

PARTNERSHIP FOR COLLEGE COMPLETION

Accelerating action to close the graduation gap

Reporting Period 2/16/19 - 8/15/19

Kyle Westbrook, kwestbrook@partnershipfcc.org;

312.857.4643

Operations

FY2019 was a significant year for the continued growth and progress of the Partnership for College Completion (PCC) operations. During the period covered by this report PCC moved into a permanent office space at 200 S. Michigan, lead an internal review of its financial systems and capacities, and continued to automate routine human resource functions.

During the reporting period PCC received three new grants. The first was an unrestricted \$50K gift from an anonymous foundation. The same anonymous foundation subsequently gave another gift to PCC of \$225K to contribute to PCC's reserves. The third new grant that PCC received was from ECMC Foundation to support the Illinois Equity in Attainment initiative (ILEA) as well as build PCC's capacity to deliver on ILEA's ambitious goal. These new grants along with renewed support from current PCC funders, significantly contribute to PCC's capacity to deliver on its goal of increasing college success rates for low income students while also creating a foundation for long term fiscal stability. Finally, on April 10, 2019 the Cleveland Avenue Foundation for Education graciously hosted a CAFE Conversation featuring Georgia State University's Tim Rennick who spoke powerfully about fundamental rethinking student success and the tangible, equity-driven results that the university has seen as a result of its reform efforts. This CAFE conversation was the first of what is expected to be other small events to build and strengthen PCC's donor base.

During the reporting period, the PCC Board of Directors has grown considerably through the addition of well-respected local, regional and national voices for policy, education, and economic development. The additions of Kevin Considine, Joan Dileonardi, Bob Pullion, Beth Swanson, and Douglas Wood will position PCC for potential new areas of growth in partnerships to support improved alignment across K-12, higher education, and workforce development. The PCC Board of Directors also recently announced that Greg Darnieder will be stepping down as PCC Board Chair. Greg will remain on the PCC Board. Beth Swanson, CEO of A Better Chicago will Chair the PCC Board.

During the reporting period, while PCC has maintained a positive cashflow despite ending FY19 slightly over budget (See Appendix A). PCC staff and Board Finance committee will continue to apply additional scrutiny to expenses in order to avoid future budget deficits.

Programming

Technical Support

During the reporting period, PCC staff and leadership have continued to deepen the connections to area colleges and universities through the Illinois Equity in Attainment initiative. On April 11, 2019, all 25 participating ILEA colleges and universities participated in a daylong summit at the Naperville Campus of Northern Illinois University. The event, attended by 184 leaders from across all ILEA colleges featured morning and afternoon keynotes by Tim Rennick,

and the Frank Harris of the San Diego State University Community College Equity Assessment Lab respectively. The event also featured breakout sessions from colleges and university leaders and reformers from 7 states as well as colleges in Illinois that are having success in prioritizing systems level reforms to improve success rates for low-income students and students of color. PCC staff also launched significant work to lead ILEA colleges and universities through a planning process culminating in each college producing an Equity Plan, or roadmap for how they will close their equity gaps in degree completion by 2025. Through webinars and on campus meetings, PCC team members have collaborated with each college to produce the plans. A significant contribution to Equity Plan development were campus level capacity assessments that PCC staff, alongside Achieving the Dream, lead at 24 of 25 ILEA colleges. Each ILEA college was provided a link to an online survey for faculty and staff developed by Achieving the Dream called the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT). The survey asked for faculty and staff assessment of the college capacity in seven key areas (Leadership and Vision, Data and Technology, Equity, Teaching and Learning, Engagement and Communication, Strategy and Planning, and Policies and Procedures). PCC facilitated ICAT debrief sessions at each college and in which as many as 82 faculty and staff members debriefed results. Finally, the ILEA cohort has itself gone through a significant change since its initial launch in Fall of 2018. Most significantly four new colleges and universities (Chicago State University, Elgin Community College, Kishwaukee Community College, and Loyola University) have joined the initiative. Unfortunately, however the University of Illinois and Urbana Champaign and University of Illinois Chicago have withdrawn from the cohort. Significantly though, the combined enrollment of ILEA colleges is approximately 185,000 students representing about ¼ of Illinois' combined undergraduate enrollment.

