

PARTNERSHIP FOR COLLEGE COMPLETION

Accelerating action to close the graduation gap

Illinois Equity in Attainment



EQUITY PLAN

www.govst.edu/equity-initiative/

December 18, 2019

Executive Summary

Introduction

In alignment to its mission and vision and through the Illinois Equity in Attainment Initiative, Governors State University is committed to eliminating disparities in degree completion rates of African-American, Latinx, and Pell-eligible students. In doing so, GSU is committed to exploring racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps through an intersectional lens.

Current State

Our ILEA Equity Plan focuses on eliminating disparities among African-American, Latinx, and Pell-eligible students with an additional emphasis on adult-learners, first-generation students, men of color, students with disabilities, and veterans and military connected students. Currently, gaps continue to exist in retention and graduation rates for African-American students compared to their White peers. However, Latinx students outperform other ethnic/racial student groups and generally achieve greater persistence towards degree completion. Retention rates for Pell-eligible students over the past five years indicate the need to analyze and address compounding variables of students' socioeconomic status(es). Though the total enrollment numbers for these student groups have increased, the increase has not kept pace with the needs of students meeting these criteria.

Future Vision

Governors State University is one of 25 institutions committed to eliminating racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps by 2025 and aggressively prioritize increasing completion rates on our campuses. We seek to increase retention rates among African-American students, increase enrollment of Latinx students, and support college completion rates for low-income students (as identified by Pell data).

Institutional Strategies

In developing our strategies for our Equity Plan, the GSU team considered the criteria outlined by the Partnership for College Completion, which included: 1) serve a specific student group, 2) reach more than 50% of a student group and 3) achieve a specific intended outcome. As such, GSU has outlined five major strategies that include:

- Launch TRiO programs that include addressing equity gaps of African-American students.
- Develop professional development programs focused on faculty and staff efforts to address equity gaps of African-American students.

- Set standards for excellence as an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution which includes designation as an HSI while also maintaining high levels of Latinx student academic achievement.
- Develop AIM HIGH program that both rewards merit and talent but is designed to reach a broad range of income levels and African-American and Latinx students.
- Establish a Social Service Consortium to develop programs and services for student populations that are disproportionately impacted by basic needs insecurities (food, housing, and financial) and the barriers they create towards degree completion.
- Create and nurture an “Equity Advancing Collaborative” that serves a collective of academic program-based initiatives designed to specifically address equity gaps informed by annual Equity Score Cards.

Evaluation Plan

Each of the five institutional strategies will be evaluated every semester in accordance with their associated outcomes and to ensure we are making progress towards the overall goal of eliminating disparities in degree completion rates of African-American, Latinx, and Pell-eligible students.

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Signature Page

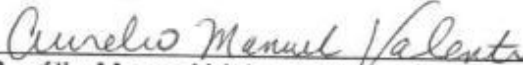
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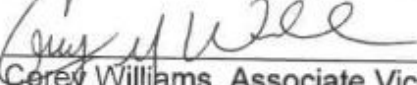
Equity Plan: 2020 - 2025

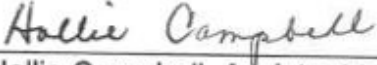
This Equity Plan has been authored by the GSU ILEA Campus Team with consultation from our broader campus community:


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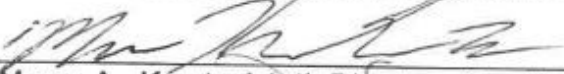

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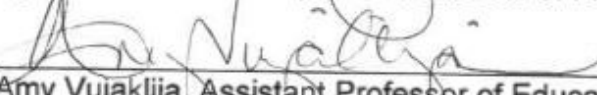

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1: Introduction

1a: ILEA Overview

High school graduation for Illinois students have maintained consistent rates between 85.4-86 between 2014-2018; however, wide and persistent gaps in high school completion rates during the same time period for low-income (76.7-79.4) and students of color (Black 74.6-78.9; Hispanic 80.7-83.5) have accurately predicted widening gaps for college matriculation. The launch of the Illinois Equity in Attainment (ILEA) marks a major step forward for 25 two-year and four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities from northeastern Illinois and across the state who are committing to eliminate racial and socio-economic achievement gaps by 2025, while aggressively increasing completion rates on their campuses.

ILEA is the signature initiative of the Partnership for College Completion (PCC), a non-profit organization founded in 2016 to champion policies, systems, and practices that ensure all students can graduate from college and achieve their career aspirations. With an initial focus on northeastern Illinois, PCC has set a goal to eliminate institutional achievement gaps in college degree completion for low-income, Latinx and African-American students in Illinois by 2025, establishing the region as a national leader in equity in attainment.

Beginning with this initial cohort, PCC will offer direct support and resources to the 25 colleges and universities who have volunteered to be members of ILEA. PCC will work alongside these partner colleges to jointly set commitments, identify appropriate evidence-based strategies to utilize on their campuses, and scale effective practices. PCC will support policy and practice change efforts that have the explicit goal of eliminating racial and socioeconomic degree completion gaps, while increasing institutional college completion rates overall.

By participating in ILEA, partners commit to a core set of principles:

- Colleges are responsible for graduating all of their degree-seeking students as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- All students can graduate with college degrees if they have the right information, tools, and supports.
- Achievement gaps between low-income, Black and Latinx students and their higher-income, White peers are unacceptable and should be eliminated.
- These efforts will be undertaken without sacrificing institutional quality or excellence or increasing admission standards.

The ILEA colleges will conduct a deep analysis of their institutional data, develop equity plans that contain annual growth targets, and report progress toward their goals, which will be shared publicly. Through analyses of institutional data, these colleges will work to identify obstacles students face and develop programs and policies that break down unnecessary barriers to college graduation.

The launch of ILEA follows a galvanizing 2017 PCC report, "[Unequal Opportunity in Illinois: A Look at Who Graduates College and Why It Matters](#)," which found that only 33.7 percent of African-American students who start at four-year institutions earn bachelor's degrees within six years – a rate 32.7 percentage points below that of their White peers. For Latinx, 49.3 percent are earning degrees, a gap of 17.1 percentage points. The completion gap between low-income and wealthier students is also alarming. According to Advance Illinois, only 37 percent of low-income students graduate in six years, while 75 percent of wealthier students do.

Increased and more equitable graduation outcomes across the diversity of our state's higher education institutions benefits students, their families, and the state of Illinois. A 3% increase in graduation rates is projected to produce \$1.7B increase in net earnings, \$132M increase in tax revenue, and \$35M in public system savings. The progress of the ILEA member colleges and universities will provide a set of learnings that PCC will document and share with practitioners and policymakers across Illinois, the region and the nation, establishing a path forward that will promote equity in college achievement.

For more information on ILEA, please visit: <http://partnershipfcc.org/ilea>.

1b: Institution Overview

Community Context

Governors State University (GSU) is located 35 miles south of the Chicago loop on a 750-acre campus. GSU was founded in 1969 as an upper-division institution providing the last two years of bachelor's degree work as well as master's degree programs. In 2014, it became a comprehensive public university and is proud to offer the most affordable undergraduate tuition rate in the state of Illinois. Student life at GSU is comprehensive, both on- and off-campus. It includes on-campus housing, athletics and recreation, civic engagement, international student services, and more than 70 student clubs and organizations. Students at GSU live in the midst of art with the internationally-recognized Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park and regularly-rotated art exhibits by students and faculty. The Center for the Performing Arts presents jazz, opera, and theatrical performances by both students and visiting theater troupes. Thousands of young schoolchildren attend performances at the CPA each year, often their first theater experience.

GSU has evolved into a regional institution serving southern and southwestern Cook County, Kankakee County, and Will County. The area population of around 1.5 million is approximately 23% minority. This region serves about 12% of the Illinois P-12 school population and employs nearly 12% of all public-school teachers and other school personnel in Illinois. Economically, the region is very diverse; it includes one of the poorest of suburbs in the United States with median household incomes of \$17,000, and one of the wealthiest suburbs with median household incomes in the \$90,000 range. Historically, the economy has depended upon agriculture, steel and other heavy industries, and petrochemicals. Since the early 1980s, the area's economy has shifted

to a heavier reliance upon the transportation, service, and communications sectors. The economic and social diversity of the area it serves, as well as major shifts in the economic base of the area, have significantly shaped GSU and the university's mission.

Institutional Context

Serving nearly 5,000 students, GSU's four colleges – Arts and Sciences, Business, Education, and Health and Human Services – offer 64 degree and 24 certificate programs, and our students obtain the skills and credentials needed to succeed in business, industry, healthcare, liberal arts, and education. The University's broad range of graduate programs prepares students for their next level of academic and professional achievement.

GSU's Dual Degree Program (DDP), a national-model partnership with seventeen area community colleges, offers students a seamless pathway from the community college associate's degree to the university bachelor's degree. Students attend full time and are provided with comprehensive financial and academic advising at both the community college and university. The success rate of the DDP students is impressive, with close to 90% of those who transfer to GSU earning their baccalaureate. One signature partnership to note is the Governors State University / Prairie State College Nursing Pathway blended degree program that enables students to earn both their Associate of Applied Science and Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree with guaranteed admission into the Master of Science in Nursing (Nursing Executive Innovate Leadership) or the Master of Science in Nursing - Clinical Nurse Specialist in Adult Healthcare programs. Partnerships such as this example represent GSU's efforts to maximize the completion and advancement opportunities for our students.

GSU is currently celebrating its 50th anniversary. The institution was founded in 1969 as an upper-division university, serving primarily adult transfer students in their pursuit of baccalaureate and master's degrees. The majority of classes were scheduled at night to accommodate students' work and family responsibilities, making GSU a commuter campus in the strictest possible sense. For approximately 40 years, GSU served the needs of our community by educating nurses, teachers, police officers, social workers, and business leaders. However, as the demographic needs of the region shifted and state support dwindled, it became apparent that its upper-division designation, established in the experimental 1960s, was no longer an effective model for higher education.

