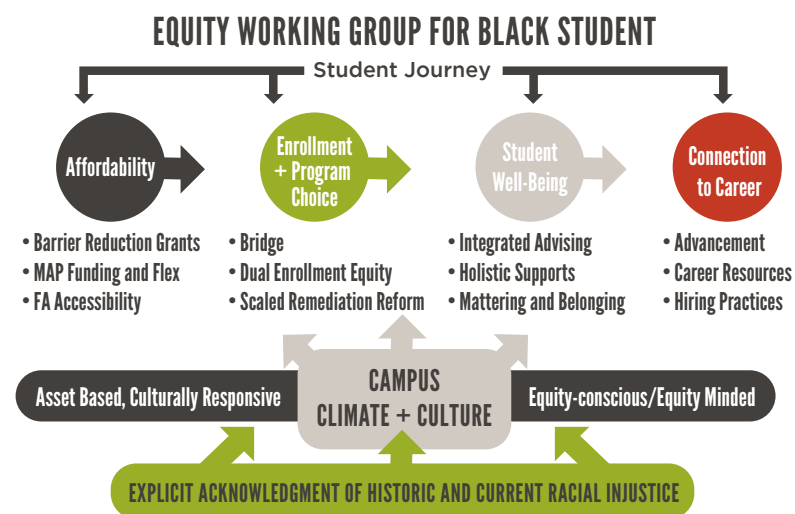
To address racial equity gaps that exist from high school graduation through entry in the workforce, over 40 leaders from across the state representing secondary and postsecondary education, elected officials, government agencies, business, community-based organizations, and philanthropy were convened by Chicago State University President Zaldwaynaka Scott to form the Equity Working Group for Black Student Access and Success in Illinois Higher Education. With the mission to identify actions needed to close equity gaps to enable Black students, families and communities to thrive and survive in Illinois, the Equity Working Group (EWG) was oriented by two key questions: How can we address systemic racism that shows up in our practices and policies and change those practices and policies to be equitable. How can we

collaborate and work jointly to knock down barriers that have prevented our system from serving students and families equitably?

The multi-sector action plan outlined in this report flows from deep examination of these two questions and is oriented by four guiding principles. First, Black students should be treated as experts of their own experience, as well as customers of educational institutions, and should be involved in sustained efforts to evaluate, redesign, and improve the policies, practices, and systems of support. Throughout the report, student voices and perspectives are elevated. Second, data must be collected, analyzed, and shared over time to ensure that equity goals are being met, both within institutions and at the state level. Third, it is not enough for a promising program to exist; investments must be made to allow full access and success for Black Students and programs should be evaluated on their contributions to closing racial equity gaps. Finally, addressing the challenges facing Illinois' Black students requires an examination of, and perhaps thinking differently about, institutional and philanthropic funding priorities. Innovating within current budget constraints and allocating more resources to achieving equity goals both must be prioritized.

Taken together, the framework (see Figure 1?) summarizes the solution areas identified by the group. At the most foundational level, closing equity gaps for Black students in Illinois requires honest acknowledgement of the historic and current racial injustices embedded in postsecondary policies and practices in our nation and state. From a commitment to dismantling racial injustices embedded in educational practices flows a commitment to the creation of a higher education funding formula that prioritizes racial equity and that includes clear state-defined metrics to track the impacts of institutional funding on closing existing equity gaps over time. In addition to increasing financial resources for institutions serving large numbers of Black students, institutional leadership must prioritize making college and university campuses safe and supportive environments in which Black students' sense of belonging is prioritized and in which Black students see themselves represented in the faculty and staff that serve them. From this grounding, solutions aimed at dismantling unfair barriers to Black student success must be pursued at each step of the educational journey.

Higher education must be truly accessible and affordable; policies and practices that impact Black students enrollment and persistence in a program of choice must be equitable; a holistic approach to Black student well-being must be prioritized by institutions; and ensuring Black graduates entering the workplace are connected to jobs with family sustaining wages and compensated in the same manner as their white peers must be prioritized across and beyond the learning journey.



REFERENCES

1 <https://www.ibhe.org/equity.html>

ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

MAKE HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE FOR ALL ILLINOIS BLACK STUDENTS

All Black students in Illinois should be able to access and afford a high-quality postsecondary education.

College access and affordability presents a significant barrier to Black students' enrollment and success in Illinois higher education. To make higher education accessible and affordable for all Illinois Black students, Illinois must:

DIRECTIVES

- Remove the ability to pay as a barrier for Black students through barrier-reduction grants that provide small amounts of money to cover costs which might otherwise prevent students from persisting in college.
- Increase need-based funding and program flexibility to help low-income Black students overcome cost barriers in their postsecondary education.
- Make college more accessible by strengthening early connections to college-affirming experiences, including asset-based high school counseling and culturally-responsive financial literacy and financial planning support for Black students and their families.

Indicators of Success

- With greater targeted financial aid and barrier-reduction grants, the average net price of college for low-income Black families is at an affordable level, as defined by the Institute for Higher Education Policy or a similar metric adopted by Illinois.
- MAP is fully funded so that all eligible students receive a MAP grant equal to the cost of tuition.
- Racial equity gaps in student loan default rates and amount of debt held after graduation are eliminated.

INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS & SUPPORT

FOSTER BLACK STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUCCESS BY PROVIDING ROBUST INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTS

All Black students should be provided the supports and structures they need to thrive in Illinois higher education.

Illinois' higher education systems need to play an active role in supporting Black students to succeed in college by providing robust supports for academic, basic needs, and individual well-being success at each step in the student journey. Higher education institutions can foster Black students' academic success by doing the following:

DIRECTIVES

- Improve Black students' access to existing dual enrollment and dual credit programs, and expand dual programming offerings to high schools serving predominantly Black students.
- Strengthen bridge and cohort programs for Black first-generation students, Black students from low-income backgrounds, Black transfer students, and Black adult learners to promote seamless transitions and student success.
- Revise admissions criteria to eliminate structurally racist practices and increase targeted outreach to Black high school students.

Indicators of Success

- Racial equity gaps in dual credit enrollments are eliminated.
- Dual credit and dual enrollment programs are available in all communities serving Black students in Illinois.
- Racial equity gaps in retention, transfer, and completion rates are eliminated.
- All Black high school graduates are either employed or enrolled in higher education 12-16 months after graduation.
- College recruitment efforts include strong recruitment of Black students in communities across Illinois.
- Racial equity gaps in undergraduate enrollment are eliminated.

ENROLLMENT & PROGRAM CHOICE

SUPPORT BLACK STUDENTS TO ENROLL & PROGRESS

All Black students in Illinois should have access to the full range of programs of study offered, and receive robust advising and support to help them enroll in higher education and progress towards completion of their degree.

Black students make up a declining share of undergraduate enrollment in Illinois, and many of those who do enroll lack the guidance they need to progress towards completion. In order to support Black students to enroll and persist, Illinois institutions must:

DIRECTIVES

- Scale reform of developmental education to shorten time-to-degree and increase student success.
- Close equity gaps in access to advisors, and provide antiracist academic advising to students that is asset-based, proactive, and sustained to strengthen Black students' sense of purpose and self-efficacy.

Indicators of Success

- High stakes placement tests are no longer used to determine remediation needs, and all remediation is provided in the context of credit bearing courses.
- All students are provided multiple, rigorous math pathways that align to well-paying careers of today and tomorrow.
- Student : advisor ratios are manageable across the state, ensuring strong, individualized advising for all Black students.

STUDENT WELL-BEING

PRIORITIZE BLACK STUDENTS' HOLISTIC WELL-BEING

All Black students in Illinois should be provided with a safe environment and access to holistic, culturally competent supports and mental health services on campus.

The quality of advising and supports provided to Black students has an enormous impact on their sense of belonging, which in turn is positively correlated with persistence and completion. To level the playing field for Black students and attend to the impacts of structural racism on their experiences and outcomes, Illinois institutions must:

DIRECTIVES

- Provide holistic student supports including trauma-informed, antiracist mental health services for Black students on campus that attend to the lived experiences of Black students and their families.
- Examine campus policies and hiring practices and strengthen professional development for all campus employees to improve Black student safety, belonging, and inclusion on campus.

Indicators of Success

- Student support structures have been redesigned at scale to provide an advising experience for students that is sustained, integrated, proactive, and personalized.
- Black students have ready access to high quality, antiracist mental health services on campus.
- All faculty, staff, and student support professionals are trained in cultural competency.
- Campus climate and culture assessments are being administered frequently and are being used to inform campus policy changes aimed at strengthening Black students' safety and well-being.

CONNECTION TO CAREER

BUILD STRONG BRIDGES INTO THE WORKPLACE FOR BLACK STUDENTS AND GRADUATES

All Black students in Illinois should be able to get a good job in their field of choice after graduation, earn the same wages as non-Black peers, and have the same opportunities for advancement in careers and at the next level of education.

Even after Black students graduate from postsecondary education, equity gaps persist in job placement and in the workplace through inequitable hiring practices, unequal pay, and a lack of guidance and mentorship for Black students as they navigate career paths for the first time. To build strong bridges into the workplace for Black students and graduates, Illinois must:

DIRECTIVES

- Build a stronger bridge between college and careers for Black students by promoting early career exploration and improving career connections throughout their time in college and beyond.
- Hiring practices and other internal company policies should prioritize closing equity gaps in the workforce.

Indicators of Success

- Racial equity gaps in labor force participation and unemployment rates are eliminated.
- Black graduates are being employed at the same rate as their peers at each institution.
- Large numbers of paid internships and apprenticeships are being held by Black students across Illinois.
- Racial equity gaps in entry-level salaries are eliminated.

HIGH-LEVEL OVERVIEW OF ACTIONS BY SECTOR

Each of the solution areas identifies actions that should be taken by leaders across sectors to improve equity in access and outcomes for students. A high-level summary of action ideas is provided here.

High Schools: Boosting college attendance by providing early college experiences, asset-based advising, and financial literacy that result in greater academic preparedness, a sense of belonging, and greater financial access to a postsecondary education.

- **Connecting College to Careers:** Equip teachers and counselors to promote Black students' sense of belonging in college and academic purpose through early and often career exploration conversations.
- **Early College Exposure & Coursework:** Expand Black student access to dual enrollment and dual credit programs, and lower barriers to Black student participation in these opportunities.

- **Access to Financial Aid:** Provide robust financial literacy and financial planning counseling for Black students and families.

Colleges & Universities: Promoting persistence by providing equitable access to programs of study aligned to careers, holistic advising, and a culturally responsive and safe campus climate.

- **Increasing Equitable Access:** Implement test-blind or test-optional policies to address structural racism in admissions practices.
- **Redesigning Remediation at Scale:** Discontinue the use of high-stakes placement tests to determine remediation needs and provide all remediation in the context of credit-bearing courses or free of charge to students prior to matriculation.
- **Connecting College to Careers:** Ensure that Black students have access to early and ongoing career exploration and co-curricular, work-based learning opportunities embedded in programs of study.
- **Improving Campus Climate & Culture:** Provide anti-racist training and professional development for all employees grounded in an asset-based view of Black students, and regularly conduct and campus climate surveys to inform ongoing improvements.
- **Supporting Student Persistence:** Provide culturally responsive advising and holistic student supports that attends to the academic and non-academic needs of Black students.
- **Reforming Administrative Policies:** Eliminate administrative holds that prevent students from registering for courses or obtaining transcripts because of small dollar debt.

Policymakers: Strengthening access and improving outcomes by aligning resources, setting priorities, reforming policies, enabling robust data use, and supporting seamless transitions.