PCC continues to collaborate with UChicago Urban Labs on the randomized control trial of the Social Belonging intervention. In addition to Robert Morris University, and Northern Illinois University, Eastern Illinois University, and St. Xavier University will participate in the study during the upcoming academic year. Of note, the University of Illinois Chicago, while no longer participating in the study, will scale the intervention across all first year experience courses at the university. While initial data saw no effect of semester one to semester two persistence, researchers were not alarmed and did not expect to see any impact.

Public Policy

In Public Policy, PCC has launched its most significant policy solution to equity in higher education to date. In February 2019, State Senator and Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee, Pat McGuire introduced a PCC authored bill to significantly improve the state's remedial or developmental education system by reforming placement and delivery of remedial courses. SB41 seeks to mandate: 1. Alternative and more evidence-based approaches to placement of students into developmental education, and 2. Statewide scaling of corequisite remediation at all public universities and community colleges. PCC and Women Employed led statewide engagement with higher education leaders many of whom expressed predictable but unconvincing concerns about the need for legislative action.

To accommodate more real concerns about faculty buy-in, while continuing to pressure higher education leaders to significantly and urgently address the greatest equity challenge in higher education, PCC and Women Employed worked with Senator McGuire and other lawmakers to craft a joint resolution (SJR41) to create the Developmental Education Advisory Council to recommend to the legislature how the state will reform developmental education. SJR 41 was passed by both houses of the General Assembly. Chaired by the Executive Directors of the Illinois Community College Board, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Senator McGuire, Representative West, and an appointee from Governor Pritzker, the DEAC will over the course of the 2019-20 academic year, inventory approaches to reforming developmental education in Illinois and then submit a recommendation for improving developmental education to the Illinois General Assembly. PCC Policy Manager Emily Goldman was appointed by the State Senate to the DEAC.

In addition to SJR 41, PCC was part of a larger coalition of advocates for increased MAP funding. PCC staff along with policy advocates from Women Employed, Young Invincibles, and others, conducted an advocacy day with student leaders in Springfield on April 5. PCC also contributed witness slips in support of other key legislation about FAFSA completion, Direct Admissions and other policy priorities.

PCC is in the final stages of completing the forthcoming series of reports on college affordability in Illinois. The reports will be released as a series of reports focusing on affordability from the perspectives of African-American, Latino and rural students. A steering committee including City Colleges of Chicago Chancellor Juan Salgado, Advance Illinois President, Robin Steans; Education Systems Center Executive Director, Jon Furr; UChicago CCSR Senior Director, Jenny Nagaoka; Joyce Foundation Senior Program Officer, Sameer Gadkaree, Senior Director of Higher Education Research and Data Analytics at the Education Trust, Andrew Nichols; University of Wisconsin researcher, Nick Hillman; Vice President of Policy for Campaign for College Opportunity, Audrey Dow; Michigan State researcher Brendan Cantwell; Century Foundation President Bob Shireman; University of Denver researcher Cecilia Orphan; University of North Texas researcher Barrett Taylor, Chicago Urban League Vice President of Research and Policy, Stephanie Schmitz-Bechteler; Enlace Chicago, College Pipeline Specialist, Jessica Canas has met twice to review the plan for the report and to review the initial findings of the study. PCC anticipates a September 25 release date for the African-American students report. PCC staff is currently developing web-based data visualization tools.

Finally, in public policy, PCC recently kicked off an 8-week engagement with the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) Fellows to explore opportunities to support a higher education funding formula for Illinois four-year universities. The engagement will produce two significant deliverables. First, it will produce a national review of state higher education funding formulas. Second, BCG will lead the development of a tool for visualizing what an equity-based funding formula for Illinois would mean for each public university in Illinois.

Public Awareness

In Public Awareness, after more than 2 years of development, PCC released the long-awaited regional outcomes report entitled *College-Going and Completion in the Chicago Area: A Regional Analysis*. The report explores access, demand, funding and success for students in the seven county region. Among the findings of the report are:

- White students are most likely to leave the region and state for college, Latinos, the least likely; in all seven counties, more than 20% of both Black and White FAFSA-filing students enroll out-of-state. However, Latino students have very different college-going patterns; no county has Latino student populations that leave the state at a rate that exceeds 20%
- The region has large income and wealth disparities by race, but even among children born into a family within the same income range, Whites have a much greater chance of earning a degree than students of color.
- Amid fiscal uncertainty, rising tuition costs, and increasing outmigration of students, applications at Illinois' public universities showed troubling trends, growing at only half the rate of the national average between 2011-2016.
- High costs for four-year degrees combine with access issues to influence enrollment and completion rates, with wide disparities by race. Six-year completion rates among low-income Black and Latino FAFSA-filers are 30% and 38%, respectively, compared to 68% for White FAFSA-filers. As of 2016, none of the four universities in the area has demonstrated an ability to graduate more than half of their Black and Latino students.