Including first-year students in addition to the existing upper-level and graduate students, the university expanded its already diverse population. Table 1 provides the demographics of GSU's undergraduate students.

Table 1: Fall 2018 Undergraduate Student Demographics

	Number	% of all Undergraduates
All Undergraduates	3,262	100.0%
African-American/Black	1,277	39.1%
Latinx	482	14.8%
Pell Recipient	1,761	54.0%
Students on Veteran's Benefits	177	5.4%
Adult Learners (over the age of 25)	1,418	43.5%
Men of Color	633	19.4%
First Generation Students	1,352	41.4%
Students with Disabilities	152	4.7%

Some additional student statistics for fall 2018 include:

- The average age of a GSU student is 31 years old with an average age of 28 for undergraduate students and the freshmen average age 20½.
- 74% of all GSU students live within 20 miles of the university.
- 54% of undergraduate students receive Pell grants, 47% receive Illinois MAP grants, and 5.4% receive some type of veteran benefits.
- 56% of all students take at least one class online.

Table 2 outlines the demographics of faculty and staff. While the percentage of "Other/Unknown" is relatively high at 28% for faculty and 15% for staff, GSU demonstrates the desire to increase diversity among its community members. GSU's full-time faculty minority percentage is more than two times higher than the national average for American post-secondary institutions. The number of African-American faculty members is three times the national average (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017; The Condition of Education 2017, NCES 2017-144).

Table 2: Fall 2018 Faculty and Staff Demographics

	Faculty (N=266)	Staff (N=419)
Race / Ethnicity		
African-American/Black	17%	34%
Caucasian	53%	47%
Latinx	2%	4%
Other / Unknown	28%	15%
Gender		
Male	40%	33%
Female	60%	67%

Over the past decade, GSU has undergone a significant transformation by adding a model lower-division curriculum with a freshman class, building its first living-learning residence hall community (Prairie Place), renovating its science and health building, and creating a competitive athletic program. The past ten years have entailed deliberative, research-based change guided by GSU's mission while keeping the needs of students at the forefront.

1c: Equity Statement

Guided by its six core values, Governors State University invests in student success through a commitment to mentoring and a deliberate university focus on student achievement of academic, professional and personal goals. Through a demonstration of inclusiveness and diversity GSU encourages acceptance of wide-ranging perspectives among students, staff, faculty, and members of the broader community.

The Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California defines ["Equity-Mindedness"](#) as the "perspective or mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who call attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes." Further, equity-mindedness moves practitioners "to take personal and institutional responsibility for the success of their students, and critically reassess their own practices" by placing success outcomes for students of color at the center. The intersection of GSU's values of student success, inclusiveness, and diversity sets a framework for achieving equity in student outcomes as a central focus for advancing our mission and vision.

As a Minority Serving Institution and an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution, GSU is committed to achieving equity and inclusive excellence by building our internal capacity to address inequities in student outcomes, eliminate equity gaps, and implement evidence-based interventions for improving student learning and success.

1d: Purpose of the Equity Plan

The ILEA Equity Plan is intended to be a roadmap for how Governors State University can close retention and degree-attainment gaps for low-income, first generation, African-American, and Latinx students. Due to the persistence and size of equity gaps across colleges and universities in Illinois, this initiative prioritizes urgent action on equitable degree completion outcomes for students across racial and socioeconomic groups. The Current State outlines the retention disparities among the following student groups, which predicts similar gaps in degree completion:

- African-American and White students
- Latinx students and White students
- Students receiving Pell grants and those not receiving Pell grants

Additionally, the following student groups will benefit from additional supports to increase rates of retention and academic success, predictors for degree completion:

- Adult Learners
- First Generation students
- Men of Color
- Students with disabilities

The ILEA Equity Plan complements other institutional efforts to increase equity in retention and degree completion.

1e: Campus Engagement Plan

As a minority-serving institution, Governors State University upholds the mission to provide opportunity and access to a first-class public education for the residents of our surrounding communities and those traditionally underserved by higher education. We embrace diversity among students, staff, and faculty as well as members of the broader community, encouraging acceptance of wide-ranging perspectives. Our mission calls for us to engage our campus community in the identification of areas for growth and develop an equity plan to address these areas.

The development, implementation, and assessment of an equity plan can potentially transform our regional institution. The GSU community relies on several stakeholders for its success: Faculty Senate, faculty committees, Student Senate, Civil Service Senate, student clubs and organizations, student services, administration, community businesses, community colleges, local schools, among others. Regular meetings of various stakeholders provide opportunities to disseminate survey results, reports, and other data gathered from ILEA Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT), National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), 2017 Campus Climate Survey, Equity Scorecards, as well as studies on housing, civic engagement, and cross-disciplinary writing that are currently underway.

Initial communication strategies used to engage various internal and external stakeholder groups in building support for ILEA equity work included the following:

- December 19, 2018 through January 25, 2019 – University stakeholders were invited to respond to the ILEA Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT) survey about perceptions of campus equity. Those asked to complete the survey included Faculty Senate, Civil Service Senate, Strategic Planning Committee, Student Affairs Management Team, Deans and Provosts Council, and R2G Action Group (the group charged with the development, implementation, assessment, and promulgation of student retention strategies).
- February 26, 2019 – Campus stakeholders were invited to review the survey results of the ILEA Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT). During this meeting, campus members were encouraged to discuss strengths and areas for improvement as a basis for Governors State University's Equity Plan.
- Spring 2019 – GSU implemented a series of charrettes that directly aligned with the strategic initiatives to address diversity, inclusion, and equity across the institution. In these face-to-face and online forums, stakeholders voiced

institutional challenges surrounding equity and offered suggestions for improvement.

A presence at regularly-scheduled meetings (Faculty Senate, Student Senate, Civil Service Senate, program/department/division) will provide ILEA team members the opportunities to report on the various initiative functions (gathering data, charting themes, researching resources) and ask for feedback.

Further, a communication strategy to inform and engage both internal and external audiences will be employed to disseminate the creation and implementation of the University's equity plan. This strategy will include the following: 1) Blackboard, 2) GSU Agora and GSU View (electronic newsletters), 3) Social Media Outreach, 4) Campus Emails, and 5) [Equity Project Website](#).

2. Current State

Governors State University Enrollments

In fall 2018, the total student headcount at Governors State University was 4,857, a decline of 12.7% from the 5,530 number of enrolled students in 2012. It must be noted that in fall 2017, GSU was experiencing the cumulative effects of the state's 2-year budget impasse and, as with most of the Illinois state institutions, enrollments fell. Though much of this decline can be attributed to reduced or stalled state funding, other factors included (and continue to include) out-of-state population movement.

However, despite overall enrollment declines, the fall 2018 undergraduate degree-seeking students totaled 4,730, an increase of 51.9% from 3,114 in 2012. Of this degree-seeking population, 1,882 students were enrolled full-time, a marked increase from 1,269 in fall of 2012.

The average age of undergraduates in 2012 was 31.8. The transition from an upper-level to a four-year institution in 2014 only slightly lowered the average age of students to its current 28.4, indicating the need to maintain GSU's focus on serving the nontraditional student. It is notable that transfer students still constitute 89% of GSU's undergraduate student population, holding onto the traditional upper-level model that was in place until 2014.

Transitioning from upper-level to a comprehensive university as recent as 2014 impacts available data for graduation rates among groups of students. The first report for six-year graduation rates will be in 2020. First-year retention rates and course success rates for academic years 2014-18 are being used to predict persistence to degree completion.

Intersectionality in Equity Work

Illinois Equity in Attainment (ILEA) asks participating institutions to explore equity gaps for African-American, Latinx and Pell-eligible students. With such a diverse student population (Figure 1), GSU is committed to exploring racial and socioeconomic gaps through an intersectional lens. For example, from our participation in [Committing to Equity and Inclusive Excellence](#), GSU learned that to address gaps in African-American women adult-learner achievement, we needed to meaningfully focus on supporting students based on the intersecting nature of social groups/identities such as race, gender, and class on overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or bias. With these learned understandings as guiding factors, our Equity Plan focuses on disparities among the following groups of students: African American, Latinx, Pell eligible, adult learners, first-generation students, men of color, and students with disabilities.