- **Ensuring Equitable Funding:** Reform the funding formula to ensure equitable resources for institutions serving large numbers of Black students, and provide robust funding of student aid
- **Interrogating Policies:** Conduct an equity audit of all education and workforce development policies with an eye toward impact on Black student postsecondary attainment
- **Promoting Effective Data Use:** Collect, share, and utilize robust data on the impacts of state programs on Black student retention and completion.
- **Supporting Student Transitions:** Pursue and refine evidence-based policies that lead to equitable dual-credit/dual-enrollment programs, scaled reform of remediation, and seamless applicability of transfer credits.

Community-Based Organizations: Advancing a culture of college-going and improving student persistence and completion through aligned efforts increase access to resources and culturally responsive student supports.

- **Promoting Culturally Responsive Financial Literacy & Planning:** Lead partnerships to provide more culturally competent financial literacy and financial planning education for Black students and families across the state beginning when students are in middle school.
- **Strengthening a Culture of College-Going:** Strengthen trust in and knowledge of the value of postsecondary attainment and available financial aid resources by partnering on efforts to embed college conversations in community venues and increase the number of Black students completing the FAFSA.
- **Increasing Access to Emergency Aid:** Participate partnerships to expand access to emergency aid for Black students and to develop effective systems to connect students in need to barrier-reduction grants.
- **Connecting College to Careers:** Partner with educational providers and employers to strengthen career exploration opportunities and career readiness programs for Black students.

Philanthropy: Improving outcomes by seeding innovation, investing in promising practices and data infrastructure, and fostering high-impact cross-sector partnerships.

- **Aligning Investments:** Fund organizations that are leading advocacy efforts aligned to the Equity Working Group's recommendations.
- **Promoting Effective Data Use:** Support cross-sector partnerships that track and regularly publish finely disaggregated data on progress toward equity goals
- **Supporting Infrastructure for Improvement:** Provide funding for institutions to build out high-quality systems of predictive analytics aimed at supporting Black student persistence and completion.
- **Scaling Evidence-Based Innovation:** Provide resources for institutions, systems, and cross-sector partnerships to scale evidence-based innovations in supporting the persistence and completion of Black students.
- **Connecting College to Careers:** Invest in large-scale efforts to connect Black students with career opportunities and create matching programs to expand hiring opportunities for Black students in well-paying fields.

Business Community & Employers:

Promoting strong outcomes by increasing collaborations that connect college to careers and by ensuring hiring and retention practices are grounded in a commitment to equity.

- **Connecting College to Careers:** Expand high-quality work-based learning programs for Black students
- **Engaging Higher Education Institutions:** Expand employer presence and engagement with career centers at colleges and universities that serve large numbers of Black students.
- **Supporting Professional Development of Faculty & Staff:** Engage with college faculty and advisors to improve early and ongoing career exploration conversations with Black students
- **Improving Hiring and Employee Retention Practices:** Evaluate internal practices around internships, recruitment, salaries, promotions, and performance evaluation to prioritize equity.

The challenges facing Illinois' Black students, perpetuated by systemic racism, can only be addressed through the collaboration of these various sectors working together to remove barriers, address deeply inequitable policies and transform the system. Proposed solutions, promising practices, and a snapshot of the current state and road ahead are detailed in the full report. The members of the Equity Working Group for Black Student Access and Success in Illinois Higher Education are committed to the long-term work entailed in achieving equity in access and outcomes for Black students in our state. We invite you to join us in this work.



NOTE: This icon highlights recommendations that are based directly on student input, gathered from the Equity Working Group's student panel and focus groups

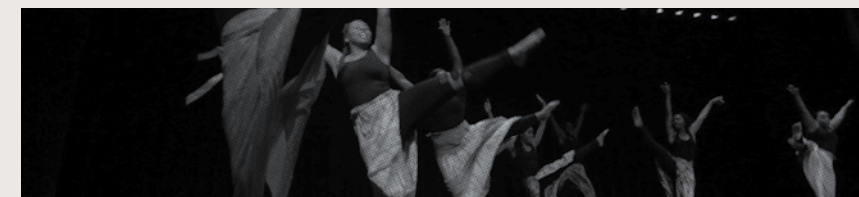


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EQUITY WORKING GROUP ACTION PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

STUDENTS ARE THE EXPERTS, AND SHOULD BE DEEPLY INVOLVED IN SUSTAINED EFFORTS TO EVALUATE AND REDESIGN THE SYSTEMS OF STUDENT SUPPORT.



DATA SHOULD BE COLLECTED, ANALYZED, AND SHARED OVER TIME TO ENSURE THAT EQUITY GOALS ARE BEING MET, BOTH WITHIN INSTITUTIONS AND AT THE STATE LEVEL.

IT IS NOT ENOUGH FOR A PROGRAM TO EXIST; INVESTMENTS MUST BE MADE TO INCREASE ACCESS FOR BLACK STUDENTS AND PROGRAMS SHOULD BE EVALUATED ON THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO CLOSING RACIAL EQUITY GAPS.



ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES FACING ILLINOIS' BLACK STUDENTS REQUIRES THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT FUNDING PRIORITIES. THERE IS A NEED TO BOTH INNOVATE WITHIN CURRENT BUDGET CONSTRAINTS AND ALSO

ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

DIRECTIVE | Remove ability to pay as a barrier for Black students in persisting and completing college through barrier-reduction grants

The financial burden of college presents a challenge to many Black students, not only as they consider enrolling in higher education, but also as they seek to persist and ultimately earn their degrees. For many students, one financial emergency—a car accident, medical emergency, lost job, or even the price of textbooks—can make the difference between earning their degree or not. Many Black students in Illinois are particularly vulnerable to this type of financial barrier—61% of Illinois Black families live in liquid asset poverty, meaning that their savings cannot cover three months of basic expenses, compared to only 28% of White families.² Barrier-reduction grants—small amounts of money intended to cover costs

that present a barrier to students' path to a degree—can make the difference between dropping out and remaining in school for many students. According to a 2014 community needs survey by All Chicago, a non-profit that provides emergency funds to students in Chicago, 25% of students surveyed who dropped out for financial reasons needed as little as \$1,000 to remain in school.³ Additionally, returning students often face challenges re-enrolling if prior account balances remain. Policies for returning students should be examined to support debt forgiveness when it poses a barrier for students to return to complete their education.

Higher education institutions, non-profit organizations, and other partners can help to

close these gaps in Illinois by providing small-dollar barrier-reduction funds. These grants can come in a variety of forms: retention grants, which target students who are near completion of their degree but are kept from graduating by small cost barriers; emergency funds, which target students at any point in their time at college who are experiencing a financial emergency or need additional money to pay rent or buy textbooks; and debt forgiveness for returning students who may have small, lingering account balances that prevent them from re-enrolling.⁴ All types of grants are crucial for many Black students experiencing financial hardship.



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CURRENT STATE

PROMISING PRACTICES

- All Chicago Emergency Fund: All Chicago is unique in that it provides a model for the ways in which CBOs, postsecondary institutions, and funders can work together. In 2020, All Chicago had 13 partner organizations that work closely with students who help connect emergency funds with students in need. In the first half of 2020, All Chicago assisted 969 students and disbursed \$462,536 with an average grant amount of \$475.⁵ 59% of grant recipients identified as Black/African American.⁶
- Georgia State University Panther Micro-Retention Grants: Georgia State uses robust data on students' academic progress, unmet financial need, and outstanding tuition balances to identify the students who could be retained with small-dollar grants. Students are offered micro grants on the condition that they agree to certain activities, such as meeting with a financial counselor to create a plan for how they will finance the rest of their education. In 2018, more than 2,000 students were retained through the Panther Retention Grant program.⁷
- City Colleges of Chicago's Chancellor's Retention Fund: Launched in Spring 2020, the fund removed outstanding debt from the Fall 2019 semester so that low-income students could remain enrolled in the spring.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Provide a wide array of accessible barrier-reduction grants that eliminate financial barriers that prevent Black students from persisting and completing college

This can be done by:

- Leveraging cross-sector partnerships and institutional funds for barrier-reduction grants to Black students in need;
- For programs that are created, tracking data on who receives or is denied by race, amount, retention, and graduation rates;
- Following best practices to make barrier-reduction grants as inclusive and effective as possible for Illinois' Black students.

SHORT TERM

Aid providers including 2- and 4-year institutions, philanthropy, and government agencies.

- Make institutional emergency aid more accessible for Black students and develop

retention/completion grant programs to provide small barrier-reduction grants for Black students who are at risk of dropping out due to financial need

- Set aside funds for grants of up to \$500-1,000 per student to help students complete their degrees or persist in the face of financial emergency.
- Students should be automatically identified for retention or completion grants, either by their advisors or by institutional data on tuition payments, financial aid, etc.
 - Retention/completion grants should target students who are close to completing their degree but have outstanding financial need.
 - Do not place GPA/academic eligibility criteria on retention/completion grants.
 - Follow best practices for grant distribution and follow-up with students when designing the grant system.
- Implement debt forgiveness programs for Black students who would like to return, but have small amounts of outstanding debt
- Administrative holds for small dollar amounts that prevent students from registering for courses play too large a role in equity gaps in persistence and college completion for Black students. Debt forgiveness programs should be implemented and made accessible.
 - Use broad eligibility criteria to be able to accept as many interested returning students as possible.
 - Publicize the program widely in Black communities to encourage low-income Black students to return to higher education.
 - Release administrative holds and allow students to register in spite of balances.

Grant providers, including 2- and 4-year institutions, philanthropy, and government agencies.

- Collect institutional data on community need and grant distribution
- All institutions should conduct an initial community needs survey to identify where need for emergency aid or general retention/completion grants exists on their campuses.
 - As grants are distributed, gather data on:
 - Type of expenses usually covered.
 - Average amount of grant requested.
 - Demographics of recipients (year in college, race, age, etc.)
 - Data should be shared with IBHE.

LONG TERM

Barrier Reduction Fund Grant Providers, Including Philanthropy

- Form partnerships to direct emergency funds to Black students most in need
- A current model example is All Chicago's Emergency Fund, in which foundations and corporate partners should provide funds, to be distributed to students identified by education-based CBOs and 2- and 4- year institutions.
- Where possible, CBOs and postsecondary institutions should facilitate the process by applying on behalf of students or expediting release of grant funds to students directly.
 - The COVID emergency grant process can serve as a model here—IBHE distributed funds to universities, and universities connected those funds with students.
- Collect robust data on program effectiveness of grants and publish data through impact reports and accessible data dashboards on a regular basis.
- 2- and 4-year institutions and Philanthropy
- Institutions should develop a high-quality system of early alerts to connect students in need with barrier-reduction grant money
- Institutional data on community need and grant distribution can be leveraged to develop early warning indicators that help universities plan interventions to keep students on track to graduate.
- Follow the example of institutions such as Georgia State University, who use predictive analytics to schedule advisor interventions, communicate with students about financial supports, etc. when students are in danger of not being retained/not completing their degree.
- Philanthropy can support such efforts by providing the funding necessary to build out these systems.

ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

DIRECTIVE | Increase need-based funding and program flexibility to help low-income Black students overcome cost barriers in their postsecondary education

In the early 2000s, Illinois served as a model to other states for strong post-secondary financial aid due to the Monetary Award Program (MAP).⁸ In 2001, there was enough MAP funding to serve every student who was eligible for the program, and grants covered 100% of a student's tuition and fees at public universities and community colleges. Over the past twenty years, however, as tuition and fees have increased dramatically, MAP funding has remained stagnant. As a result, the purchasing power of MAP has declined—in 2020, grants cover only 34% of tuition and fees at public universities and 36% at community colleges.⁹

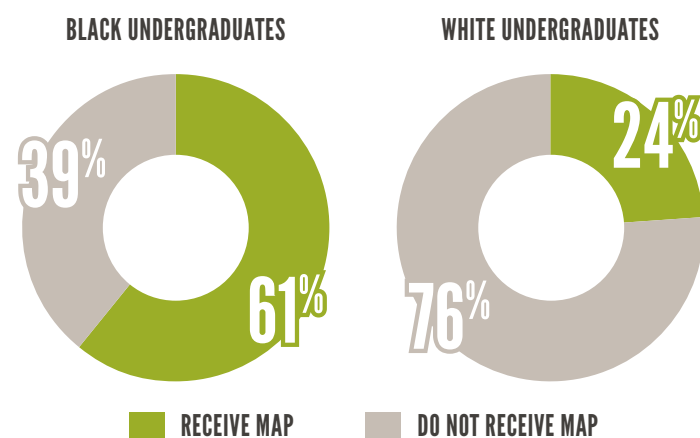
In addition, many eligible MAP applicants do not receive any MAP funding due to fund depletion. Funds are distributed on a first-come-first-serve basis based on when a student files a FAFSA (MAP uses FAFSA to determine eligibility, rather than require a separate application). Between 2017 and 2019, the number of eligible students denied MAP grants ranged from 104,588 to 82,799, and in 2019, 71% of denied eligible students were community college students.¹⁰ Unfortunately no data currently collected on those who do not receive MAP grants—neither their racial demographic, nor their ultimate outcomes. Collecting this data would be a strong step forward for the state to further understand where MAP is falling short in serving Illinois' Black students.

The only way to ensure effectiveness of the MAP program is to fund the program to match the level of student need. In fiscal year 2020, MAP received a \$50 million increase in funding from the state, which increased the number of MAP recipients by 10,056 and the average award size by \$260.¹¹ In fiscal year 2021, the Governor's Office proposed that MAP's budget be increased by an additional

\$50 million, but the budget was held steady at \$451.3 million. It has been estimated that around an additional \$900 million per year is required to fully fund MAP.¹²

Fully funding MAP will help Illinois better serve its Black students. According to ISAC, 59% of Black undergraduates in Illinois receive MAP funding.¹³

Percentage of public university students who receive a MAP grant to help pay for college, by race.



Source: ISAC Basic Program Data, February 2020; ISAC/IBHE Racial Data for MAP recipients, 2017.

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CURRENT STATE

LEGISLATION

- In FY20, state funding for MAP increased by \$50 million. This funding was maintained for FY21. The Governor's Office originally proposed to further increase funding by \$50 million as part of an effort to increase MAP funding by 50% over a four-year span, but due to COVID-19, MAP funding was kept level. MAP's current budget is \$451.3 million.

PROMISING PRACTICES

- Summer Pell: In 2017, the U.S. Department of Education reinstated the year-round Pell grant program after having suspended it in 2011. To be eligible, students must already receive Pell during the academic year and be enrolled at least half time during the year. Students are eligible to receive up to 150% of their award through this method (ex. \$1,500 in fall, \$1,500 in spring, \$1,500 in summer). Summer semester Pell usage counts towards the lifetime Pell limit of 12 semesters.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Increase MAP funding and flexibility to help low-income Black students overcome cost barriers in their post-secondary education

Until the MAP program is fully funded, there will be Black students who are denied aid due to lack of funds, or who are not supported to persist and complete because the available funding leaves an unfilled gap. While the state moves towards the goal of fully funding MAP, a few additional strategies can help to make MAP more effective and equitable for Black students.

This can be done by:

- Collecting, sharing, and utilizing robust data on MAP, both for the applicants who receive MAP and for those who do not;
- Creating a set-aside of 15% of MAP funding for community college students;
- Piloting a MAP Summer Grant program for one to two years to test extending grant terms from 9-months to 12-months;
- Committing to incremental budget increases for MAP every year until the program is fully funded.

SHORT TERM

State, 2- and 4-year institutions, ISAC, and high schools

- Collect, share, and utilize robust data on MAP, both for the applicants who receive MAP and for those who do not
- Mandate the collection and sharing of data between state bodies and institutions regarding the demographics of students who do or do not receive MAP, including race, type of institution attended, age, geographic location in the state, etc.
- Mandate the collection and sharing of data between state bodies and institutions regarding the outcomes of students who do or do not receive MAP, including whether they enroll in post-secondary education and whether they complete.
- Create a report card, data map, or dashboard that tracks this data and makes it available to legislators, policy advocates, institutions, and others in order to drive further equity-based reforms to MAP.

State and ISAC

- Improve access to MAP funding for community college students
- First-come-first-serve will no longer be necessary when MAP is fully funded; until then, establish a set-aside within the MAP budget for community college students to ensure that they are not disproportionately harmed by the first-come-first-serve disbursement model.

- A model for implementation could be the set-aside of \$75 million for community college students that was proposed by the Governor's Office in February 2020. This amount reflects the estimated amount needed for MAP and Pell to cover full tuition and fees for nearly all MAP-eligible community college students.¹⁴

State, Philanthropy, and Employers

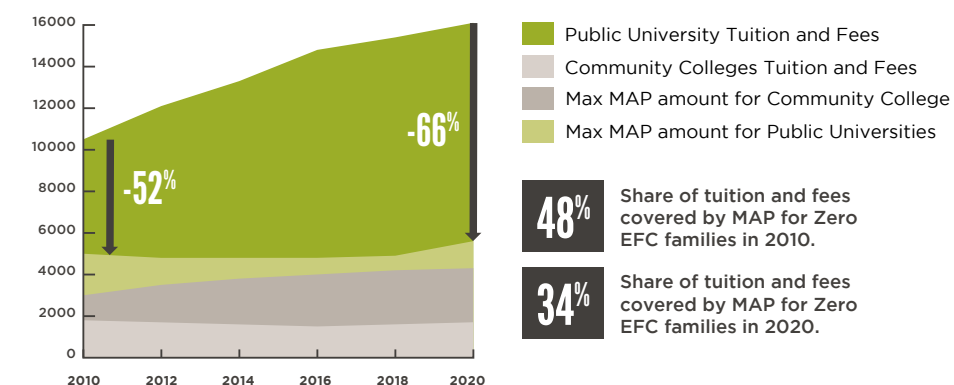
- Pilot a MAP Summer Grant program for one to two years to test the impact of extending grant terms from 9-months to 12-months
- All students who are eligible for MAP can apply to use MAP funds over the summer.
- Funding will be provided by foundations, philanthropic giving, corporate partners, etc. and will be set-aside for summer use.
- The administration of the program will be consistent with existing MAP functions under ISAC.
- Data should be collected to track academic progress, demographics (age, gender, race) and overall usage of the program.

LONG TERM

State policy, IBHE, and ISAC

- Commit to incremental budget increases for MAP every year until the program is fully funded
- Adopt an act that commits Illinois to fully funding MAP grants, binding the state to providing incremental increases for the program every year.
- While the Governor's previously proposed increases of \$50 million per year may be out of reach due to the pandemic, the State should commit to a steady increase that tracks with the state's economic recovery.

Annual tuition and fees for full-time students; highest MAP awards for students with Zero Expected Family Contribution.



Source: ISAC Basic Program Data, February 2020; ISAC/IBHE Racial Data for MAP recipients, 2017.

ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

DIRECTIVE | Make college more accessible by strengthening early connections to college-affirming experiences, including asset-based high school counseling and culturally-responsive financial literacy and financial planning support for Black students and their families

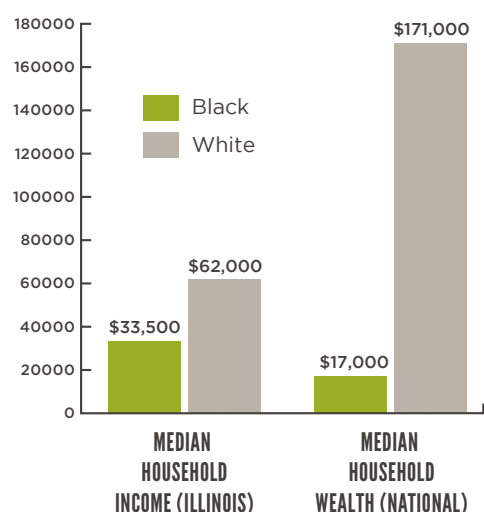
Efforts need to be made across sectors to provide Black students with access to a much wider array of college-affirming experiences. Asset-based high school counseling that promotes Black students' sense of self-efficacy is a critical piece of the access puzzle, but there are also important roles to be played by faith leaders and other community-

based organizations in helping Black students see themselves as college goers.

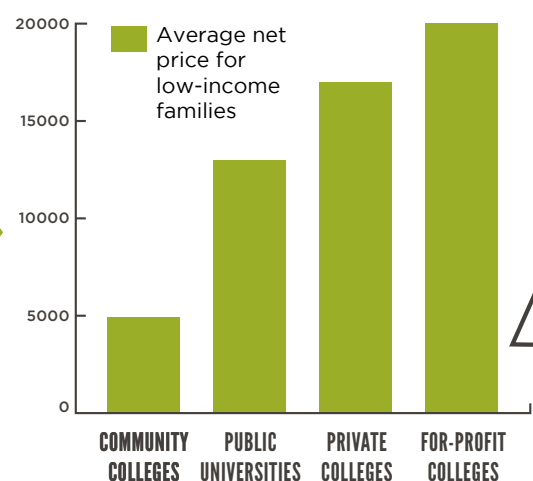
In addition, to increase the likelihood that Black students can fully utilize financial aid Illinois must expand and improve financial literacy programs, increase awareness of existing financial aid offerings, foster deeper conversations with students and parents about

financial planning for college, and break down common financial barriers which impede access to and completion of college for Black students. It is important to note, however, that financial literacy alone will not overcome wealth gaps or gaps between financial aid and the full cost of attending college.

Median household income (IL) and median household wealth (US)



Average net price of college for families in the \$0-30,000 income bracket, 2019



Black students are disproportionately enrolled at for-profit colleges, despite the fact that they cost more to attend.

Source: "Priced Out: Black Students," Partnership for College Completion, 2019; Prosperity Now Racial Wealth Gap Data, 2016; The College Scorecard and data on FAFSA-filers household income from ISAC; ISAC Table 2.3d, Average Income by Dependency Status FY 2019; U.S. Department of Education College Scorecard, "Average Net Price by Income Level \$0-30,000."



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CURRENT STATE

LEGISLATION

- IL Public Act 101-0180 requires high school students to file a FAFSA, or sign a waiver to opt out, in order to graduate beginning in the 2020-21 school year.
- School Code Section 27-12.1 on Consumer Education requires that grade 9-12 curriculum include a financial literacy component and establishes a Financial Literacy Fund in the State treasury to fund awards for schools meeting financial literacy goals. There is no specified length of financial literacy instruction required for students in Illinois, and in the proposed curriculum released by the Illinois State Board of Education in 2009, college funding plays only a small role.
- The Student Investment Account Act was signed into law in August 2019. It gives the Treasurer the power to allocate an annual investment of 5 percent (approximately \$800 million based on current estimates) from the State Investments portfolio for low-interest student loans, refinancing of outstanding student loans, and other innovative college financing approaches.¹⁵
- The Student Loan Bill of Rights, passed by the Illinois legislature in 2017, sets certain state requirements for student loan services. The act prohibits practices that can be misleading for borrowers and requires companies servicing student loans to inform borrowers about all affordable financing plans. Additionally, the act lays out the criteria that must be met to receive a license to service student loans in the state of Illinois and prohibits those without licenses to operate as a student loan servicer.