PCC continues to establish itself as a leading voice in college completion in Illinois. In addition to a recent Op-ed authored by PCC, the organization is being increasingly sought by local and state media outlets as a voice and on higher education related issues.

Key Learnings

Technical Support

While PCC continues to take a constructivist or learning centered approach to support ILEA colleges and universities, PCC has through its policy work had to begin to draw some broad boundaries around what the organization thinks successful reform looks like. This was most acute in discussions with ILEA college presidents about the need for developmental education reform. Thus, while PCC believes strongly that colleges themselves should, through a process of discovery and review of their own data, arrive at solutions to their own student success challenges, solutions that do not address the equity challenges posed by the current developmental education practices of so many colleges and universities are at best half-measures.

Public Policy

While SJR41 represents a delay in reforming the broken system that is developmental education in Illinois, it represents an opportunity to ensure that faculty voices in particular are a part of the solution to the equity challenges created by a two-tiered and often racialized system of public higher education. In the buildup to introducing SB41 PCC should have been in closer contact with faculty organizations like the Illinois Association of Community College Mathematics Professionals. Theirs and other advocates for ESL students for example are important voices in understanding the practical implications of policy decisions. Though the 15-member DEAC cannot include every stakeholder involved in developmental education, it will create the best opportunity for broad based coalition building to support reform. Nonetheless, while inflammatory to some, the original bill to reform developmental education was an important and forceful statement on the part of PCC and Women Employed about the need for reform and the urgency with which it needs to take place.

Common Quarterly Checklist

Introduction: The foundations agree to accept quarterly checklists (no longer than three pages) to identify any significant changes that have occurred during the reporting period. Checklists will be submitted on the following dates:

- Checklist Update 1: February 15
- Checklist Update 2: May 15
- Checklist Update 3: August 15
- Checklist Update 4: November 15

Note: For the quarters in which full reports are submitted, the quarterly checklist will be included as an attachment. When completing the checklists during these quarters, organizations may write, "See report" for any boxes where report narrative may provide an adequate explanation.

Quarterly Checklist Form

Organization Name	Partnership for College Completion
Primary Contact Information (name, phone, email)	Kyle Westbrook 312.857.4643 kwestbrook@partnershipfcc.org
Reporting Timeframe	2/16/19 – 8/15/19

Instructions: For each question below, include only the appropriate answer (Yes/No). If your answer is **Yes**, please provide further explanation in the space provided. If **No**, please leave blank. (If there are no significant changes, it is acceptable to leave all comment boxes blank.)

Question	Select One (Yes or No)	Comments
Organizational		
1. Have there been any significant changes in governance, management, operations, fundraising, or overall organizational health in the past quarter?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	See Narrative
2. Has your budget (revenue and/or expenses) changed significantly (+/- 10%) in the past quarter?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	See Narrative
3. Are you off-track with your revenue goals, including private, fee for service, or government?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
Programming		
4. Have there been any significant changes to the proposed program or workplan?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
5. Are key program outcomes off-track?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
6. Have there been any meaningful changes (including additions) in your key partnerships that may affect your program?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	See Narrative
Other		
7. Is there anything else that you would like to share?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	

Submission Guidelines

Below is a list of the foundations accepting the Common Reporting Framework. Please use the instructions listed in the table below to submit these updates.