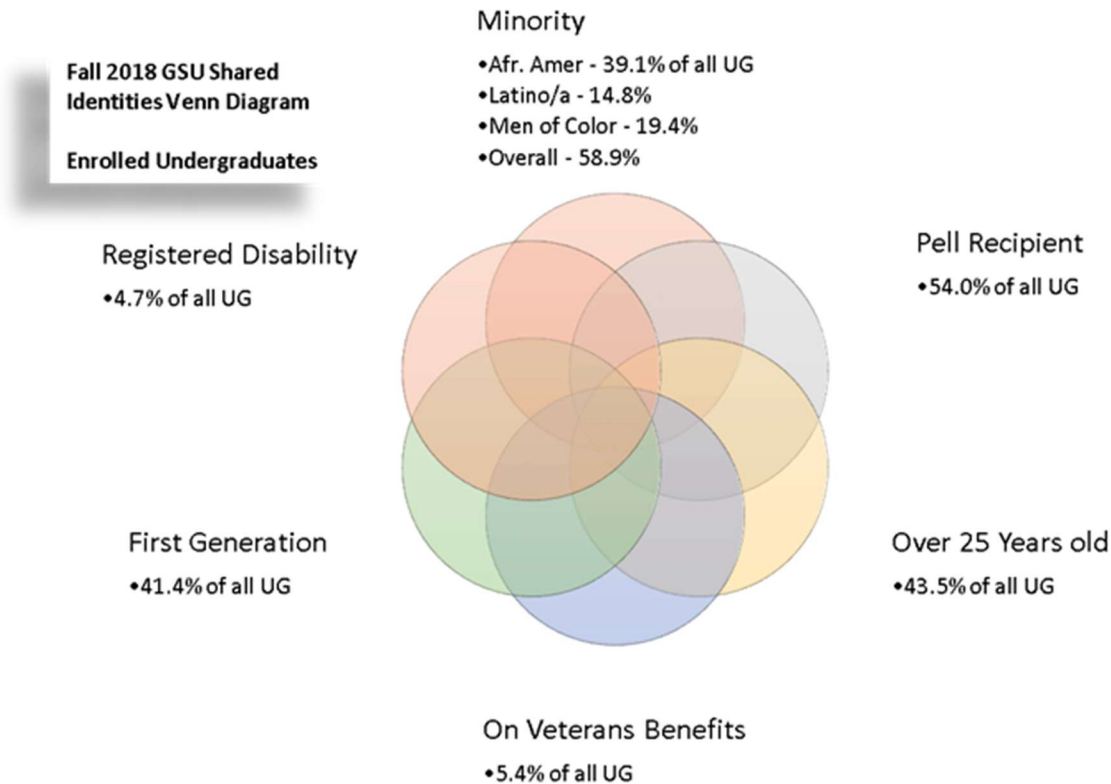


Figure 1: Shared Identities Venn Diagram

2a: African-American Students

African-American student enrollments at Governors State University have been relatively steady: 37.9% in 2012 and 38.4% in 2018. In fall 2018, African-American students were 39.1% of the GSU undergraduates (1,277 of 3,262).

Retention rates demonstrate a pattern of disparity for African-American students compared to their White peers. This pattern persists for both students entering into their first undergraduate academic year and for transfer students. Since 2014, African-American students have been retained to their second year at 50.5% compared to 60.3% of White first-year students. While differences in retention rates exist for transfer students, they are smaller. African-American transfers have been retained at 75.2% compared to 82% for White transfer students.

As a Minority Serving Institution with African-American students representing nearly 40% of its undergraduate population, addressing equity gaps is critical for student success. Recent initiatives such as GSU's participation in the AAC&U Committing to Equity and Inclusive Excellence project and the Kresge-sponsored Male Success Initiative mark the beginnings of full-scale efforts to close equity gaps for African-American students.

2b: Latinx Students

From fall 2012 to fall 2018, enrollment of Latinx students grew by 32.5% (425 students in 2012 increasing to 630 in 2018), even with overall decline in enrollment during the two-year state budget impasse. When all regional state institutions were facing significant enrollment declines, Latinx students constituted the sole population demographic on the rise: +4.5% in fall 2018 versus overall enrollment of -6.3%. In fall 2018, Latinx students were 14.8% of the GSU undergraduates (482 of 3,262), just shy of the 15% required for designation as an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution.

In an effort to build our enrollment of Latinx students, GSU has launched a Hispanic Recruitment Committee, purposefully hired Spanish-speaking staff, and recently became institutional members of both Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) and *Excelencia in Education*. However, while new initiatives are under development, no interventions currently exist that focus specifically on Latinx student success, which might explain the high variance in student outcomes from 2012-2018.

Using retention rates as a measure, Latinx students generally show greater persistence compared to all minority groups and all students, which may provide key information about student success. Fall 2017-2018 persistence rates for first-year Latinx students was 80% compared to 67% for all White first-year students. Latinx transfer students also retained at a high rate for each of the years from 2012-2018. The highest year-to-year retention rate was 89% in 2013-2014 and 2014-15, and the lowest 69% in 2017-18. The variance in retention rates suggests that the outcomes are driven more by student characteristics, societal changes, and college readiness, and less about institutional interventions.

Additionally, GSU's Equity Scorecards indicate a pattern of Latinx students outperforming all student groups across five academic areas in retention in academic years 2016-2018: 1) Elementary Education by 35%, 2) Business Administration by 32%, 3) Communication by 28%, 4) Interdisciplinary Studies by 19% and 5) Social Work by 15%. Some programs underperformed in retention areas and should be a focus for improvements (e.g. Psychology at -17% and Information Technology at -16%).

2c: Pell Eligible Students

For the purposes of this initiative, Pell-eligibility guidelines were the criteria for determining socioeconomic status for students attending GSU from 2012 through 2017. With the exception of 2016, the number of Pell-eligible students has hovered just below to somewhat above 50% of our learner population. In the fall of 2012, 49.1% of the total enrolled students were Pell eligible. In 2013 and 2014, the number of Pell-eligible students increased to 50.1% and 54.2%, respectively. From 2014 to 2015, there was a 1.2% decrease to 53.0% of enrollment being Pell-eligible. In 2016, during the statewide budget impasse, there was a notable decrease of 12.4% to 41.6%, followed by an increase in 2017 to 53.7% of the total enrollment being Pell-eligible.

With a consistently sizeable number of Pell-eligible students, GSU's challenge is to address the specific needs faced by this growing population so they can maintain their degree-seeking progress. The retention rates between 2014-2017 illustrate the achievement gap. The fall semester of 2014 began with 489 Pell eligible students with 381 (77.9%) of those students retained in the fall of 2015. The fall semester of 2015 began with 426 Pell eligible students, and 300 (70.4%) students were retained in the fall of 2016. The fall of 2016 began with 581 Pell eligible students of which only 367 (67.2%) were retained in the fall of 2017. The fall of 2017 began with 613 Pell eligible students and only 425 (69.3%) were retained in the fall of 2018. Though the total numbers have increased 25.3% in Pell eligibility between 2014-2017, the retention rates have only risen 10.4%, not keeping pace with the needs of students meeting these criteria.

Retention rates for the past five years indicate the need to analyze and address intersectionality in students' socioeconomic status(es). Of the 54% Pell-eligible students, 43% are Adult Learners and the majority are also female. Discerning the impact of each of these variables will be one area for data analysis and program implementation.

2d: Adult Learners

Adult Learners on GSU's campus are identified as undergraduate students age 25 and above. For 44 of its 50 years, GSU was an upper-division university, serving only transfer students with an average age in the mid-30's. In fall 2012, 62.5% of our male students and 68% of our female students were over the age of 25. In fall 2014, the semester that lower-division students were first admitted, the percentages of male and female students over 25 decreased to 53.2% and 60% respectively.

In fall 2018, males age 25 and over still accounted for 46.4% and females 50.8% of the undergraduate population. It is logical that the percentage of students age 25 and over decreased somewhat, as most first-year GSU students are of traditional college age. But even accounting for the lower average age due to younger underclassmen, GSU still remains a campus attractive to and committed to serving Adult Learners.

The vast majority of adult students age 25 and over are transfer students. Of the 401 new Adult Learners enrolling in fall 2016, 392 were transfer students. Similarly, 351 out of 354 new Adult Learners enrolled in fall 2017 were transfer students.

Persistence to degree completion, indicated by retention rates from one fall to the next fall, demonstrates gaps between the Adult Learner population and traditional-age students. In fall 2014, 408 new Adult Learners enrolled with 298 (73%) of these students returning the following fall compared to 77.8% of the 532 students under age 25, a gap of -4.8%. In fall 2015, 367 Adult Learners enrolled with a retention of 61.3% to fall 2016 compared to 73.3% of the 449 students under age 25, a gap of -12%.

As the transition to a four-year comprehensive university status took hold, enrollments in fall 2016 increased to 700 newly-enrolled traditional-age first-year students and a reasonably steady number of 401 Adult Learners. Unfortunately, retention for both Adult Learners and traditional students dropped in fall 2017 to 231 (57.6%) and 467 (66.7%), respectively, with a gap of -9.1%. Enrollments in fall 2017 showed a similar trend with 354 Adult Learners and 600 new traditional age students. Of these students, 213 (60.2%) Adult Learners and 408 (68%) traditional age students were retained to fall 2018, a gap of -7.8%.

In fall 2016, majors entered by adult students in larger numbers included Business Administration (BS), Criminal Justice (BA), Interdisciplinary Studies (BA), and Psychology (BA). Enrollment in these same majors in fall 2017 followed the trend of lower enrollment: Criminal Justice from 31 to 17; Interdisciplinary from 66 to 39; and Psychology from 40 to 34. However, Business Administration enrollment during this same time grew from 36 to 51. These majors all have retention rates that range between 60% to 80% (60% in Psychology for fall 2016 compared to 79.4% for fall 2017) to 79.5% for Interdisciplinary Studies for fall 2016.

GSU has reinvigorated its attention on Adult Learners after four years of establishing itself as a four-year comprehensive university. In November of 2018 and again in March of 2019, all-campus symposia focused on the needs of Adult Learners. Faculty, student, and staff suggestions from these all-day symposiums will guide the planning for future initiatives.

2e: First Generation Students

First Generation college students are integral to Governors State University with 41.6% (n=1,352) representation of all undergraduate students in fall 2018. First Generation college student enrollment percentages have been relatively constant for undergraduate students: 39.8% in fall 2016 and 42.6% in fall 2017.

First Generation students entering in fall 2016 numbered 323 compared to 778 non-First Generation students. In fall 2017, First Generation student numbers rose to 407 with a decline of non-First Generation students to 547.

The fall-to-fall retention rate for first-year, First Generation college students is consistent with national norms. The 323 first-year, First Generation college students who entered GSU in fall 2016 were retained at a rate of 72.8% to spring 2017 and 61.3% to fall 2017. In comparison, the 778 non-First Generation peers in fall 2016 were retained at a rate of 77.9% to spring 2017 and 64.3% to fall 2017. Retention rates improved for First Generation to 81.1% for spring 2018 and 68.3% for fall 2018. At the same time, the retention rates for non-First Generation students stayed relatively steady at 78.2% in spring 2018 and 62.7% in fall 2018.