PROMISING PRACTICES

- ISACorps is a program from the Illinois Student Assistance Commission that hires recent college graduates to run outreach programs in communities around Illinois. It includes workshops for financial aid and college applications, one-on-one mentoring for students and families, career-planning services, along with other college informational sessions.
- ISAC's FAFSA Completion Initiative allows principals to see which students have filed a FAFSA so that they can target their efforts to try to get as high a completion rate as possible.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Make existing financial aid more accessible to Black families by improving financial literacy education and breaking down common barriers to accessing financial aid

This can be done by:

- Improving and expanding existing financial aid awareness efforts, particularly as Illinois's FAFSA requirement for high school graduation is rolled out;
- Strengthening state policies to support responsible lending;
- Launching cross-sector partnerships to foster more robust conversations around financial literacy education that begins in middle and high school with students and families across the state;
- Building trust in communities surrounding financial aid and FAFSA, in part by identifying local leaders who can lead financial literacy training efforts;
- Creating more scholarship funds specifically targeted at low-income Black students who may struggle to fill the gap between tuition and financial aid.

SHORT TERM

Two- and four-year institutions, high schools, and ISAC

- Increase culturally relevant financial aid outreach, targeting Black schools and families
- Embed culturally relevant financial aid information into all outreach, from high school visits to college fairs and more.
 - Make sure that financial literacy and college planning conversations are more robust and account for the specific challenges facing many Black communities, including lack of trust in FAFSA and avoiding predatory loans that often target people of color.
 - Provide professional development to those leading financial literacy efforts to equip them to better engage Black parents in deeper conversations about financial planning for postsecondary education.
 - Ensure equitable access to culturally competent financial literacy training for Black students and their families by scaling up the ISACorps model, which brings graduates back to the high schools that they attended to counsel students on acquiring financial aid and navigating the admissions process, and implement similar local programs where applicable.

State, Philanthropy, and high schools

- Continue to invest in ISACorps and other proven financial literacy programs
- Evaluate ISACorps' and other financial literacy programs' current effectiveness, including both the success of their financial literacy programs in student outcomes and their success in reaching the state's Black students.
- Increase funding so that ISACorps can hire more corps members and reach more schools that serve predominantly Black students.
- Ensure cultural competency and implicit bias is prioritized as part of ISACorps training.

- Ensure that ISACorps members are demographically representative of the state as a whole, and of the high schools they are serving.

State and ISAC

- Strengthen state policies to support responsible lending
 - Conduct an audit of lending practices to identify responsible lending practices as well as predatory practices.
 - Evaluate state progress on implementing provisions of the Student Loan Bill of Rights that went into effect in December 2018.
- Strengthen Student Investment Account practices to:
 - Provide more low-interest loans for Black students and families who cannot access credit;
 - Refinance student loans to help graduates with outstanding debt;
 - Provide other equity-based financing options to low-income Black students and families who struggle to pay for college.
- Allocate additional resources to the Attorney General's office to aggressively combat predatory lending practices and to ensure the robust implementation of Illinois' Student Loan Bill of Rights.
- Track racial data on FAFSA completion
 - As part of the FAFSA completion initiative, track FAFSA completion by race and track incidences of additional barriers to Black student FAFSA completion, such as income verification processes.

LONG TERM

State and high schools

- Ensure robust, culturally competent financial aid counseling for Black students in Illinois
- To support the implementation of Illinois's FAFSA requirement for high school graduation, provide state guidelines for the optimal high school financial aid counselor-to-student ratio and for counselors' maximum caseloads, to be managed and implemented by ISBE with a focus on the equitable distribution of resources to underserved communities.
- Mandate cultural competency and implicit bias training for all financial aid counselors.

State and 2- and 4-year institutions

- Conduct comprehensive internal audits of institutional and scholarships to ensure that disbursement is equitable
- Evaluate the effectiveness of current scholarship practices, including but not limited to eligibility for merit-based aid and scholarships, the amount of need-based aid being distributed, etc. in achieving equity goals.
- Consider amending eligibility criteria for scholarships to be more inclusive and to incorporate an equity lens.
- Use the information gathered from institutional aid and scholarship audits to equitably redistribute funds, if needed, prioritizing low-income, Black students most in need of the institution's financial support.

INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND SUPPORT

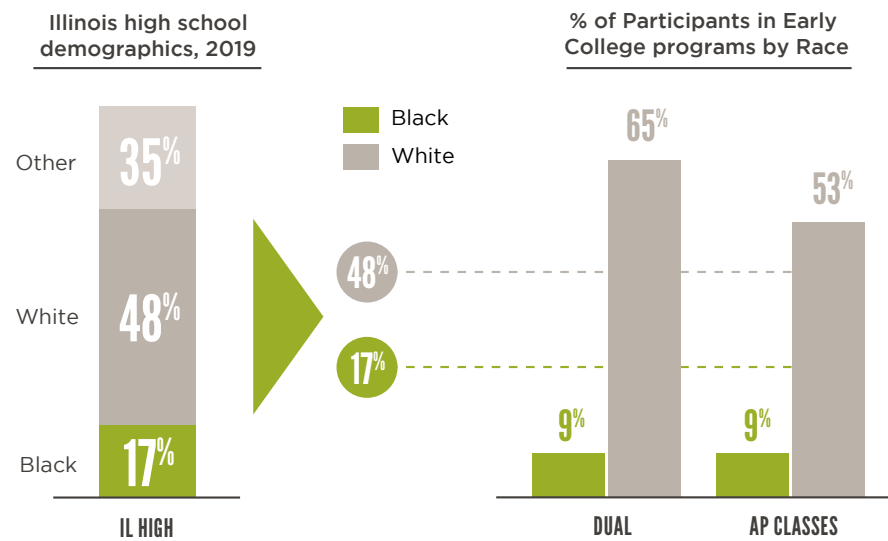
DIRECTIVE | Improve Black students' access to existing dual enrollment and credit programs, and expand dual programming offerings to high schools serving predominantly Black students

Dual credit programs that allow students to earn college credit while still in high school can help close attainment gaps and strengthen students' sense of academic purpose and belonging in college. Indeed, the Illinois Community College Board has described dual credit as a "win-win" arrangement for all parties—students can get ahead on accumulating credits towards a degree and gain confidence in their academic abilities; parents and students can benefit from reduced college costs; and "the enhanced high school and college faculty dialogue can contribute to a better alignment between secondary and postsecondary education."¹⁶

Recognizing these benefits, Illinois has invested in significantly expanding dual credit programs over the past two decades. In 2001, Illinois had 11,809 enrollments in dual credit programs. Last year, in 2019, dual credit enrollments were over 10x what they had been in 2001, with 124,614 enrollments across the state.¹⁷

However, increased numbers of dual credit programs have not resulted in equal access to these programs. In fact, Black students are almost half as likely (47% less likely) to be enrolled in early college programs as would be expected based on their overall enrollment

in Illinois high schools. Largely because of inappropriate eligibility requirements that raise artificial barriers (e.g., the use of high-stakes placement tests that lack validity) to the location and marketing of dual enrollment programs, Black students are underrepresented in these important opportunities.



Source: ISBE Illinois State Report Card 2019, IBHE "Assessing Equity in Illinois Higher Education," 2020.

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- 18 "Expanding Equity in Dual Credit."
- 19 "Expanding Equity in Dual Credit."

CURRENT STATE

LEGISLATION

- The Dual Credit Quality Act (110 ILCS 27), passed in 2009 and significantly amended in 2018, outlines the following policies for dual credit programs in IL:
 - Requires local community colleges to agree to offer dual credit courses if a school district requests them;
 - Prohibits school districts from offering dual credit courses from out-of-state institutions without first asking an Illinois college if the same courses are offered there;
 - Establishes a "Model Partnership Agreement," which outlines the parameters of school-college partnerships, should the stakeholders be unable to reach an agreement;
 - Outlines the qualifications required for dual credit instructors.

PROMISING PRACTICES

- Rockford Public School District 205 and Rock Valley College have partnered to provide targeted reading interventions to students who do not meet eligibility criteria, allowing them to remain in the dual credit program.¹⁸
- Eastern Illinois University has demonstrated that online dual enrollment can expand the university's reach and allows students to bypass barriers such as distance from a community college campus or shortage of qualified teachers.¹⁹

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Improve Black students' access to dual enrollment and credit programs that are now widely available through community colleges and universities, ensuring that Black students in Illinois have equitable access to dual credit programs that can decrease their time-to-degree, lower college costs, increase student sense of purpose and self-efficacy, and improve chances of completion.

This can be done by:

- Further expanding access to dual enrollment programs and increasing recruitment at majority-Black high schools;
- Redesigning dual credit programs' eligibility requirements to be more inclusive for Black students;
- Leveraging new legislation to accelerate teacher certification and the establishment of new partnerships through the "Model Partnership Agreement";
- Bringing in more Black students through targeted recruitment efforts.

SHORT TERM

Two- and four-year institutions and high schools

- Build new partnerships between colleges, universities, and local high schools that center equity;
- 2 and 4-year colleges and universities in regions that currently lack dual credit and enrollment programs—especially in districts that serve higher numbers of Black students—should make expanding dual credit and enrollment programs a priority.
- ICCB data indicates that the Chicago region presents a significant opportunity for growth and increased access—Chicago schools serve higher numbers of Black and Latinx students than the majority of other districts in Illinois and have significantly lower numbers of dual credit and dual enrollments compared to other regions of the state.
- New partnerships should follow the new Model Partnership Agreement laid out in the Dual Credit Quality Act to make dual credit accessible to all.
- The MPA lowers costs for students by encouraging best practices for low-cost dual credit:
 - Establishes the responsible party for course costs, textbooks, etc.
 - Requires multiple measures for placement in dual credit;
 - Prioritizes courses that are most likely to transfer or that are embedded in career pathway course sequences;
 - Lays out clear guidelines for districts and colleges to follow when deciding which instructors are qualified to teach dual credit courses.

- Make existing dual enrollment and credit programs more inclusive by eliminating common barriers to access:
 - Reform eligibility criteria to eliminate the use of high-stakes placement tests and instead use GPA to determine eligibility for dual enrollment opportunities.
 - Leverage digital infrastructure from the COVID-19 pandemic to give students opportunities to access dual enrollment and credit, even if their high school does not offer a course on-site
 - The pandemic has proven that schools have the digital infrastructure to be able to offer in-person classes at a distance.

- State, IBHE, ISBE, 2- and 4-year institutions, and high schools
- Set improvement targets for achieving racial equity in dual credit and dual enrollment programs and track progress
 - These goals should aim to make dual credit enrollment more reflective of overall high school enrollment in the state. Black students currently make up 9.5% of dual credit enrollments, despite representing 17% of the overall high school population.
 - ISBE and IBHE should create action plans for closing equity gaps around dual credit to help the state reach the equity targets described above.
- Require reporting on racial representation, student eligibility requirements, and student success metrics from all dual credit and dual enrollment partnerships
 - This data will help the state to identify tactics that are increasing Black representation, as well as those that are keeping students out of dual credit programs.

LONG TERM

State, 2- and 4-year institutions, and high schools

- Explore ways to increase the number of teachers qualified to teach dual credit courses, especially in Black communities that currently lack dual credit programs
- Increase support for existing educational pathways for teacher certification.
- Consider new, additional paths to teacher certification.

INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND SUPPORT

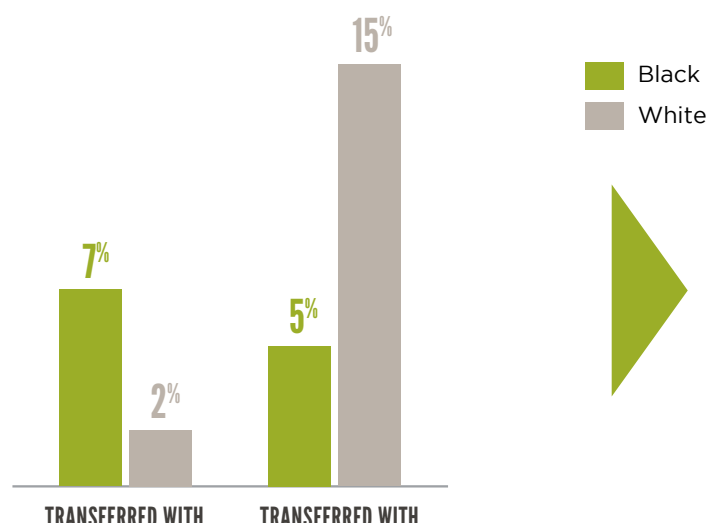
DIRECTIVE | Strengthen bridge and cohort programs for Black first-generation students, Black students from low-income backgrounds, Black transfer students, and Black adult learners to promote seamless transitions and student success

Rather than placing the burden on Black students to navigate systems that were not designed to support their success, colleges and universities must commit themselves to taking responsibility for reforming inequitable systems. By every measure, Black students are retained and graduated at lower numbers than their White peers. This is especially the case for Black

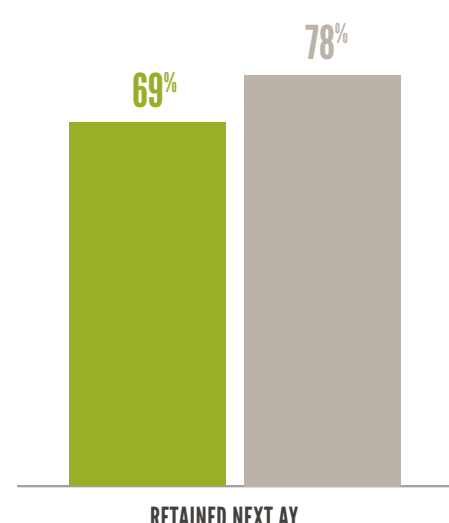
students who are first-generation college goers and from low-income backgrounds. Efforts aimed at creating seamless and well-supported transitions for students, including bridge programs and transfer improvement efforts, are improving outcomes for Black students. Bridge and cohort programs that provide integrated supports should be expanded and targeted to honor the strengths and

meet the needs of persistently underserved student populations, including returning adults. Additionally, institutions must reform policy and practice to ensure that Black baccalaureate-seeking community-college students are able to transfer seamlessly, have all their transfer credits applied toward their degree, and receive tailored advising to finance and achieve their goals.

Black students are less likely than White students to transfer having already received an Associate's degree..



...and they are less likely to be retained after transferring than White students



Source: IBHE "Assessing Equity in Illinois Higher Education," 2020. College Complete America, Data Dashboard, Transfer, <https://completecollege.org/data-dashboard/>.

CURRENT STATE

LEGISLATION

- The Bridge Program for Underrepresented Students Act (110 ILCS 170), provides a framework for public universities to receive state appropriations to support bridge programs. This act needs additional state funding behind it to be fully effective.¹⁸

PROMISING PRACTICES

- Chicago State University's Rise Academy program provides a full tuition scholarship, a concentrated summer academy for incoming students and ongoing academic support through individualized advising, academic skills workshops each semester, and a cohort community that helps them feel at home on campus.¹⁹

SHORT TERM

Two- and four-year institutions

- Commit additional resources to the development of currently existing bridge programs
- Invest additional resources to expand existing programs and to ensure programs inclusive of best practices such as peer mentoring and asset-based academic skills workshops.
- Develop new bridge and cohort programs, especially for target groups that may not be currently represented in existing bridge programs
- Focus on extending institutional support combined with cohort-based peer support to Black transfer students, returning students, and adult students.
- Collect and share data on outcomes for Black transfer students
- Benchmark data using the National Student Clearinghouse "Tracking Transfer" metrics and share data on transfer outcomes for Black students by program.

LONG TERM

Two- and four-year institutions and State

- Commit to long-term data collection and analysis on the outcomes for students involved in bridge and cohort programs
- In order to assess effectiveness and improve bridge and cohort programs long-term, gather institutional data and survey responses from program participants in order to guide future additions and changes to the programs.
- Analyze qualitative data on student experiences, along with quantitative institutional data such as graduation rate, retention rate, etc. for program participants.

- Strengthen partnerships between community colleges and four-year institutions to improve seamless transitions and equitable outcomes for Black transfer students
- Within these partnerships, lay out a clear process for transfer and applicability of credits, and collaborate to improve the transfer-affirming culture at the community college and an equity-minded transfer-receptive culture at the four-year institution.
- Provide proactive support, tailored advising, and culturally competent outreach that focuses on supporting Black students in navigating the transfer process and creating a full financial plan for completion.
- Assess systems currently in place, such as iTransfer, and ensure advising staff is trained to support students to use such systems.
- Launch a sustained effort to engage Black students and alumni to identify additional barriers in the transition to higher education and in seamless transfer of credit
- Engage Black students and alumni through focus groups, student panels, or other collaborative efforts to understand the lived experience of Black students as they navigate systems and institutions.



INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND SUPPORT

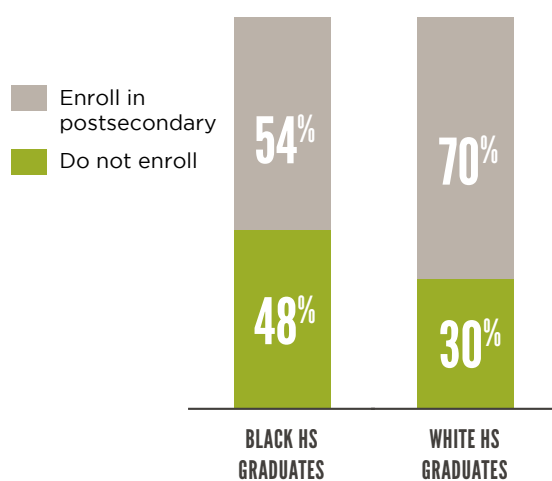
DIRECTIVE | Revise admissions criteria to eliminate structurally racist practices and increase targeted outreach to Black high school students

Inequitable admissions practices such as standardized test requirements create an additional obstacle for many Black students to find a college and enroll. Recent data from the College Board shows that standardized tests continue to produce disparate outcomes by race—in 2019, for example, 80% of White students met benchmarks in Reading/Writing, compared

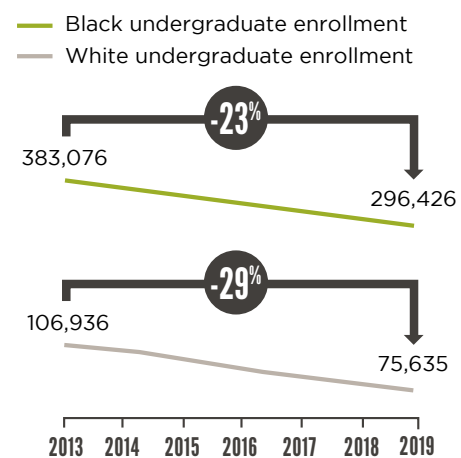
with 46% of Black students nationwide.²⁰ By revising admissions practices to become test-optional and instead using more holistic methods of evaluating students, institutions can begin to eliminate obstacles to Black student enrollment. High-quality college counseling and university informational sessions at the high school level can also make a significant impact

on Black students' sense of academic purpose and belonging in college. By increasing culturally competent outreach efforts to high schools that serve predominantly Black students and providing every Black student with focused college counseling, Illinois educators and other stakeholders can reduce equity gaps between Black and White students in college admissions and enrollment.

12-month college enrollment rates for IL high school graduates, 2018
100% = 135,420 IL HS graduates



Overall undergraduate enrollment trends for Black and White students in IL, 2013-2018



Nearly half of all Black high school graduates do not enroll in post-secondary in the 12 months following graduation.

While overall undergraduate enrollment in IL has declined disproportionately for Black students (29%).

Source: Data on college enrollment rates for high school graduates comes from a data match between ISBE, IBHE, and NSC on 2017 and 2018 IL high school graduates. Data on enrollment trends comes from IPEDS 2013-2018 Fall Enrollment Trends Data.

CURRENT STATE

PROMISING PRACTICES

- As of August 2020, 35 4-year institutions in Illinois (public and private) have switched to some form of test-optional or test-blind admissions.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Make the admissions process more inclusive and accessible by revising admissions criteria and increasing culturally competent outreach to Black high school students and their families.

This can be done by:

- Making admissions test-blind or test-optional;
- Increasing college outreach to Black communities through summer programs, college informational sessions, and culturally competent recruitment officers;
- Ensuring that every student has culturally competent college advising in high school.

SHORT TERM

2- and 4-year institutions and State

- Revise admissions criteria to be more inclusive, including implementing test-optional practices
- Remove the requirement for standardized test scores for college admission.
- Use high school GPA, recommendation letters, essays, projects, and other criteria to inform admissions decisions.
- Waive application fees that may be an obstacle for low-income Black students.

2- and 4-year institutions and high schools

- Strengthen recruitment practices to better support Black students through training and targeted, personalized support
- Train college recruitment officers for implicit bias and cultural competency.
- Emphasize personalized attention for Black students in recruitment efforts, strengthening the bridge to college enrollment for students who don't have models of college-going behavior in their families or communities.
- Emphasize personalized attention for parents as well to establish trust among

families in the admissions and financial aid process.

- Increase targeted, culturally competent outreach to Black high school students and communities
- Prioritize recruitment at high schools that serve predominantly Black students.
- Allocate resources to expand culturally competent recruitment efforts to more Black students across the state.
- Run informational sessions for parents to help them understand the college admissions process and to support their children in applying.

LONG TERM

State and high schools

- Run statewide awareness programs to build Black students' sense of academic purpose and belonging in college.
- Leverage the existing ISACorps network to increase college awareness programs for Black students across the state.
- Mandate cultural competency training for all college counselors and college recruitment officers.
- Run programs for parents and families as well as for students.



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²⁰ "SAT Suite of Assessments Annual Report," College Board, 2019. <https://reports.collegeboard.org/pdf/2019-total-group-sat-suite-assessments-annual-report.pdf>

ENROLLMENT AND PROGRAM CHOICE

DIRECTIVE | Scale reform of developmental education to shorten time-to-degree and increase student success

Developmental education, formerly known as remediation, was intended to be a supportive experience for students, preparing them to succeed in college-level courses. However, over a decade of evidence from around the country shows definitively that traditional structures of remediation have not achieved the goal of supporting student success. Instead, these policies and practices have served as an invidious sorting mechanism. Statewide, less than 20% of students placed in traditional remediation ultimately graduate.²¹ For Black students, who are disproportionately placed in developmental courses at both public universities and community colleges, that low

rate of success is cut in half. According to a 2014 cohort study, 71% of Black community college students are placed into remedial courses through the use of high-stakes placement tests that national research suggests lack validity and reliability.²² As a result and less than 9% of them will go on to graduate.²³ Unfair placement policies and non-credit-bearing or “prerequisite” developmental course sequences present the largest obstacle to student retention and completion.

Lowering barriers to Black student success requires scaled reform of placement policies and the structure of remediation. A significant amount of work has already gone into developmental education reform

in Illinois, culminating in the Senate Joint Resolution 41 Report published in July 2020, which includes a detailed plan on how to scale current reform efforts and track progress. First, institutions should move away from the use of high stakes placement tests and instead use multiple, evidence-based criteria to significantly increase the number of students accessing credit-bearing gateway math and English. Additionally, Illinois should transition away from traditional models that do not grant credit for completing developmental coursework, and should instead use corequisite support models which provide remediation in the context of credit-bearing gateway courses.