Organization	Submission Instructions	Specific Format/Notes
A Better Chicago	Email Doug Scott: dscott@abetterchicago.org And Kelly Jones: kjones@abetterchicago.org	<u>Updates:</u> Word Document <u>Budgets/Financials:</u> Excel or PDF <u>Outcomes:</u> A Better Chicago Excel milestone tracker <u>Other Report Requirements:</u> A Better Chicago will continue to meet quarterly with grantees
The Brinson Foundation	Email Jim Parsons: jim.parsons@brinsonfoundation.org	<u>Updates:</u> Word Document <u>Budgets/Financials:</u> Excel or PDF <u>Outcomes:</u> Common Reporting Tool or, if applicable, the Foundation's customized data sheet <u>Other Report Requirements:</u> Annual due diligence meeting
Circle of Service Foundation	Email Mara Botman: mara@cosfoundation.org	<u>Updates:</u> Word Document <u>Budgets/Financials:</u> Excel or PDF <u>Outcomes:</u> Common Reporting Tool or Organization's preferred format <u>Other Report Requirements:</u> The Common Reporting Framework replaces the Program Update (questions 5-6) on the COSF Challenge Report
Cleveland Avenue Foundation for Education	Email Dawn Reese: dreese@thecafe.org	<u>Updates:</u> Word Document <u>Budgets/Financials:</u> Excel and PDF <u>Outcomes:</u> Common Reporting Tool or Organization's preferred format <u>Other Report Requirements:</u> Annual due diligence meeting
Crown Family Philanthropies	Submit all reports through the CFP Grants Portal: https://portal.cfpgrants.org/	<u>Updates:</u> Upload Word Document or PDF in the Grants Portal <u>Budgets/Financials:</u> Use CFP Template for budget in the Grants Portal <u>Outcomes:</u> Use CFP Template for outcomes in the Grants Portal (Grant Report Outcomes Table)
Finnegan Family Foundation	Email Woody McCally: wmccally@finneganfamilyfdn.org and Katherine Finnegan: kfinnegan@finneganfamilyfdn.org	<u>Updates:</u> Word Document, Excel, or PDF <u>Budgets/Financials:</u> Word Document, Excel, or PDF <u>Outcomes:</u> Word Document, Excel, or PDF
Julian Grace Foundation	Submit all reports through the Julian Grace Grants Portal: https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=juliangrace	<u>Updates:</u> Word Document, Excel, or PDF <u>Budgets/Financials:</u> Word Document, Excel, or PDF <u>Outcomes:</u> Word Document, Excel, or PDF
Polk Bros. Foundation	Email Suzanne Kerbow: skerbow@polkbrosfdn.org	<u>Updates:</u> Word Document or PDF <u>Budget/Financials:</u> Word or Excel <u>Outcomes:</u> Word Document or PDF <u>Other Report Requirements:</u> Multi-year grants to complete additional report before re-applying. See website.
Prosper Road Foundation	Email: Joan Evans Joan@prosperroadfoundation.org	<u>Updates:</u> Word Document or PDF <u>Budget/Financials:</u> Word Document or Excel

Organization	Submission Instructions	Specific Format/Notes
		<u>Outcomes:</u> Word Document or PDF
Mayer & Morris Kaplan Family Foundation	Email Shira Bernstein: sbernstein@kapfam.com	<u>Updates:</u> Word Document or PDF <u>Budgets/Financials:</u> Word Document, Excel or PDF <u>Outcomes:</u> Common Reporting Tool or Organization's preferred format
McDougal Family Foundation	Submit all reports through the Grants Portal: https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=mcdougal	<u>Updates:</u> Word Document or PDF <u>Budgets/Financials:</u> Word Document, Excel or PDF <u>Outcomes:</u> Common Reporting Tool or Organization's preferred format
S5 Foundation	Email Michael Schield: Schield@gmail.com	<u>Updates:</u> Word Document, Excel, or PDF <u>Budgets/Financials:</u> Word Document, Excel, or PDF <u>Outcomes:</u> Common Reporting Tool or Organization's preferred format in Word Document, Excel, or PDF
Square One Foundation	Email Priscilla Kersten: kerstenpriscilla@gmail.com	<u>Updates:</u> Word Document or PDF <u>Budgets/Financials:</u> Word Document, Excel or PDF <u>Outcomes:</u> Common Reporting Tool or Organization's preferred format
The Osa Foundation	Email Amy Sauer: amy@theosafoundation.org	<u>Updates:</u> Word Document or PDF <u>Budgets/Financials:</u> Word Document, Excel or PDF <u>Outcomes:</u> Common Reporting Tool or Organization's preferred format
The Siragusa Family Foundation	Email John Hicks: jhicks@siragusa.org And Crystal Robinson: crobinson@siragusa.org	<u>Updates:</u> Word Document or PDF <u>Budgets/Financials:</u> Word Document, Excel or PDF <u>Outcomes:</u> Common Reporting Tool or Organization's preferred format <u>Other Report Requirements:</u> Common Reporting Framework replaces the annual grant report requirement