The demographics of this First Generation population has changed. In fall 2016, 52.8% of First Generation were minority students, increasing to 66.2% in fall 2017. In fall

2016, 38.2% of minority students were First Generation and in fall 2017 that number increased to 48.7%. While available data for these designations are limited to two academic years, the numbers indicate the need to consider how the equity plan identifications of students' demographics and characteristics overlap. Currently, initiatives in place to increase first-generation student success include the Starfish Early Alert System, the comprehensive First-Year Experience program, and the Retention to Graduation freshmen subcommittee.

2f: Men of Color

In fall 2015, Men of Color students (combined African American and Latinx) numbered 19.1% of the total undergraduate population at Governors State University. In fall 2016, this enrollment number rose to 21.4% of undergraduates, further increasing to 24.6% in the fall of 2017. During the fall 2018 semester, there was a slight enrollment decrease to 23.9% Men of Color in the undergraduate student population.

While GSU has experienced a slight reduction in the enrollment of men of color, the rate of persistence has increased for each new incoming freshman cohort for several years. Fall 2016 to spring 2017 saw a 79.3% persistence rate; while in fall 2017 to spring 2018, there was an 84.7% persistence rate for this group of entering freshmen. Conversely, there was a decrease in the persistence rate for members of the transferring cohort. Fall 2016 to spring 2017 showed an 80.6% persistence rate; while in fall 2017 to spring 2018, that number dropped to 78.3%.

In the fall of 2014, the Male Success Initiative (MSI) was developed to address the significant opportunity gap for minority males who are often the first in their family, and sometimes first in their community, to pursue higher education. The MSI program ensures postsecondary persistence through targeted workshops designed to increase social, emotional, and non-cognitive barriers to success. MSI goals include: 1) establishing identity through intersectionality and character enrichment; 2) fostering a sense of belonging and raising social and academic consciousness; 3) developing healthy relationships and gaining positive interactions between peers and faculty/staff; and 4) building a new cadre of effective, prepared leaders who have a commitment to service and social justice. The ultimate goal of the program is ensuring the retention and completion of participating minority male students at Governors State University.

While the MSI program has been a highly successful institutional pilot initiative with more than 80 males having participated in the program since its inception, it is currently supporting less than 2% of the total minority male student population at the institution. It may be prudent for this program to be scaled up to include all undergraduate minority men.

2g: Students with Disabilities

For the 2017-2018 Academic Year, 247 students registered a disability with the university, accounting for 5.1% of all students. Nationally, the distribution of students

with disabilities is more than 11% with even higher values for minorities (excluding Hispanic and Asian students), students aged 30 years or older, independent students, and veterans (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Persons with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed than those without disabilities and up to three times more likely to not be in the labor force, even with a college degree (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2015).

The State of Illinois, as part of the Illinois Board of Higher Education's Underrepresented Groups Survey, asks universities to identify students who have registered for services, students who have used services, and the population of faculty, staff, and other employees who have disclosed or received accommodations for a disability. Because this is a state-wide report and peer institutions benchmark against these data, the categories serve as a common language to discuss various populations within the university. However, in terms of outcomes, no longitudinal data exist on these students. It will be important to keep collecting data and to improve the accuracy of what is reported and then measure for equity.

The breakdown of disabilities students registered with the GSU Office of Disability Services was as follows (please note that students are only identified for one disability but may be included several categories):

- 25% Psychological Disabilities
- 23% Systemic/Chronic Health Problems
- 21% Learning Disabilities
- 16% Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
- 6% Mobility Impairment
- 5% Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- 4% Blind/Low Vision
- <1% Other Disabilities

Governors State University will work to close the equity gap for students with disabilities, addressing possible stigmas and the increased accommodation needs for students. However, this work will only be possible with better data collection, more visibility, and outreach to faculty and staff to not only educate them on these issues but to help them identify and register, if applicable, as well.

3. Future Vision

Goal

The goal of Governors State University, in alignment to its mission and vision and through the Illinois Equity in Attainment Initiative, is to eliminate disparities in degree completion rates between African-American and White students, between Latinx and White students, and between low-income students (as identified by Pell data) and non-Pell eligible students.