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CURRENT STATE

LEGISLATION:

- Senate Joint Resolution 41: Adopted in the spring of 2019, the Senate Joint Resolution convened a task force for reviewing and scaling effective developmental education practices in the state of Illinois. The advisory council published its report about developmental education reform in June 2020. The report laid out a list of reform recommendations, as well as a plan and a timeline for the implementation of these reforms at institutions across the state. In June 2021, IBHE and ICCB will file an additional report on reform implementation and provide data on outcomes for students enrolled in the various developmental education models.
- In January 2021, the Illinois General Assembly passed HB2170, also known as the Education Omnibus Bill. Article 100 of the bill creates the Developmental Education Reform Act, which attempts to build on the State’s ongoing work on the topic. This act requires that all Illinois community colleges adopt multiple measures for placement in developmental education, including a student’s cumulative GPA. It also requires that institutions submit by May 1, 2022 an institutional plan for scaling developmental education reforms to improve student placement and success. Beginning in 2023, IBHE and ICCB will be responsible for sharing and collecting data to report back to the General Assembly on the status of these reforms.

PROMISING PRACTICES:

- Evidence from around the country suggests that default placement in college-level math and English with corequisite support should be the norm for the vast majority of students.²⁴
- Many institutions around Illinois have already begun to adopt multiple measures, as proposed by ICCB. As of fall 2019, 17 community colleges had fully implemented multiple measures, and 12 others had partially implemented and had plans to fully implement by fall 2021.²⁵ Some community colleges, including Illinois Central College, have eliminated placement testing for developmental education altogether.
- As part of a comprehensive approach to reforming remediation, college algebra should no longer be used as the default math for all programs. Instead, students should be provided with access to multiple math pathways, such as data science and statistics, that integrate rigorous math appropriate to different disciplines and to the well-paying careers of today and tomorrow.²⁶

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Scale reform of developmental education to shorten time-to-degree and increase student success.

This can be done by:

- Using multiple placement criteria including GPA or guided self-placement, rather than high-stakes placement tests, to increase Black student access to credit-bearing courses;
- Providing remediation in the context of credit-bearing courses through corequisite support models, rather than using traditional prerequisite course sequences.
- Providing multiple math pathways for non-STEM students aligned to programs of study and careers.

SHORT TERM

2- and 4-year institutions and State

- Use multiple placement criteria to increase Black student access to credit-bearing courses
- Offer students a variety of ways to demonstrate college readiness.
- Cumulative high school GPA, including self-reported GPA, is the most reliable and accurate placement measure. A recent

University of Chicago Consortium study found that GPA outweighs ACT scores as a predictor of college success.²⁷

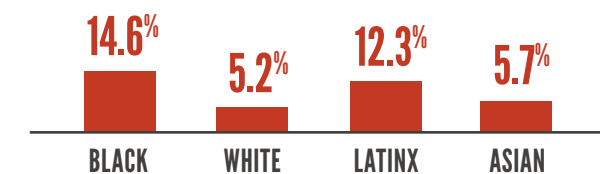
- Placement tests are not valid or reliable predictors of college readiness and should not be used as a measure of student preparation for college-level work.

LONG TERM

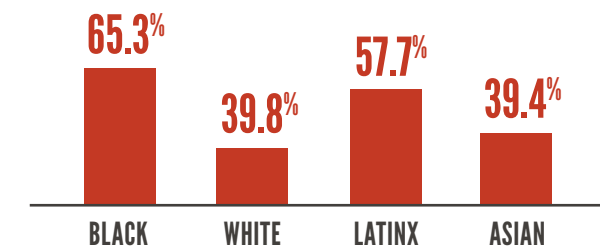
2- and 4-year institutions and State

- Scale more effective models of developmental education
- Placement tests should be eliminated as a single measure of student readiness and should be used only as a mechanism for students who want to test out of a corequisite
- All remediation should be provided in the context of credit-bearing courses or, for students at the lowest levels of preparation, provided free of charge in a compressed model prior to matriculation.
- Multiple math pathways aligned to fields of study should be provided to all students and those courses should be accepted and applied in transfer.

Students placed into Dev Ed by race
All Public Universities, Fall Semester 2018-2019



Students placed into Dev Ed by race
All community colleges, Fall Semester 2018-2019



ENROLLMENT AND PROGRAM CHOICE

DIRECTIVE | Provide asset-based, antiracist advising to students that is proactive and sustained to strengthen Black students' sense of purpose and self-efficacy

“One of the main things that’s important is having people with actual support roles like advisors [...] who are culturally competent in engaging with students of color.”

—ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT PANELIST

Advising is one of the most powerful tools an institution has to support its students. Student advising should be intentional, sustained, and proactive. Advisors not only help students choose a program of study and build an academic plan. They also ensure that students are progressing towards the completion of their degrees, and intervene when they are experiencing academic or financial hardship. The important role that advisors play in students' experiences was highlighted during the Working Group's November 12 Student Panel. One student commented that his advisor is a crucial part of the support

system that keeps him progressing towards his degree because his advisor always checks in to see how he is progressing academically and otherwise. Another student explained that one of his friends had to leave school because of a family emergency, and never ended up returning because he didn't have sufficient support from the institution. “He started to register for classes, but he didn't have anyone to follow up with him. Nobody was checking in when he needed them most.”

Institutions must provide personalized advising to all Black students, providing advisors with the appropriate tools and

cultural competency training so that they are well-equipped to address concerns specific to the Black student experience at that institution. To guarantee that every student receives quality advising, institutions must ensure advisors' caseloads are manageable. Finally, in order to respond to students' individual needs, institutions should develop early alert systems, policies, and processes that schedule interventions for students who are either struggling academically or are struggling to make payments.

CURRENT STATE

LEGISLATION

- iTransfer is an online platform created as part of the Illinois Articulation Initiative, a statewide transfer agreement that is transferable among more than 100 participating colleges and universities and Illinois. It provides information on how credits transfer between Illinois colleges and universities.

PROMISING PRACTICES

- City University of New York (CUNY) ASAP is a wrap-around program for low-income students, providing personalized academic and career advising in order to help students choose the courses that they need to progress towards their career goals. In a 2017 cohort study, ASAP students “not only earned their associate degrees at a higher rate, they also earned their associate degrees more quickly than other students.”²⁸
- Northern Illinois University launched a program called NIU Navigate, which uses predictive analytics to alert staff of students who have veered off the path to graduation so that they can schedule advisor interventions. Georgia State has a similar program called “GPS Advising”, which generated more than 55,000 individual meetings between advisors and students in 2019-2020.²⁹

- Having advisors make academic, financial, and wellness plans with Black student advisees;
- Developing equitable institutional policies that will help Black students from non-traditional paths (i.e. transfer students) progress along their path to degree.

SHORT TERM

State and two- and four-year institutions

- Ensure all advisors are trained in cultural competency and implicit bias
- Change state requirements around counselor training to include implicit bias and cultural competency.
- Institutions should incorporate implicit bias and cultural competency into their internal trainings for advisors, and should include these skills in evaluations of advisors.
- Have advisors make academic, financial, and wellness plans with Black student advisees
- Ensure that advisors help students plan not only for their academic paths through college, but also for how they will manage their finances and their health while in school and post-graduation.
- Inform students of the various support/mentorship resources that they can leverage during their time in college and give them a roadmap displaying the possible “touch-points” so that they can plan how they will leverage these resources.

- Make advisors' caseloads manageable and optimize them to reflect student need

- Institutions should set a maximum number of students that advisors can serve to give advisors enough time for each advisee.
- Advisors' time should be allocated equitably—for example, if an advisor serves predominantly Black, first-generation students, the limit on the number of students they serve should be lower to acknowledge that some students might need additional support.

- Reframe advisor role so that their primary focus is ensuring students can graduate and are successful at the institution
- Emphasize the need for proactive support, rather than reactive response to a student coming in for assistance.



- Develop educational and advising policies that will help Black transfer and returning students to progress on their path to a degree
- For returning students, institutions should provide college credit for technical qualifications/competencies that are not traditionally recognized as progress towards a degree.
- Ensure advising for transfer students encompasses the pathway at both the 2- and 4-year institutions.
- Ensure that the maximum number of credits will transfer, or at least count for elective credit towards a degree.
- Provide robust training for advisors in the Illinois Articulation Agreement and iTransfer policies, so that they can best advise potential transfer students and ensure that their students are aware of their credit transfer options.

LONG TERM

Two- and four-year institutions

- Build out systems of predictive analytics using institutional student data to create early alert systems
- Track student success over a variety of metrics and program certain alerts to occur when students need additional support (e.g., alerts could be linked to low grades, withdrawals from classes, late tuition payments, etc.).
- As a first step, conduct an institutional review of data collection policies to determine what data is currently being collected, what data needs to be collected, and how data can be leveraged.
- Commit to collecting data on racial equity where it is not already being collected.
- collected, what data needs to be collected, and how data can be leveraged.
- Commit to collecting data on racial equity where it is not already being collected.

Form more transfer agreements between 2- and 4-year institutions

- Track the number of new partnerships over time.
- Partnerships should be made using the existing iTransfer system.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Provide robust, culturally competent advising for Black students as they progress towards their degree of choice

This can be done by:

- Providing advisors with the tools and training necessary:
 - Training all college advisors in cultural competency and implicit bias;
 - Making advisors' caseloads manageable;
 - Using predictive analytics to proactively schedule advisor meetings where needed;

REFERENCES

28 CUNY ASAP Evaluation Brief, January 2017.

29 Georgia State University, GPS Advising.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Improve safety and inclusion for Black students by strengthening campus policies directly affecting student interactions with each other and with the institution

SHORT TERM

2- and 4-year institutions



- Regularly examine school use of campus and/or local police
- Include Black student groups and faculty / staff in review and decision-making process.
- Examine student codes of conduct
- Create a plan to review and regularly revise student code of conduct, prioritizing the inclusion of Black student and alumni voices.
- Use campus climate and culture assessments and micro-surveys to better understand campus climate and to guide policy changes
- Following the best practices recommendations from the University of Southern California Center for Race and Equity and others, conduct an initial, robust assessment of campus culture and climate to identify institution-specific issues and opportunities for growth.
- Use micro-surveys throughout the year to check in on finances, mental health, capacity, and outcomes.
 - Micro-surveys should be given to students, faculty, and staff to gain a holistic view of campus climate.
- Use the results of climate assessments and surveys to direct institutional reforms and policy changes.



LONG TERM

State and local policymakers:

- Determine standards for Illinois institutions' student codes of conduct that center Black students
- Given a history of inequitable framing and application of student codes of conduct, set principles for revisions to codes of conduct for 2- and 4-year institutions that will encourage inclusive policies and anti-racist application of codes of conduct.

2- and 4-year institutions

- Implement changes in state-wide standards to codes of conduct
- Conduct surveys on campus culture and climate annually to track institutional progress
 - Follow best practices³⁰ to assess campus climate and culture through the use of regular campus climate and culture assessments and even more frequent micro-surveys.
 - Use the results of this assessment to direct institutional reforms, budget processes, and policy changes over time.

GOAL: Sponsor and support the development of on-campus communities/spaces for Black students to create and maintain community and belonging, and ensure Black students have access to all campus spaces

SHORT TERM

2- and 4-year institutions

- Allocate new, and protect current, resources to create and support on-campus Black communities, such as living / learning communities, Black student unions, intercultural centers, Black student peer mentoring communities
- Prioritize resiliency in budget adjustments for Black student communities.
- Ensure recruitment and admissions staff are trained to highlight existing programs and to provide information on Black student community-building opportunities during recruiting and admissions events.



- Remove barriers for potential and current Black students to learn about opportunities on campus and to engage with all student spaces on campus
- Remove the cost barrier to participating in certain on-campus communities by eliminating any additional fees required to take advantage of such opportunities.

Philanthropy and Employers

- Fund on-campus Black communities such as living / learning communities, Black student unions, intercultural centers, Black student peer mentoring communities
- Philanthropic funds can be used to fill the gaps to provide ongoing support for Black student communities so that they are resilient to difficult institutional budget periods.