**PARTNERSHIP FOR
COLLEGE COMPLETION**
Accelerating action to close the graduation gap

PCC Newsroom



**Waubonsee initiative aimed at recruiting,
retaining black male students**

Denise Crosby / Chicago Tribune (The Beacon-News) / Feb 12, 2019

Officials at Waubonsee Community College had noticed it for a while.

Across the country, Africa-American males graduate at a substantially lower rate than their peers. Among the 10,000 students at WCC, there are 700 African-Americans enrolled, with just 250 of them being male, who have a 58 percent retention rate, compared to 70 percent for all students.

It's an issue that had been noticed and discussed by the higher-ups at the school.

But that concern did not turn into an initiative until WCC President Christine Sobek and Vice President of Strategic Development Jamal Scott attended a Vermont meeting in the fall of 2017 with a national education group called the Association for Innovation and Transformation. There, according to Scott, college officials were challenged to pick a project that could be "transformative in nature" at each of their schools.

Projects eventually chosen by other colleges included focusing on adult students returning to the classroom; finding better ways to work with parents; promoting wellness; and increasing the number of programs offered.

But the moment the challenge went out, recalled Scott, "Dr. Sobek and I looked at each other and the light bulb went on."

Because Scott's role includes reviewing student data and success rates, "we knew this would be a great project for us to focus on."

Since then, that's just what they have done.

The first part of this initiative, Scott said, is to "find and foster mentorships in and around the community." Which, he added, "would seem like such a natural" since Aurora's first African-American mayor, elected the same year this initiative was seeded, grew up in the projects on Aurora's East Side and faced many of the same challenges young black males face today.

And so, in December the mayor and other successful African-American men — including those in their 20s — met with a couple dozen black male students at WCC to discuss what it takes to overcome hurdles like poverty, racial stereotypes and low expectations too often placed on these young men.

By all accounts, it was a revealing and at times emotional meeting, where stories were shared, tears were shed, bridges were built and more eyes were opened to what is needed for these students to achieve success.

Some of the topics discussed: showing respect for others, including women and authority figures; learning to ask for help when needed; and breaking down stereotypes.

"Don't let people define what you can be," Irvin said, after telling the young men how a guidance counselor at East Aurora High School once informed him he'd never amount to much.

"When you see someone as successful as Mayor Irvin stand up and say, 'I was where you are now,'" said Scott, "it makes a tremendous impact."

These meetings are ongoing, he added, with the idea of finding mentors to pair with black male students looking for guidance.

The second part of the initiative, according to Scott, is an alignment with Chicago-based Partnership for College Completion, which has begun an initiative called Illinois Equity in Attainment that focuses on helping students who enter college at a disadvantage because of lack of opportunities.

According to the group, in community colleges, on average only 21 percent of all first-time, full-time students graduate, and only 16 percent of low-income students will graduate.

The idea, said Scott, is "to help them get off the ground and on more equal footing."

While the number of black males enrolled at WCC has remained fairly stable over the decade, Scott is determined to raise that percentage. And one way to do that is to "do a better job" of letting African-American males know about the college, he insisted, adding that too many may be aware of the downtown

Aurora campus "but did not know the Sugar Grove campus even existed."

Scott plans to work much closer with school officials, including superintendents and guidance counselors, to more effectively market the opportunities at the school, even if it means providing bus support so "we can get the high school students out to the campus to see what it is all about."

Not only does he and other officials want to see the enrollment numbers go up, he noted, "we need to make sure they are prepared to be successful when they get here."

Success, however, must be measured not just through recruitment but also retention and completion. In other words, "it's not good if we can get them to enroll and then they drop out a week later," Scott said. "We want to see them complete this program or transfer to a four-year school."

Aurora Communications Director Clayton Muhammad, who is also founder of the successful Boys II Men mentoring program and served as emcee at the round-table at WCC, knows more than anyone how very real the student achievement gap is among black males, not just in our community but nationally. And he's convinced education is not only "the great equalizer," it's critical that successful African-Americans get involved in helping guide these students.