Exhibit 1: First-Year Persistence Rates: 2020-25 Equity Goals

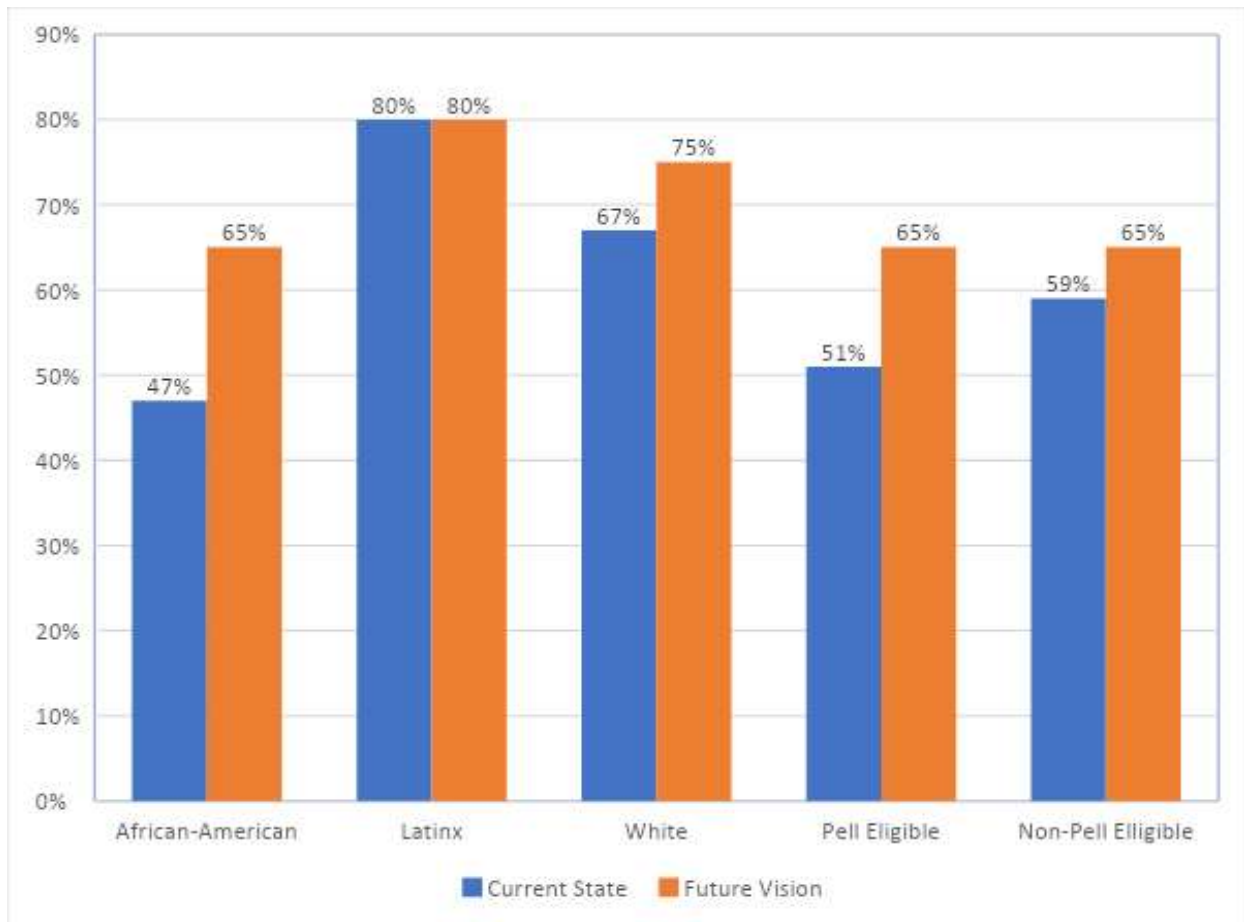


Exhibit 2: First-Year 4-year Graduation Rates: 2020-25 Equity Goals

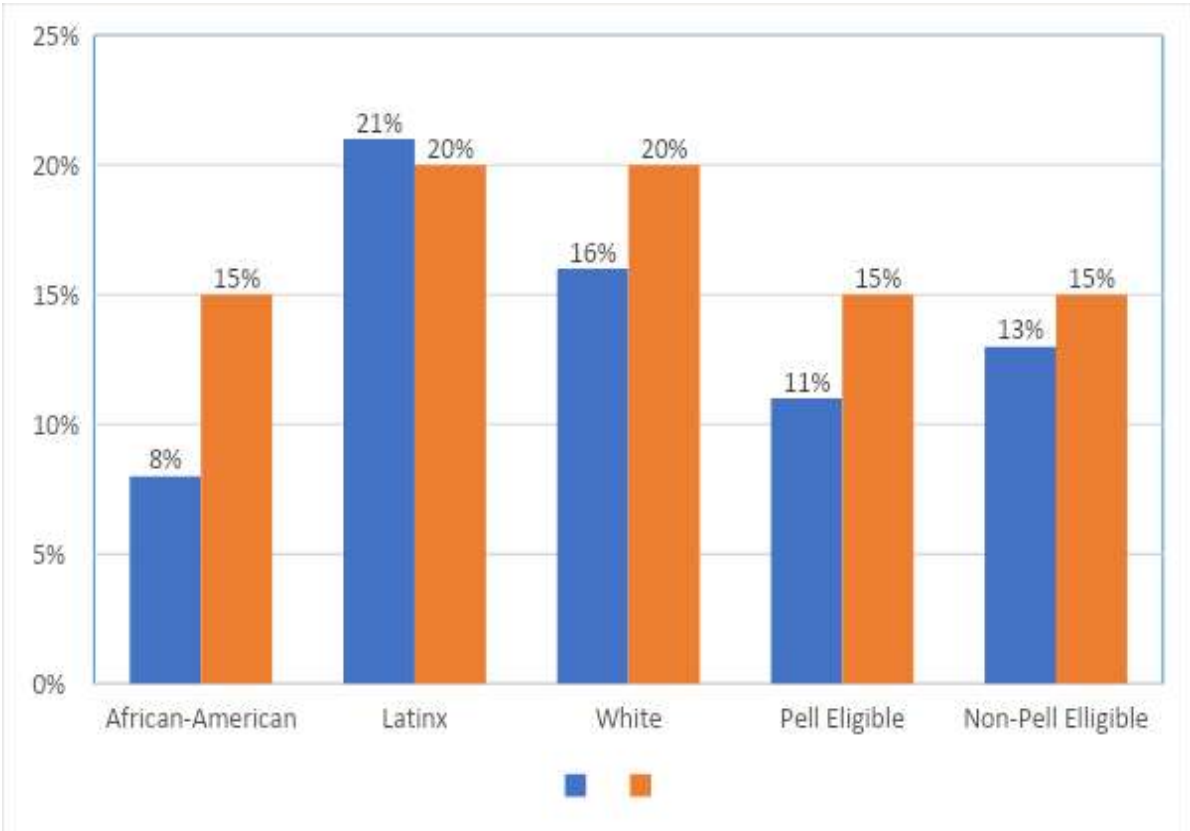
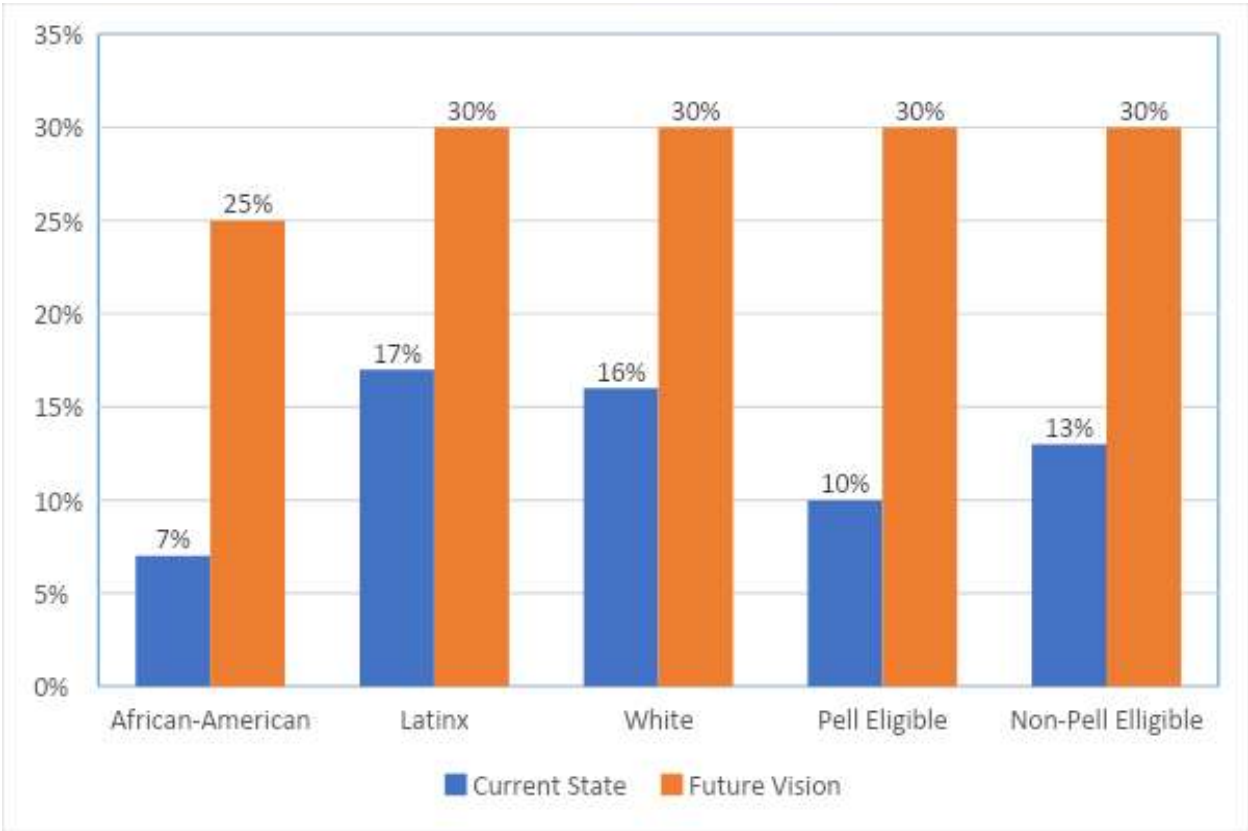


Exhibit 3: Part-time Transfer 4-year Graduation Rates: 2020-25 Equity Goals



3a: African-American Students

Data for African-American students from 2012-2019 demonstrated consistent underperformance in retention and success rates compared to White students. Constituting 39.1% of the undergraduate student body in comparison to 30.6% White peers in fall 2018, this gap in performance demonstrates the need for attention.

Focused efforts will be made to close achievement gaps in retention and six-year graduation rates between African-American and White students by 2025. The future vision sees African-American, Latinx, and White students achieving retention rates of 65% and six-year graduation rates at 25%.

To achieve this goal, GSU will examine the Equity Scorecards to analyze attainment rates across academic programs. Through 2016-2018, several programs demonstrated African-American students excelling above the average, including Psychology (13%) and Social Work (8%). These programs might provide models for best practices that could be replicated to other courses of study and social programs. GSU should explore programs such as Business Administration and Health Administration where gaps in student success rates for African-American students are more significant.

Externally, GSU will actively seek application for TRiO grants dedicated to student retention and completion.

3b: Latinx Students

For Latinx students the equity issue is one of access and representation rather than academic performance. Latinx students generally outperform all student subgroups in key metrics such as retention and success rates. However, despite having community college partners with Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) designation, being located in Will County (17.5% Latinx) and neighboring Cook County (25.5% Latinx), GSU's Latinx student enrollment constitutes just under 15% of our undergraduate student population. To address access as an equity goal, GSU will work to be designated as an emerging HSI by 2021 and achieve Hispanic Serving (HS) designation by 2025. In addition, while Latinx students have a pattern of outperforming all other students, the variability in metrics from 2012-2018 should be moderated, as such GSU will design student interventions to ensure that Latinx student success is consistent and not episodic.

3c: Pell Eligible Students

In the recent Wisconsin HOPE Lab study, 74% of participating Governors State students reported facing some basic needs insecurity. GSU recently implemented the GSU4U program to aid students who may have food and housing insecurities, adding to the support already provided in other areas, including clothing (particularly professional attire), academic and career support, and health and wellness. GSU has also partnered with the Illinois Hunger Coalition to coordinate opportunities for students to apply to the Link card program.

Data on the success of these existing programs must be systematically collected and measured to evaluate the potential benefits of expansion. For example, Pell-eligible students at GSU who are primarily female students and may be single parent/head of household could benefit from child care programs and emergency housing. Yet, until data are made available that quantify the number of students who have benefited from existing programs, plans to add new programs are premature. GSU's goal will be to monitor and evaluate GSU4U to ascertain its functionality and frequency of use, as well as its effects on retention. Additionally, concerted efforts will be made to determine the reasons for attrition among Pell-eligible students in order to develop programs to specifically address these needs.

3d: Adult Learners

For 40+ years GSU existed as an upper division school, serving mostly Adult Learners. When GSU became a four-year institution in 2014, many of the newer initiatives and programs targeted newer student populations—young men of color, veterans, first-year students, etc. Yet even with the influx of traditional-age freshmen, the Adult Learner remains a core population at 43.5% of all undergraduates.

The Adult Learner has become a renewed focus for GSU. The fall 2018 and spring 2019 all-campus symposia about adult learning theory and pedagogy helped GSU identify ways in which supports can be enhanced, improved, and added. For example, this demographic may need babysitting so that they can attend class, workshops in how to use course technology, and flexible campus life opportunities that will fit into their full work and class schedules.

Another avenue for reaching the Adult Learner is through the Dual Degree Program. Over the course of the last three years (six cohorts), 45% of Dual Degree Program students have been Adult Learners. The rising demands for affordable education for career-changing preparation has highlighted the importance of the GSU/community college network. Encouraging partnership involvement in service learning on GSU's and area campuses can create connections among all students, particularly Adult Learners who may have difficulty finding a sense of belonging during the transfer process.

3e: First Generation Students

The future vision for the First Generation student demographic includes defining specific needs and solutions. Current data show that First Generation college students have lower retention and persistence rates than their non-First Generation peers. GSU will seek to add narrative context to the quantitative reports by including one-on-one and focus group interviews to learn more about the successes and challenges of First Generation college students. Of importance is a conversation about the reasons First Generation students leave the university.

First Generation college students often enter the university with a multitude of distinct social identities. Building support systems for students unfamiliar with college's hidden curriculum will be important, particularly as a charge for faculty members who teach courses for first-year students and for administrative staff who interact with these students.

Furthermore, faculty and staff who were First Generation college students can be part of an outreach campaign to build connections with new students. For example, higher education institutions have created outreach campaigns that ask faculty and staff to include appropriate identifiers such as "First Generation college student" in their email signatures. These small connections can go a long way in welcoming students into the GSU community.