LONG TERM

2- and 4-year institutions and Philanthropy

- Collect data and track on retention, persistence, and completion rates for Black students who are supported by their institution to participate in a Black student community
- Track how institution and philanthropic support for on-campus communities affects equity gaps for Black students.

GOAL: Increase the number and support of Black faculty on campus



SHORT TERM

IBHE, ICCB

- Increase awareness of and participation in Diversifying Faculty Initiative (DFI), and assess the need for other statewide hiring initiatives
- Gather data on the employment outcomes

REFERENCES

³⁰ University of Southern California Center for Race and Equity, <https://race.usc.edu/colleges/>; Rankin & Associates, 2015; Rankin, et al., 2010, <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/uw-s3-cdn/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2018/07/24025042/Dr.-Sue-Rankin-Presentation-Climate-Matters.pdf>;



STUDENT WELL-BEING

DIRECTIVE | Provide holistic student supports including trauma informed, antiracist mental health services for Black students on campus and in the workplace that attend to the lived experiences of Black students and their families

Black youth—especially those who grew up in low-income families—are at higher risk for depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues as a result of discrimination, poverty and trauma that they experience.³¹ Racial tensions on campus and beyond can create further stress and anxiety for many students. Additionally, Black students are less likely to seek help for mental health issues due to stigma.³² Student panelists emphasized the importance of mental health supports for Black college students. One panelist, who has had a therapist since middle school, and was able to continue seeing her therapist remotely upon going to college, described the experiences of two of her friends who left school for mental health issues. There were no licensed

therapists on campus, only counselors, and none of them were trained to work with Black students. “My friends didn’t have the support system that I have, and they struggled to find people who would speak up for them.” It is crucial that Illinois postsecondary institutions provide Black students with easily accessible, licensed therapists who are trained to work with Black students in particular.

In July 2020, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act to begin to address these issues. The bill was aimed at raising awareness about mental health on college campuses, training faculty and staff to identify and address mental health issues, and connecting students to mental health resources. However, institutions

estimate that it would take \$17 to \$20 million in additional funding over the next three years to fully implement the law, funding which has yet to be provided.³³ Additionally, the bill does not mention the issue of cultural competency, which many Black students have highlighted as crucially important to an effective mental health infrastructure for Illinois’ Black students.

In order to support Black students’ well-being and mental health on Illinois campuses, institutions must increase holistic student supports, decrease stigma surrounding mental health issues among Blacks students, and connect students with high-quality, culturally competent supports and services on or near campus.

CURRENT STATE

LEGISLATION

- Illinois 110 ILCS 58/ Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act, passed in July 2020, requires public universities and colleges to raise awareness of mental health resources on campus, provide mental health training for faculty and staff, and form local partnerships with mental health providers to be able to connect students with resources. However, more funding is required for institutions to be able to fully implement the bill.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Provide culturally competent mental health services for Black students on campus and in the workplace

This can be done by:

- Funding the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act;
- Requiring mental health providers to be licensed therapists;
- Requiring mental health providers to be trained in cultural competency and implicit bias;
- Ensuring that mental health supports continue beyond college, into the workplace.


SHORT TERM

State

- Fund the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act
- The Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act is a great step towards providing more comprehensive mental health supports on campus, but it needs to receive more funding in order to work.

- Schools have estimated that implementation will require \$17 to \$20 million additional funds per year for three years.

State, and 2-and-4 year institutions

- Require mental health support providers to be licensed therapists and trained in cultural competencies and implicit bias 
- Hire licensed therapists, along with counselors, to provide mental health services on campus, with a focus on hiring Black service providers.
- Provide cultural competency and implicit bias training for all mental health employees on campus.
- When mental health services are being provided by an off-campus local provider, require that they be certified in cultural competencies and implicit bias.
- Require all faculty and staff to be trained in culturally competent mental health awareness
- Require all staff to complete basic mental health trainings that incorporate cultural competency elements.

Employers

- Expand offerings of trauma-informed and mental health benefits and support in the workplace
- Ensure increased outreach and communication is informed by anti-racist and implicit bias training.

“[Mental health] is not focused on enough, and underserved communities have a lot of trauma stemming from lack of resources. Mental health is often seen as taboo.”

—NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY STUDENT PANELIST

REFERENCES

- 31 <https://www.epi.org/publication/toxic-stress-and-childrens-outcomes-african-american-children-growing-up-poor-are-at-greater-risk-of-disrupted-physiological-functioning-and-depressed-academic-achievement/>
- 32 Ruth White, “Why Mental Health Care is Stigmatized in Black Communities,” *University of Southern California Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work*, February 12, 2019, <https://dworakpeck.usc.edu/news/why-mental-health-care-stigmatized-black-communities>
- 33 Kate McGee, “A Law Aims To Improve Mental Health Services At Colleges, But There’s No Money To Make It Happen,” *WBEZ*, September 9, 2020. <https://www.wbez.org/stories/a-law-to-improve-mental-health-services-at-illinois-universities-has-no-funding/7a568c15-e6b9-4999-b66d-d4a3a9c7dbbe>

STUDENT WELL-BEING

DIRECTIVE | Examine campus policies and hiring practices, and strengthen professional development for all campus employees to improve Black student safety, belonging, and inclusion on campus.

To close equity gaps in Black student enrollment retention, persistence, and completion, institutions must become more supportive and safe for Black students.

In July 2020, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act to begin to address these issues. The bill was aimed at raising awareness about mental health on college campuses, training faculty and staff to identify and address mental health issues, and connecting students to mental health resources. However, institutions estimate that it would take \$17 to \$20 million in additional funding over the next three years to fully implement the law, funding which has yet to be provided. Additionally, the bill does not mention the issue of cultural competency, which many Black students have highlighted

as crucially important to an effective mental health infrastructure for Illinois' Black students.

Equity gaps exist for Black students at every step of the path to and through higher education. While cost and academic support issues, which are addressed elsewhere in this plan, contribute significantly to lower enrollment, retention, and completion rates for Black students, marginalization and discrimination on campus also have an impact on Black students' success in higher education. According to a 2015 study conducted by Rankin & Associates, 30% of student respondents seriously considered leaving their institution due to a challenging or unwelcoming climate.³⁴ Along with other structural changes to policies around cost and academic supports, we must also consider policies that

contribute to Black student safety and inclusion on campus, such as financial support of Black on-campus communities, implicit bias training for all on-campus staff, and a more inclusive curriculum that includes Black authors and perspectives.

Another way to do this is to consider the diversity of faculty. A diverse faculty is important both for creating a climate of belonging (signaling to a Black student that they belong when they see someone in a position of power that looks like them) and also for creating career opportunities for Black academics. According to IPEDS data, in 2018, only 6% of faculty at Illinois public institutions was Black, while 71% of faculty was White.³⁵

CURRENT STATE

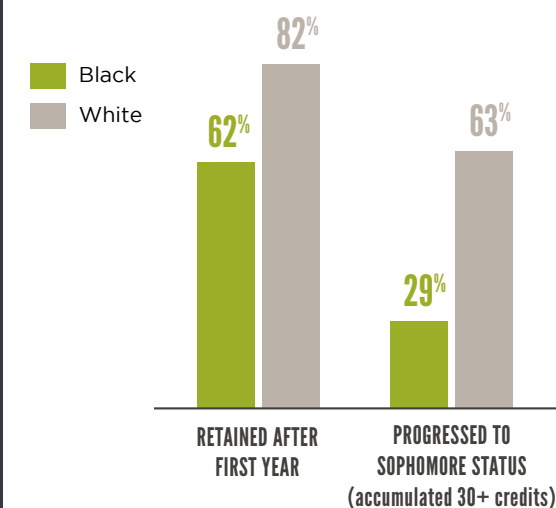
LEGISLATION

- In 2004 the Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois Program (DFI) was established by Public Act 093-0862 of the Illinois General Assembly. The goal of the program is to "increase the number of minority full-time tenure track faculty and staff at Illinois' two- and four-year, public and private colleges and universities."³⁶ The program provides up to \$12,000 for new students and \$15,000 for continuing students to use for their graduate studies over a four-year period. Furthermore, institutions that receive DFI fellows are required to provide these students with ample professional development opportunities, such as mentors, workshops, part-time jobs on campus, and assistance in finding post-graduation employment.
- In 2018, the Illinois General Assembly passed House Resolution 1098, which created the Black History Curriculum Task Force to conduct an audit of high school districts' history curriculum and ensure that they sufficiently incorporate African American history. In 2020, the Black Caucus began to push for additional legislation mandating the inclusion of African American history in Illinois social studies curriculum.
- In January 2021, the Illinois General Assembly passed HB2170, also known as the Education Omnibus Bill. Article 120 of the bill amends the Higher Education Student Assistance Act to add additional provisions around the Minority Teacher Scholarship. One of the changes is to create a set-aside of at least 35% of the funds appropriated for scholarships for qualified Black male applicants, beginning in fiscal year 2023.

PROMISING PRACTICES

- Diversity professionals and research centers across the country have aligned on promising practices that universities can use to improve their campus climate. The first step for institutional action is a comprehensive campus climate and culture assessment, which many institutions across the country have already begun to conduct, including Northern Illinois University and Illinois State University.³⁷

New Full-Time Students Fall 2017-2018



Black students are less likely than White students to be retained after their first year.

The gap between Black and White students for credit accumulation is even more stark—only 29% of Black students accumulate 30+ credits in their first year of college compared with 63% of White students.

Source: IBHE IHEIS 2017 and 2018 Fall Enrollment Collection, IBHE "Assessing Equity in Illinois Higher Education," 2020.



REFERENCES

- Rankin & Associates, 2015; Rankin, et al., 2010, <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/uw-s3-cdn/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2018/07/24025042/Dr.-Sue-Rankin-Presentation-Climate-Matters.pdf>
- IPEDS "All full time instructional staff, by race," 2018.
- DFI website, <https://www.ibhe.org/dfi.html>
- NEIYou Campus Climate webpage, <https://www.neiu.edu/about/campus-climate>; Charles H.F. Davis, et al. "Illinois State University, Campus Climate Assessment Final Report," University of Pennsylvania Center for Race & Equity, April 2016. <https://illinoisstate.edu/downloads/ISU-CampusClimateAssessmentReport.pdf>

CONNECTION TO CAREER

DIRECTIVE | Build a stronger bridge between college and career for Black students by improving career supports throughout their time in college and beyond

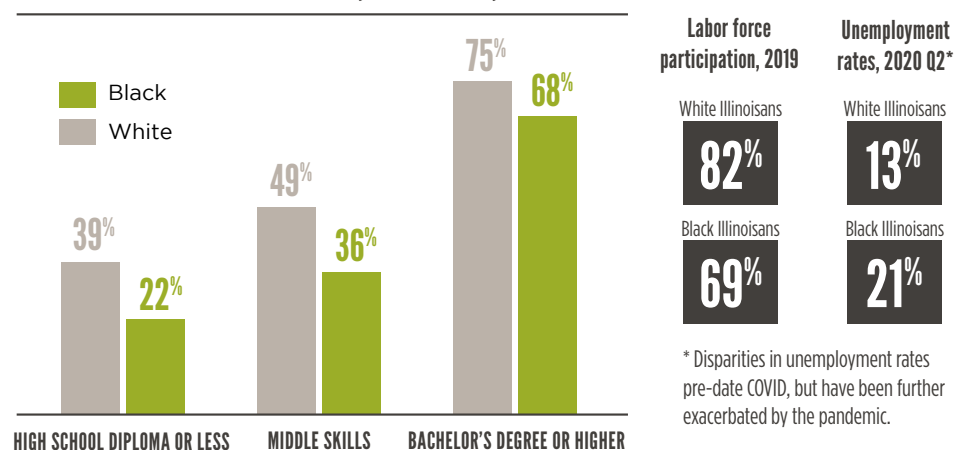
College education is a key driver of social mobility and economic stability for individuals and families. However, for many Black students who graduate from higher education in Illinois, the return on their investment is lower than for their White peers. According to a study by Georgetown’s Center on Education and the Workforce, the percent of Black workers holding “good jobs” (those that pay at least \$35K per year, or \$45K for workers age 45 and older) after receiving a bachelor’s degree or higher is only 68%, compared with 75% of White workers.³⁸ In Illinois, equity gaps in labor force participation and unemployment rates persist—in the second quarter of 2020, White Illinoisans experienced 13% unemployment, while the rate of unemployment among Black Illinoisans was 21%.³⁹

In order to increase the return on investment for Illinois Black students and ensure that higher education remains a driver of economic opportunity for all, Illinois must build stronger connections between the classroom and the workplace throughout and beyond students’ time in college. Postsecondary institutions and policymakers must place more emphasis on labor-market outcomes for students and invest resources

in improving these outcomes through increased support for career exploration and development embedded throughout the student learning journey. In addition to increasing support for career centers, Illinois institutions must embed high-quality, work-

based learning experiences within program curriculum. Additionally, Illinois should build cross-sector partnerships between postsecondary institutions, philanthropy, CBOs, and employers to connect Black students to high-paying career pathways.