This group plans to meet again the last week of the month. And Scott says he's "really excited" about the initiative because "it's like anything in life ... once you identify what you want to focus on, you get serious" about improving it.

"We are making it a number one priority," he said. "And by galvanizing the community behind it, this will pay great dividends in the future."



- [PCC in the News](#)
- [PCC Blog](#)

PCC's Response to Governor Pritzker's First Budget Address

Wednesday, 20 February 2019

Increasing MAP by \$50 Million: A Good Start to Supporting Low-Income Students

Today, the Governor pledged an additional \$50 million for the state's Monetary Award Program (MAP), bringing total funding to around \$450 million. This recommendation falls short of the State's higher education agencies' (IBHE, ICCB, as well as ISAC) requested \$100 million increase; however, if part of a multi-year ramp up to ensuring all eligible students receive a MAP award, the additional \$50 million appropriation is a significant first step toward reinvesting in Illinois students for whom this support determines if they can attend college at all.



In 2002, MAP covered 100% of tuition and fees for all eligible applicants. Today, more than 100,000 eligible applicants are denied funding each year, and for those lucky enough to receive it, MAP covers just 33% of tuition and fees. For the future of Illinois' students, workforce, and diverse economy, our first priority must be for all eligible students to be served without cutting funding levels. We project that a **65% increase (or \$260 million increase)** in current funding would both fund all applicants at current levels and at least keep up with increasing applications for the program. This additional \$50 million proposed in the Governor's address today will serve about 15,000 more students -- a commendable first step, but one which will likely still leave more than 80,000 eligible applicants without funds. The Governor ran on a platform of a **50% increase** in MAP funding, and we hope today's proposed **12.5% increase** is the first step towards delivering on to that promise.

While we do not expect the Governor to fully reverse 15 years of underfunding in his first fiscal year, we applaud Governor Pritzker's commitment to continue, if not accelerate, the pace of ramping up this investment in order to improve our State's higher education outcomes.

Public Universities Get A Much Needed 5% Increase

Illinois' four-year universities have endured historic disinvestment over the last ten years -- they saw per-student funding cut by more than 50% *before* the budget crisis, and then suffered through defunding and uncertainty that affected students, staff, and the system as a whole. As appropriations declined, tuition increased, as universities were left with no options but to shift costs to their students. Now, the net cost for students of all income levels is the highest in the Midwest, and among the highest in the nation, and this hits the lowest income students the hardest. A 5% increase in public universities' budgets is a necessary start in allowing institutions to better serve all of their students.

The Increase in AIM HIGH Should Be Qualified, Or Reconsidered

AIM HIGH, Illinois' new merit-based financial aid program, is an attempt to slow the outmigration of Illinois' high school graduates leaving to attend college in other states. As it currently stands, however, the only need-based qualification is that a student's family income is no greater than six times the national poverty guideline -- about \$150,000 for a family of four. There are no further mandates to equitably distribute this grant funding to students, and without such requirements, increasing funding for this program may come at the detriment of qualified students who most need it. Today, Governor Pritzker proposed an increase in state appropriations to this program.

One of the stipulations of AIM HIGH is that colleges must match all grants to students with their own institutional aid. Without requiring that grants go to low-income students, and assuming that an institution does not increase their institutional aid greatly after receiving AIM HIGH (which would be difficult given the aforementioned funding shortfalls), this matching provision could actually draw institutional aid *away from* low-income students who need them to attend these universities and direct it to better-resourced students who may have chosen to attend that university anyway. With enrollment numbers in precipitous decline, now is not the time to expand a grant program that may result in even fewer Illinois' low-income students being able to afford our public universities.

A more equitable path to driving Illinois' students to attend our public universities is to redirect the \$10,000,000 increase to the more than 3,200 eligible students who will apply for MAP and not receive any funds this year.

More Commendable Recommendations

Governor Pritzker recommended a much-needed 5% increase to the State's community colleges, which serve even more of our state's low-income students, first generation college goers, Black and Latino students. The budget plans released by the Governor also include new funding for transitional math, which will increase college preparedness and cut down on developmental education, and for the P-20 council, which is working toward increasing Illinois' important initiative to have 60% of adults attain high-quality degrees by 2025. All of these recommendations are commendable.