3f: Men of Color

Students who feel connected to the university environment are more likely to succeed. Across all types of postsecondary institutions, there is an increased awareness to provide men of color with specific support programs to build these connections and help them thrive as college students.

Governors State University's concept of personal growth is premised on current student development theory with the assumption that responsible students desire to become more complete persons emotionally, intellectually, and physically. The mission of the Male Success Initiative embodies this concept. The MSI program will be scaled up to improve outcomes for these young men, particularly increasing the rates of retention and persistence of minority male students.

Faculty, students, staff, and other stakeholders will be involved in the scale-up of the MSI program. The participants in this initiative will be asked to complete assessments to determine their needs and interests. These assessments, along with conversations and other measures, will ensure that participants are actively engaged in the planning and development of program activities.

The institution will develop an action plan based on a theory of change model to establish long-term goals for the scale-up of the MSI program. Indicators of success, preconditions for success, and program interventions will be established. The university will administer the Community College Survey of Men (CCSM) developed by the Minority Male Community College Collaborative and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Additionally, the university will use the Wellbeing Assessment developed by Wake Forest University that is designed to help university offices and staff develop targeted, effective, and evidence-informed programming to support student wellbeing.

By employing these instruments, Governors State University will acquire significant baseline data. The Office of Institutional Research will aid with the internal and external validity in the collection, disaggregation, and analysis of data, as well as dissemination

and utilization of findings. The ultimate goal of the evaluation process is for Governors State University to have the internal capacity to institutionalize developmental evaluation practices and continuously improve the MSI program and new programs supporting men of color.

3g: Students with Disabilities

The figures in Section 2 regarding student disability categories were collected by hand and have only recently been entered in the university's data management system. The campus-wide identification of these students has focused primarily on equity in terms of availability of services and not in measures of academic gaps compared to other student populations. To achieve greater equity, it will be a priority to improve the process of collecting this information, add this population into mandatory reporting, and include these students in equity scorecards. Adding students with disabilities to the campus climate survey conducted every two years will help identify potential gaps in equitable practices.

Qualitative data will be important in developing contextual information about students who have or have not sought services. Adding accommodation data to admissions information, recruitment materials, and GSUStar (Retention and early-alert system) will provide resources for developing best practices to address students' needs. Conducting a campaign to make sure students know how, why, and where to register, while addressing stigma that may come from self-identifying will be critical to more fully understanding this demographic.

Closing equity gaps will mean educating our student body and faculty and staff about disabilities, accommodations, and combating the stigma of identifying as a person with a disability. The slightly more than 5% of students identified as having a disability is still closer to expected representation than the information the university has on faculty, staff, and other employees who have disabilities. Currently, fewer than ten employees have reported a disability with the university; however, conducting an outreach with the intention of providing students with mentors in the same situation may encourage more self-reporting among employees. Mentors can help students navigate the written and unwritten rules of the campus and advocate for them in improving the university's attention to equity in experience and access.

A campus-wide campaign aimed at identifying the resources available and how to access them will close knowledge gaps. Making this information electronic and easy to access, but visible and present, will educate students about the resources available without identifying a disability until they are ready to do so. Educating faculty on accommodations and how to support students with visible, invisible, known, and unknown disabilities will help improve the campus experience for students and faculty alike. Educating staff to serve as student service advocates will change misperceptions about disabilities and accommodations. Campus symposia focused on services and accommodations for students and staff with disabilities will enhance current efforts.

Creating an assessment framework for campus accommodations and reviewing these data will create a culture of continuous improvement centered on equity. By connecting with other institutions that have larger populations of students with disabilities or similar demographics to Governors State University, we will gain insight into best reporting practices and how to assess successful implementation. National associations such as the National Center for College Students with Disabilities (NCCSD) and the Association of Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) have significant resources and research to draw from.

Summary of Proposed Practices

- Increase identification of students, faculty, and staff, through outreach and education.
- Improve data collection methods and integrate this population into regular reporting and equity analysis.
- Conduct qualitative research to understand the experience for these students.
- Include data collection at the point of admissions and recruitment to create visibility for this population and aid campus planning and include this population in early-alert systems that can help close equity gaps.
- Educate faculty and staff on accommodations and resources and help them become advocates for students in need.
- Create an assessment framework for current practices.
- Connect with other institutions to share best practices and bring in speakers and collaborate with national associations to draw from their significant resources and research.
- Add students with disabilities and their experiences to the campus climate survey conducted every two years.

Sources

U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2015. (Prepared August 2016).

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). Digest of Education Statistics, 2015 (NCES 2016-014), Table 311.10.

4. Institutional Strategies

4a: African American Students

Strategy 1: TRiO Programs

TRiO is a collection of educational opportunity initiatives funded through the Department of Education. According to the Council for Opportunity in Education, “the TRiO programs were the first national college access and retention programs to address the serious social and cultural barriers to education in America.” The history of TRiO is progressive and includes eight distinct outreach programs targeted to motivate and support groups traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education, such as low-income students, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress from middle school to post-baccalaureate programs. Due to our location 35 miles south of the Chicago loop, GSU serves a broad, primarily rural region and is well positioned to deliver high impact TRiO programs.

The term “TRiO” refers to the first three programs of this nature that fell under the Higher Education Amendments of 1968, Upward Bound (UB – 1964), Talent Search (TS – 1965), and Special Services for Disadvantaged Students (SSDS – 1968), now known as Student Support Services (SSS). The remaining five TRiO programs include Veterans Upward Bound (VUB – 1972), Educational Opportunity Centers Program (EOC- 1972), Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program (McNair – 1986), Upward Bound Math-Science (UBMS – 1990), and Training Program for Federal TRiO Programs (TRiO Staff Training).

Governors State University qualifies to submit multiple TRiO applications focused on different subpopulations when the U.S. Department of Education releases the Student Support Services (SSS) program in the fall of 2019. We anticipate applying for the following SSS programs: Traditional SSS, SSS Students with Disabilities Program, SSS STEM – Health Sciences, TRiO SSS Future Educator, and TRiO SSS Veterans. If funded, all five of these TRiO SSS initiatives would serve a minimum of 700 students each year from 2020 to 2025. Persistence, good academic standing, and 4-year graduation rates are indicators upon which these programs would be funded during each of the five-year award cycles.

The decision to compete for the TRiO SSS program(s) is a critical one to support the expanding minority student population at Governors State University and to increase the lagging college degree completions. Over the next five years, and as the U.S. Department of Education releases additional TRiO competitions (e.g. EOC, McNair, VUB), GSU will continue to submit applications for each in supporting the institution’s efforts to decrease equity gaps amongst the various marginalized groups on our campus.

Strategy 2: Faculty and Staff Development

Our participation in the three-year foundational project titled “Committing to Equity and Inclusive Excellence” (2015-2018) led by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) showed us that wide and inclusive faculty adoption of equity-minded practices will be essential to elevating degree completion rates of African-American students, possibly eliminating disparities in degree completion rates among all groups of students. In the previous Equity and Inclusive Excellence Project, once we began implementing mini-grants to incentivize broader faculty adoption, faculty participation increased from 50% to 85%, which then enabled us to reach 65% of our students.

This previous initiative demonstrated that GSU has the capacity to widely implement strategies designed to move us from the current state to the future vision outlined. Faculty and staff invitation to, involvement in, and implementation of equity-minded practices will accelerate institutional efforts to achieve equity goals. To maximize the impact and effectiveness of our strategies, it will be important to partner with the Center for Active Engagement and Scholarship (CAES) and the university Faculty Development Committee (FDC) to support faculty and staff involvement in equity goals. Enhancing campus development to better align with our Equity Plan goals to improve African-American student retention, course success, and graduation rates will have broad-reaching positive effects for all students, as well as increase faculty and staff self-efficacy as education professionals.

Building University member support is an essential component of our campus engagement plan as outlined in Section 1 of this Equity plan. Presentations at faculty, staff, and student groups (e.g. Faculty Senate, Civil Service Senate, Student Senate) preface a full-community roll-out of the Equity Plan draft at our Campus Symposium on Friday, November 8, 2019. The Campus Symposia (fall and spring) include keynote presentations by Dr. Frank Harris who will facilitate feedback on the Equity Plan, future vision, goals, and strategies.

Built upon faculty and staff feedback on strategies, the ILEA team proposes to engage our faculty and staff in three areas in efforts to close completion gaps between African-American students and their White peers:

- GSU will participate fully in the Equity Academies sponsored by the ILEA.
- The institution will expand existing quantitative and qualitative research on the experiences of first-year and other groups of students to specifically focus on African-American students in curricular and co-curricular settings at GSU.
- The ILEA team will collaborate with the FDC in the development of faculty learning communities around equity-based practices.

All campus community members will be invited to attend Equity Academies and other workshops sponsored by ILEA. Faculty who teach courses in which African-American students are underperforming compared to White students will receive additional

support. Importantly, the ILEA team will coordinate with the CAES and FDC to ensure that faculty from the five colleges and all ranks who have expertise in areas of equity, cultural responsiveness, and mindfulness training are invited to facilitate sessions.

The existing quantitative data provide comparisons among different student populations on campus; however, data lack the contextual narrative necessary to understand the classroom experiences of African-American students. To support this effort, the university will commit to institution-based research grants focused on the classroom and university experiences of African-American students. Furthermore, the ILEA delegation will work with the Department of Marketing and Communications to capture narratives in video and multimedia formats.

The ILEA program will incentivize professional development workshops and sessions by offering stipends to resident experts (members of the campus community who research and/or have exceptional experience in serving African-American students). The ILEA delegation, with support from the faculty community, will also incentivize participation in these workshops by offering a certificate of completion for faculty members who complete 80% of the workshops from resident experts. The GSU ILEA team is positioned to collaborate with the university Faculty Development Committee to discuss and deliberate strategies pertaining to teaching, research, and faculty service around equity-based practices.