Percent of workers holding good jobs* at each level of educational attainment, nationwide, 2017



* “Good jobs are” are defined by Georgetown’s Center on Education and the Workforce as “those that pay at least \$35k per year, at least \$45k for workers age 45 or older, and \$65k in median earnings in 2016.”

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, 1992-2017; EPI analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) data and Current Population Survey (CPS) data.

REFERENCES

38 Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the US Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, 1992-2017.

39 EPI analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) data and Current Population Survey (CPS) data.

CURRENT STATE

PROMISING PRACTICES

- Braven is a non-profit organization whose goal is to prepare underrepresented young people—first-generation college students, students from low-income backgrounds, and students of color—for their transition into the workforce. Braven partners with universities (including National Louis University in Illinois) and corporate partners such as Salesforce, Prudential, Charles Schwab, and more to provide robust career mentoring and skill-building tools to students.
- Career Launch Chicago is a partnership between Chicago Public Schools, City Colleges of Chicago, and various employers in the Chicago region to provide apprenticeship opportunities to students. The goal of the program is to provide students with paid on-the-job training and mentorship to advance their careers.
- The just-launched 1954 Project at The CAFÉ will leverage a donor collaborative to invest in initiatives that will increase the number of Black educators and leaders throughout the education landscape, create more effective and culturally affirming teaching and learning models, and strengthen pathways from education to career in order to drive economic mobility in the Black community.

SHORT TERM

2- and 4-year institutions, high schools, employers and philanthropy

- Allocate resources to high-impact practices and partnerships that drive career success
- Ensure that career centers have the staff, resources, and training that they need to be able to prep Black students for:
 - Job interviews,
 - Writing resumes and cover letters,
 - Career mapping,
 - › Employers and philanthropy should incentivize pathways that are high-need (teaching, nursing, etc.), which lead to family-sustaining wages/ income.
- Identifying networking opportunities,
- Negotiating salaries/offers.
- Attend to career advancement across Black students’ learning journeys by embedding early career exploration and work-based learning opportunities in programs of study, and by continuing to support alumni through career development after they graduate.
- Provide opportunities for employers to contribute funding and volunteer time to career centers.
- Invest resources in other high-impact institutional practices that drive career success.

2- and 4-year institutions and employers

- Increase collaboration between university faculty and workforce/industry partners
- Have faculty collaborate with workforce/industry partners to develop curriculum guides that reflect current needs and opportunities in the workforce, to be incorporated into curricula and communicated to students.
- Support faculty professional development to embed high-impact practices such as active, experiential, and collaborative learning opportunities connected to careers.
- Build partnerships to give Black students more opportunities to interact with employers on campus
 - Bring employers to campus for informational sessions and career readiness sessions aimed at preparing and recruiting Black students.
 - Where possible, form strategic partnerships with employers that allow students to interact with a specific company or sector as part of a class that prepares them for jobs in that field.
 - Where relevant, provide students with opportunities to participate in paid apprenticeship opportunities with employers they interact with on campus.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Increase exposure to career pathways and build connections to career for Black students on campus and beyond

This can be done by:

- Increasing collaboration between faculty and workforce/industry partners;
- Increasing access for Black students to interact with employers on campus;
- Ensuring that Black students have access to early and ongoing career exploration and co-curricular, work-based learning opportunities embedded in programs of study.
- Investing additional resources into career centers to help them increase their impact;
- Ensure that Black students and graduates have equal access to opportunities, jobs, salaries, and career development;
- Building cross-sector partnerships to connect Black students to career pathways;
- Connecting Black students with mentors who will help guide them through their path in college and transition into the workforce.

LONG TERM

2- and 4-year institutions, philanthropy, CBOs, high schools, and employers

- Build cross-sector partnerships to connect Black students to careers
- Following existing cross-sector models of workforce development initiatives, CBOs and 2- and 4-year institutions can help connect students to post-graduation employment, helping to bridge the gap between colleges and employers.
- Employers should commit to hiring and developing students from these partnerships.
- Cross-sector partnerships should be built in specific cities, towns, or regions to connect Black high school and college students to paid internship or apprenticeship opportunities in the region to advance their careers.
- Philanthropy should invest in large-scale efforts to create bridge programs for Black students from college to career.
- Connect Black students with mentors who will help guide them through their path in college and into the workforce
- Recruit committed volunteer mentors from current and recently retired professionals, as well as representatives from faith organizations and community organizations, prioritizing Black professionals and Black-led organizations where possible.
- Leverage and use as a model the existing mentorship program structures of CBOs focused on educational and workforce mentorship.
- Provide general support and mentorship to help students persist through college and find gainful employment by:
 - Directing student mentees to resources such as advising, additional financial aid, etc. when needed.
 - Answering students’ questions about the workforce and advising them in pursuit of their career development goals.
 - Connecting students to individuals in their chosen career field for informational chats.

CONNECTION TO CAREER

DIRECTIVE | Hiring practices and other internal company policies should prioritize closing equity gaps in the workforce

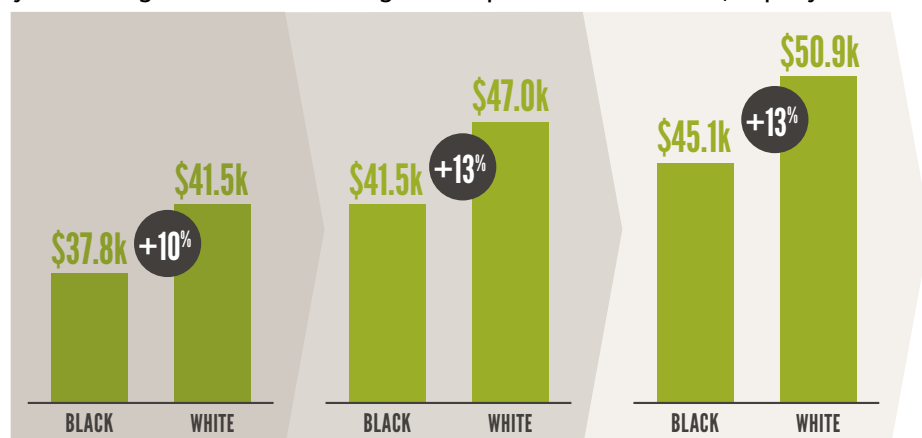
Even among those employed, Black graduates in Illinois consistently earn less than their White peers. According to data from Illinois' College2Career tool, White graduates are paid 10% more than Black graduates in their first year after graduation, and this gap only grows over time.⁴⁰ Furthermore, Black representation at the highest levels of management in Illinois remains low.

Employers can begin to combat these trends by seriously evaluating internal practices around internships, recruitment, salaries, promotions, and performance evaluation to prioritize equity. The State and other partners should hold employers accountable for prioritizing equitable practices through tax incentives, annual publications that highlight the companies providing the most paid internship opportunities, and similar means.

White graduates are paid 10% more than Black graduates in year 1 after graduation...

By Year 2, Black graduates are paid what that year's new White grads are paid...

... and after three years, the gap has widened to White students making an extra ~\$6k per year.



Source: Bachelor's Degree Completers from all MAP-eligible schools from AY 2013-14 and AY 2014-15 in the Illinois College2Career tool.

“As a student, if I’m choosing between money and advancing my career [with an internship], I often have to choose the money.”

—UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO STUDENT PANELIST

REFERENCES

40 Bachelor's Degree Completers from all MAP-eligible schools from AY 2013-14 and AY 2014-15 in the Illinois College2Career tool.

41 For an example of existing programs, see the Summer Work Experience in Law (SWEL) program in Ohio.

CURRENT STATE

PROMISING PRACTICES

- OneTen is a nationwide initiative that calls upon employers to commit to hiring, upskilling, and promoting Black Americans. OneTen works with employers to develop inclusive company cultures that help them to retain Black employees and help them grow professionally.
- The One Million Degrees program connects each of their scholars with a volunteer coach, who is typically a professional in the scholar's field of study. Coaches provide personal guidance to students as they progress through their time in college and search for post-graduation employment. One Million Degrees also requires students to participate in career-related activities and professional development workshops that help them to connect with employers as they pursue their degree.

- Widen the hiring pool to include a wide range of universities and colleges, not just elite universities.
- Employ blind hiring practices, taking names and addresses off of applications.
- Company CEOs should hold recruitment and hiring officers accountable for upholding the company's equity goals.
- Ensure that equitable hiring practices are put in place for all positions, including management-track positions.
- Provide large numbers of paid internships and apprenticeships for Black students
- The Illinois State legislature should set ambitious goals for companies of various sizes to provide high numbers of paid internships and apprenticeships.
- Evaluate current internship programs for equity & implement policy to ensure equity moving forward.



- Target paid internships and apprenticeships towards Black students and towards institutions that serve predominantly Black students.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Hiring practices and other internal company policies should prioritize closing equity gaps in the workforce and providing opportunity for Black graduates

This can be done by:

- Revising hiring practices to center equity;
- Evaluating internal policies around entry-level hiring, offers, salary ranges, etc. to address the gap in entry-level salaries of Black and White hires;
- Providing employees with the resources they need to excel and be retained;
- Providing large numbers of paid internships and apprenticeships for Black students;
- Holding employers accountable for equitable practices through tax incentives and publications.

SHORT TERM

Employers, IBHE, and State

- Evaluate internal policies to identify equity gaps and revise practices to center equity for Black Illinoisans
- Perform a comprehensive review of policies around hiring, offers, salary ranges, pay transparency, promotions, advancement, etc.
 - Commit to revising policies where they are shown to produce inequitable outcomes.
- Revise hiring practices to center equity.
 - Widen the network for recruiting new hires.
 - Do not require or give preferential treatment to referrals.

State

- Provide tax incentives for employers to follow equitable hiring and internal practices
- Provide a tax incentive for employers who hire and develop large numbers of Black graduates.
- Provide an additional tax incentive for companies who retain Black employees over time.

LONG TERM

Employers and Philanthropy

- Publicly track progress on equity goals and highlight state- or region-wide successes by companies that provide high numbers of paid internships and hiring opportunities

for Black graduates

- Companies should internally track the internship and hiring opportunities that they provide to recent graduates, by race.
- Partners in philanthropy, media companies, Chambers of Commerce, state departments, or other sectors (such as Crain's Business Chicago, World Business Chicago, the Workforce Funders Alliance, the Illinois Chamber of Commerce, or others) should compile and share data, highlighting exemplary companies at varying levels of business size.
- A compiled list should be published annually of the top companies providing opportunity for Black students, in order to provide additional incentive and accountability for employers.

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