About: The Partnership for College Completion is a new nonprofit organization launched to catalyze and champion policies, systems and practices that ensure all students in and around Chicago - particularly low-income, first generation students - graduate from college and achieve their career aspirations. Launching this regional organization is the culmination of a two-year planning process that was led by Forefront's College and Career Access, Persistence and Success (CCAPS) group and involved hundreds of stakeholders from across Chicago, the region and the nation. For more information: partnershipfcc.org

Contact:

Mike Abrahamson

mabrahamson@partnershipfcc.org

Emily Goldman

egoldman@partnershipfcc.org

20 Likes | Tweet | Share | 0 Saves

< College Student Success Gaps Persist. How Can Scho... | Waubensee initiative aimed at recruiting, retainin... >

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ERSH COM Partnership for College Completion
<http://partnershipfcc.org/newsroom>
View author's profile | More posts from author

The Partnership for College Completion is a new nonprofit organization launched to catalyze and champion policies, systems and practices that ensure all students in and around Chicago - particularly low-income, first-generation students - graduate from college and achieve their career aspirations

AUTHOR'S RECENT POSTS	
Wealthy parents reportedly giving up custody of kids to get need-based financial aid	Wednesday, 31 July 2019
Suburban parents reportedly giving up custody of kids to get need-based financial aid	Wednesday, 31 July 2019
Suburban parents reportedly giving up custody of kids to get need-based financial aid	Tuesday, 30 July 2019

SIGN-UP TO RECEIVE OUR COMMUNICATIONS

email address

CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



College Student Success Gaps Persist. How Can Schools Close Them?

Peter Medlin / WNJ / April 17, 2019

This past week, leaders from community colleges and universities across northern Illinois met to brainstorm how to close college completion gaps based on race and income level.

Over 20 schools joined with the Partnership for College Completion (PCC) to launch the "[Illinois Equity in Attainment Initiative](#)" last year. The schools share what works for them, and the PCC helps them orchestrate a plan unique to their schools and give them more information about the reality of the equity issue.

Lisa Castillo-Richmond is the Partnership's managing director. She says the gaps in Illinois mostly mirror those seen across the country. However, there are aspects of the issue where Illinois stands out.

"We are a significant outlier, I would say in terms of the gap between white students completing college degrees and African American students," she said. "In six years from a four-year institution, white students will graduate at a rate of 66 percent while African American students are graduating at about half that rate at 33 percent. And these gaps also exist across other races and ethnicities."

Organizers say it was essential for their initiative to be made up of a diverse group of schools -- two and four-year; big and small, public and private -- in order to show how gaps persisted everywhere.

"We really wanted to move away from the fallacy that says if you just get students into the right institution, everyone is graduating at these equitable and high rates, because we saw

these gaps across all types of institutions," said Castillo-Richmond.

They all faced the same problem. For some, the disparity was six or eight percent. For others, it could exceed 10 or even 20 percent.

And why did they want to meet now? Across the state, in aggregate, the gaps weren't getting better and in some cases, they were widening.

The event was held at Northern Illinois University's Naperville campus. Lisa Freeman is the president of NIU.

"What we're saying is, it's really the responsibility of the university to meet the students that we accept where they are," Freeman said, "and to recognize that sometimes when a student doesn't succeed, it's not on them, it's actually on us, on the systems we've created that are serving our students poorly."

She says NIU was looking at their graduation equity rate even before they joined the initiative. But it's been easier to start acting on it since the end of the budget impasse.

"They weren't data that we were proud of," Freeman said. "We wanted to erase the gap that achieved for students who come from lower-income families, and for students of color. And we knew that to do that we needed to make a radical change."

For NIU, that's meant making sure students have support during their financial aid process, and raising awareness for academic resources. They've also seen through their [PROMISE Scholars Program](#), how research can help connect students -- especially

students of color -- to their campus and increase their odds of retention.

Confronting and analyzing equity data has been a key part of the plan at Wilbur-Wright College. They're a two-year school and one of the City Colleges of Chicago. David Potash is the president.

He said their plan has been in effect for a few years now. They've been deciphering where student success gaps are happening, so they can home in on the sources of the problem.

"That means that you got to look at the data all the time because you make one change and then there are consequences, some positive, some negative, you make another change," said Potash.