Strategy 3: Equity Advancing Collective

During our participation in the *Committing to Equity and Inclusive Excellence* project, GSU reduced the equity gap for the retention of African-American transfer students from 5.1 percent (2014-15) to 3.7 percent (2016-17). In part, this significant accomplishment is attributed to the adoption and implementation of interventions that were informed by Equity Scorecards. Since 2015, the institutional data on the Equity Scorecards have helped GSU identify and act upon inequities. Equity Scorecards disaggregate student success data such as retention rates, GPA, and credits earned across socially constructed identities that include age, gender, race, first-generation status and income (using Pell eligibility as a proxy).

GSU will continue to utilize Equity Scorecards to identify academic programs where equity gaps exist for African-American, Latinx and Pell-eligible students. The collective will serve as an incubator for, and support initiatives coordinated by, academic and administrative departments with professional development, program resources and assessment support. The collective will be coordinated through the campus-wide Equity in Student Success subcommittee of the Retention to Graduation Action Group.

4b: Latinx Students

Strategy 4: Excellence as an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution

As mentioned previously, there are two areas of opportunity related to Latinx students' success at GSU: 1) to increase recruitment and enrollment of Latinx students to reflect the communities we serve, 2) to stabilize Latinx student performance at consistent levels. Succeeding in both will distinguish GSU for excellence as an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution.

GSU is currently on the cusp of the criteria required for designation as an Emerging Hispanic Institution (15% of undergraduates are identified as Latinx). Opportunities exist to expand Latinx enrollment to the necessary 25% to become a Hispanic Serving Institution given that our host county, Will County (17.5% Latinx), and neighboring Cook County (25.5% Latinx), have significant and growing Latinx populations. To meet this portion of our regional mission, a committee was established and chaired by the Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Management and Director of Admissions to develop a recruitment plan focusing on Latinx student recruitment in the Chicagoland area. The plan will outline strategic partnerships, work to build trust within the communities, and determine effective ways to reach students/family members to identify support services needed on campus.

It is notable that our Latinx students consistently outperform all other racial ethnic student groups; however, significant variance exists in student success metrics from year to year. Using retention rates as a measure, Latinx students generally show greater persistence compared to all minority groups and all students but with more variance. For example, the highest year-to-year retention rate was 89% in 2013-2014 and the lowest 69% in 2017-18. To help establish some consistency and moderation in Latinx student success, our campus wide and cross-functional Retention to Graduation Action Group will establish and designate an Equity in Student Success Working Group to explore this concern and recommend policies and practices to ensure consistency in Latinx student success rates. The two groups working in tandem will ensure that GSU increases access for and enrollment of Latinx students, in addition to leveraging our current Latinx student success rates to ensure that GSU will distinguish itself for excellence as an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution.

4c: Pell Recipients

Strategy 5: AIM HIGH

The Illinois AIM HIGH Grant program is an initiative of the General Assembly's Higher Education Working Group. The program's goal is to help public four-year universities attract and keep Illinois residents by providing state funds to match the institutions' spending on financial aid. Consistent with GSU's mission and strategic plan, we will develop an equity-minded program to ensure access to additional scholarship funds that address college affordability for high-potential, low-income students of color with the following goals:

- Support high-potential first-year students with demonstrated perseverance and commitment towards baccalaureate degree attainment.

- Enhance financial support for high-achieving transfer students.
- Incentivize and reward active participation in both community college and GSU Male Success Initiative through micro-grants.
- Develop proactive “persistence scholarships” for students in good academic with modest balances that prevent them from continued enrollment.

Beginning fall 2019, Governors State University’s new AIM HIGH scholarships will guarantee ALL college-ready, first-year students will receive scholarships ranging from 25% to 100% of their tuition cost. In addition, we will dedicate matching funds to micro-grants for participants of our Male Success Initiative and support retention scholarships for Adult Learners with account balances.

Strategy 6: Social Services Consortium

GSU students are more likely to face basic needs insecurities than their peers at other four-year institutions. In 2018, 74% of students reported experiencing at least one or both food or housing insecurities. While GSU has formed strong collaborations with community-based organizations and launched its campus-wide [GSU4U](#) initiative, it is critical to scale up our services as a regional hub, establishing a “Social Services Consortium for Southland College Students” for not only GSU students, but also students enrolling in our partner community colleges.

In launching the Social Services Consortium, GSU will use a “Single Point of Contact” model to lead our efforts to identify and connect with students in the Chicago Southland who need basic needs assistance towards their degree attainment. The Social Services Consortium will move beyond programmatic efforts and create social services ecosystem designed to help students navigate on-campus and off-campus programs and services.

5. Evaluation Plan

TRiO Programs

The evaluation plan for Governors State University (GSU) TRiO program(s) will be both formative and summative, beginning at the outset and lasting for the duration of the project. These assessments will allow for early, ongoing, and consistent feedback on GSU TRiO program(s)' implementation and effectiveness of progress toward meeting program goals, objectives, and specific performance indicators as required by the Department of Education. Data collection strategies for the formative portion of the evaluation will consist of official data (e.g. demographics, grades, enrollment, and persistence) and qualitative data (e.g. surveys and/or interviews, stakeholder feedback, strategy evaluations, observations, and committee minutes).

Additionally, an overall benchmark based on The Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) mandate will be assigned to each project objective, and data will be analyzed based on these benchmarks. Data and results from the CAS will be used to monitor progress towards meeting project objectives with information shared among stakeholders to determine the appropriate improvement plans.

Excellence as an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution

Governors State University is committed to strengthening and sustaining a culture of evidence. As such, similar to the TRiO evaluation plan, the Excellence as an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) will consist of both formative and summative assessment metrics. Selected strategies stem from a comprehensive assessment of institutional challenges, weaknesses, strengths, opportunities, and best practices. Data collection methods for the formative portion of the evaluation will consist of official data (e.g. demographics, grades, enrollment, and persistence) and qualitative data (e.g. surveys and/or interviews, stakeholder feedback, strategy evaluations, observations, and committee minutes). The information collected through these means provides information to drive the decision-making process.

Governors State University has established the following objectives for the HSI evaluation process:

- Create benchmarks and measure progress toward attainment of goals and objectives.
- Achieve the integration of data-proven strategies into regular institutional operations.
- Continually assess to ensure effectiveness supports institutional objectives and target.

The evaluation results will guide GSU to improve Latinx student outcomes, decision-making, planning, and the allocation of resources.

Faculty and Staff Development

Faculty and staff development will be foundational for establishing equity-minded practices across the university. Assessment will focus on both faculty and staff who participate in ILEA delegations and the students who are served by participants in the faculty and staff development. Data collected will include faculty and staff attendance and resident experts participating in ILEA Equity Academies, faculty learning communities, and campus symposia.

The success rates for various demographics of students in attendees' classrooms will provide one measure to assess effectiveness of development programs. Students who complete institutional surveys and/or focus groups will provide qualitative data regarding their curricular and cocurricular experiences, particularly the experiences of African-American students.

AIM HIGH

Evaluation criteria for AIM HIGH is determined by the authorizing legislation and collected by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. Broadly, the evaluation materials are designed to outline the impact on the primary goal of retaining more in-state students at our public Universities and reducing out-migration which has contributed to decreasing enrollments across the state of Illinois. More specifically participating institutions report data in the following four areas:

- Summary information: Figures and totals for each reporting year.
- Awarding data: Award amounts and matching funds.
- Student information: Demographic and academic outcomes for students receiving AIM HIGH funds.
- Retention and Status information: Impact information regarding persistence and retention outcomes for AIM HIGH recipients.

While the state of Illinois establishes reporting information requirements, each institution creates its own eligibility and renewable criteria. As noted, GSU designed its program to ensure the broadest and most inclusive impact. Our reporting data will highlight the extent to which our student recipients are as diverse as our population as a whole.

Social Services Consortium

The following three areas of evaluation outline how GSU will evaluate the program's success and measure successful implementation and program effectiveness.

Awareness and Utilization of Social Services Consortium: The initial measures will focus on awareness of the consortium by faculty, staff, and students. Beyond awareness, the second measure will be utilization of case management services and participation in outreach and educational programs that address basic needs

insecurities. All of these measures will be assessed monthly and reported by each of the six institutions.

Impact on Student Success Metrics: It is the vision that the work of the center will mitigate (ideally, eliminate) the impact of basic needs insecurities on key student success metrics such as academic performance, academic progress (reduction in stop-outs), credits completed (reduction in course withdrawals), degree completion, and transfer outcomes (at partner community colleges). These measures will be assessed (at the student level) and reported (at the aggregate level) for each of the six institutions.

Participation in Advocacy Program: To increase the visibility of program, empower faculty and staff who serve as critical referrals, and to eliminate the stigma of utilizing these resources, we will launch an advocacy training program. Measures for this goal include 1) faculty and staff participation, 2) assessment of learning by attendees, and 3) whether participants refer students.

Equity Advancing Collective

While campus wide initiatives are designed reach a broad institutional reach, program-based initiatives will have a smaller scale but can tailor interventions specific to their student needs. Through the delivery of specifically designed interventions, each academic program in the Equity Advancing Collective will work to eliminate equity gaps in retention and graduation rates. Cumulatively, the various academic programs utilizing their own evaluation tools aligned with their program design will provide evidence of their contribution to the broader goal.

6. Budget

Institutional Strategy	Budget Implications	Revenue Source (New/Existing)	Sustainability Plan
TRiO Programs	Minimally \$220,000 annually per awarded SSS program	Seeking support from the U.S. Department of Education	Typically, each awarded program has a five-year funding cycle. GSU will continue to apply for future TRiO competitions as they are released via the U.S. Department of Education.
Excellence as an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution	Minimally \$200,000 annually	Redirection of existing funds to hire two bilingual/bicultural recruiters as well as funds earmarked for AIM High scholarships	GSU will continue to allocate funds for staff. AIM High scholarships are contingent on state appropriations.
Incentives for Faculty/Staff Workshop Facilitation (travel to workshops, mini-grants, classroom implementation)	\$20,000-50,000 annually	Existing budgeted funds for faculty development will be re-envisioned to align with equity plan.	Faculty and staff will be invited to take active roles as campus experts and collaborators to become more fully invested in student outcomes.
Equity Advancing Collaborative	\$20,000-50,000 annually	Mini-grant budgets for program development will be re-envisioned to fund initiatives addressing gaps identified in Equity Scorecards	Faculty and staff will be invited to submit applications for program specific interventions and meet collectively to share best practices and outcomes.
AIM HIGH	\$665,000-800,000 towards	GSU will utilize waivers for matching funds.	Sustainability plans are built into legislation by requiring

	matching funds.		institutions to match direct state funds.
Social Services Consortium	Approximately \$125,000 to launch and \$75,000 annually	New funds will be needed, seeking support from Kresge Foundation which also supported HOPE Lab Study, and DDP at GSU	As with other Kresge Grants such as DDP and its dissemination grant, GSU will commit to sustaining efforts graciously supported by the Kresge Foundation.

7. Timeline

TRiO Programs

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, TRiO SSS Programs provide opportunities for academic development, aid students to navigate the university requirements, and ultimately motivate them towards the successful completion of their postsecondary education. During Years 1 and 2 (2020 -2022) the program will establish procedures for personnel recruitment and selection, training, performance planning (identification of institutional benchmarks vs. those established by the federal government), and evaluation. During the first two years, activities, services, and interventions to increase the number of eligible students who persist and graduate will be developed.

Additionally, a comprehensive, intentional plan to inform Governors State University students, faculty, and staff of the objectives, services and eligibility requirements will be disseminated. Strategies to identify, select, and retain students with academic need and those falling into the eligibility criteria will be implemented. During subsequent years, the program(s) will be assessed by an external evaluator to ensure that project goals and performance measures have been attained.

Excellence as an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution

Given the growth of Latinx students enrolling in Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), the first two years of Governors State University's emergence as an HSI will be devoted to analyzing and prioritizing GSU's high impact practices. It will be important to determine which programs, courses, and impact practices most strongly correlate to graduation for first-year Latinx students.

The team assembled by the Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Management and Director of Admissions will analyze and assess the data collected. Based on identified high impact practices, a strategic plan to improve first-year student success for Latinx students will be developed during Year Two (2021-2022). Additionally, the institution will strengthen support for Latinx undergraduate students seeking access to graduate school.

Faculty and Staff Development

Faculty and staff development will be an ongoing process during GSU's participation in the ILEA initiative. Year One (2020-2021) will begin with ILEA team collaboration with the Faculty Development Committee and the Center for Active Engagement and Scholarship to launch a summer institute around ILEA project goals and implement the associated faculty and staff development opportunities. The main projects in Year One are establishing the Faculty Learning Community focused on equity, recruiting faculty and staff to participate in the Equity Academies, and identifying faculty and staff resident

experts to lead the development workshops. Additionally, quantitative and qualitative data will be shared with faculty and staff regarding African-American students' experiences on the campus.

Year Two (2021-2022) will be the continuation of the Year One ILEA initiatives (Faculty Learning Community and participation in Equity Academies). At this time will be the launch of mini-grants focused on African-American students' success and the certificate program for participants in the Equity Workshops. During Years One and Two the ILEA delegation will conduct formative assessments in order to improve Faculty and Staff Development Initiatives in Years Three, Four, and Five.

Governors State University ILEA team is positioned to collaborate with the university Faculty Development Committee to discuss and deliberate strategies pertaining to teaching, research, and faculty service around equity-based practices. The 2019 academic year will begin with a summer institute to kick off focused attention on trauma-informed pedagogy and mindfulness practices with current faculty. All faculty members, regardless of academic rank and employment status, will be invited to participate in targeted events.

AIM HIGH

AIM HIGH is a five-year program, funded by both the state of Illinois and the institution through match funds, to help four-year universities enroll and retain talented and high-achieving students by providing grants directly to new first-year and transfer students. Throughout 2018-2019, GSU designed a program to ensure that new first-year students and transfer students received scholarships ranging from 25% to 100% of their tuition cost. Over the course of the Equity Plan, GSU will monitor and revise (if necessary) AIM HIGH criteria to ensure that we meet both merit and need based criteria.

Social Services Consortium

Years 1 and 2 (2020-2022) of the project will be devoted to establishing the Social Services Consortium at GSU to serve both our students and our partner community colleges and creating a social services eco-system designed to help students navigate on-campus and off-campus programs and services. GSU will work with an evaluation team and representatives from each partnering institution to develop a comprehensive plan for scaling the project. A full-time licensed social worker will be hired to oversee the center and to evaluate services and resources for quality. Additionally, this person will supervise graduate interns and will serve as a point of contact at each one of the partnering institutions.

Other activities in Year 2 (2021-2022) include expanding a network of faculty-staff advocates (across GSU and our community college partners) who are knowledgeable and aware of challenges students may experience with hunger, housing, and financial insecurities and who can help students navigate complex on-campus and off-campus resources. Similar to LGBT Ally programs, Ambassadors will be identified by a

specially-designed sticker that can be displayed in their office or workplace. The center will directly serve GSU students and will also work with our Transfer Specialists (GSU staff that work out of our community college partners) to extend these services to community college students. The continuity of this resource for community college students as they transfer will provide sustained support and advocacy through the degree completion pipe-line.

8. ILEA Team

ILEA Core Team	
First name, Last name	Position
Dr. Elaine P. Maimon	President
Dr. Elizabeth Cada	Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dr. Aurélio Valente	Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
Mr. Corey Williams	Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students
ILEA Leadership Team	
Dr. Hollie Campbell	Assistant to Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
Dr. Matthew Cooney	Assistant Professor of Education
Mr. Jarrell Harris	College of Education, Student
Ms. Sylvia Ponce de Leon	Interim Director of Financial Aid
Ms. Alexis Smith	College of Arts and Sciences, Student
Dr. Amy Vujaklija	Assistant Professor of Education
Key Campus Leaders Consulted for Equity Plan Development	
Ms. Penny Perdue	Executive Assistant to President
Dr. Colleen Sexton	Associate Provost/Associate Vice President Academic Affairs
Dr. Maristela Zell	Co-Chair, Campus Inclusion Team

9. Glossary

Cohort – A way of grouping students to compare across a number of access, performance, persistence, and completion indicators. In the Excel file that accompanies these documents and is used to set disaggregated early momentum and degree completion targets in service of eliminating gaps among target student groups, cohort refers to a group of students entering college/university at a particular time (e.g. Fall 2019 cohort is the student group that entered the institution in the fall of 2019). Secondly, we also refer to the ILEA cohort as the group of 25 member colleges and universities.

Completion Gap – The difference in college completion rates between student groups at the same college or university. ILEA is focused on the completion gap between African-American and White students, Latino/a, and White students, and low-income and higher income students (as indicated by Pell receipt).

Equity – A campus culture and environment in which every student receives the supports they need to complete their degree equitably and in a timely manner when compared to their peer in other racial or socioeconomic groups. PCC is interested in supporting ILEA cohort members as they refine how they support African-American, Latino/a, and low-income students on their campuses. This can include redesigning existing supports, creating new supports and eliminating seen and unseen barriers for student success.

Equity Plan – A roadmap that outlines how each ILEA cohort member plans to close gaps in degree attainment for low-income, African American, and Latino/a students. The ILEA Equity Plan will describe how each cohort member plans to close gaps in degree attainment for the target student groups.

Graduation Rate – The percentage of students that complete their degree. For students enrolled in community college, completing their degree in 2 years is 100% time and completing their degree in 3 years is 150% time. For students enrolled in a four-year institution, completing their degree in 4 years is 100% time and completing their degree in 6 years is 150% time. There are specific time to degree periods for analysis, goal setting, and reporting within the Equity Plan for different target populations (e.g. entering freshmen, transfer students, part-time students).

Illinois Equity in Attainment (ILEA) – A Partnership for College Completion (PCC) initiative that aims to close gaps in degree attainment among different racial and socioeconomic groups at 25 two-year and four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities in the state of Illinois. We aim to accomplish this goal by supporting, convening, and providing targeted resources, training, and support to the 25 ILEA cohort members, and facilitating the process of developing and executing on a campus-wide equity plan.

Lagging Indicator – A metric that represents the measurement of a specific output over time. For ILEA, an example of a lagging indicator is a graduation rate, by time to degree and particular student population. Graduation rates are our ultimate goal

Leading Indicator – A metric that has evidence of being a predictor of a specific outcome. A leading indicator is often referred to as an early momentum indicator. We are interested in tracking a set of metrics that have evidence of predicting degree completion and measuring progress toward that goal. For community colleges, these metrics include: credits accumulated first fall, credits accumulated first year, gateway course completion, and fall 1 to fall 2 persistence. For 4-year universities, these metrics include: credits accumulated first fall, credits accumulated first year, gateway course completion in year 1, fall 1 to fall 2 persistence, credits accumulated by end of second year, and fall 2 to fall 3 persistence.

Institutional Strategy – A reform strategy that affects at least 50% of the total targeted student population that it aims to serve. For ILEA, we are interested in implementing institutional strategies we believe they have the requisite scale to significantly impact equity in degree completion.

150% Time – Refers to students' time to degree. 150% time refers to the percentage of students that complete their degree within three years for associate degree seekers and within six years for bachelor's degree seekers.