Wilbur-Wright's population is two-thirds Hispanic. One improvement area they found was with Hispanic female biology students. They saw those students were dropping out close to when they should have been finishing their programs. To help fix that, they assigned students farther along in the program to peer mentor students with less experience.

"And with a little bit of peer mentoring what we found, not a ton of work, the number of Latino females in the biology sequence increased when they were falling through at a relatively low billable rate," Potash said. "I mean, this is not rocket science, but it's looking at the data, finding people who are motivated together and care, and then you make a change."

Article [Link](#)

Schools are also using technology to close the completion gap. The keynote speaker at the NIU-Naperville event was Tim Renick of Georgia State University. He spoke about his school's success with using a chatbot to answer common questions from incoming freshmen, anything from FAFSA to housing.

"We had students repeatedly tell us they asked the chat box questions they wouldn't have asked a human being," said Renick. "If you can't get your biological father to sign the FAFSA because you haven't seen him for the last two years, you don't necessarily want to go into some stranger's office and spill out your personal family history."

NIU President Freeman also has plans to implement a similar chatbot while they continue to teach their faculty and staff how to have conversations about equity.

"Nobody wants to inadvertently send a student the message that maybe this isn't for you," she said. "But people need to learn when they do those kinds of things unconsciously."

Aside from the individual school plans, the PCC is promoting policies at the state level to alleviate some of the pressure.

Currently, they're focusing on policies to overhaul the way higher education handles remedial courses, to get students college-ready.

Castillo-Richmond says with so many schools buying into the initiative there's still plenty colleges can do, even without extra aid coming from Springfield.

Knowles: GSU diversity chief targets graduation rates

Francine Knowles / Daily Southtown / April 22, 2019

As a Brooklyn College student in the 1980s, concerns about racial unrest and inequities prompted Corey Williams, who is black, to join a fraternity that was predominantly white.

He said his goal was to help dismantle stereotypes and foster understanding at the New York City school.

Today, Williams said he is continuing a similar mission. Williams, who since developed mentoring programs targeting minority first-generation students at several colleges, was recently named the chief diversity officer at Governors State University in University Park, a first for the school.

"Rather than being on the sidelines viewing equity issues, we thought why not tackle equity issues within our own institution and be a model for other institutions across the state," said Williams, 48, who also serves as GSU's associate vice president for student affairs and dean of students.

He said he wants to decrease achievement gaps for first generation students of color, particularly black and Latino students at GSU, where among its 4,857 students 38.4 percent are African-American and 13 percent are Hispanic or Latino.

"We are working with a group of 25 colleges and universities across the state through a partnership, Illinois Equity in Attainment Initiative," he said. "It is an initiative through the Partnership for College Completion. It is 25 colleges and universities across the state that have the focus of decreasing those achievement gaps over the next five years."

Among the students targeted in the effort are African-Americans, Latinos, students

receiving Pell grants, first-generation students and students with disabilities, he said.

He noted in 2014-15, retention from junior year to senior year for junior African-American transfer students at GSU was 67% compared to all transfer students at 72%.

"We aim to increase retention for all students, but also aim to close this gap by 2020," he said. "We have reduced the equity gap for the retention of African-American transfer students from 5.1 percentage points in 2014-2015 to 3.7 percentage points in 2016-2017."

Among factors contributing to achievement gaps are unique challenges some students face, he said.

It's important to understand "that some of our students come from traumatic experiences and how trauma bleeds into their education," he said. "By trauma, I mean (hunger), housing insecurities, dealing with violence at home, single-parent households, gang violence, those issues bleed into what tends to happen when they enter (college)."

He added first-generation students who make up roughly 42% of GSU undergraduates, also face unique challenges, including that they and their parents often don't know how to navigate the higher education system and perform such tasks as completing financial aid applications and advocating for themselves.

"These are things we have to teach," he said.

How should disparity issues be addressed?

"Having support systems in place to support students is absolutely key," Williams said. "There are (federal) program grants for

low-income, first-generation or students with disabilities to help. We are planning to submit for five grants through that process. I think each would bring in about \$220,000 per year for five years.”

The grants would fund support mechanisms for the students, including increased advising, peer coaching and wrap-around services to aid in their college completion, Williams said.

“Each grant would support 100 to 150 students,” he added. “We would focus on students with disabilities, traditional students, veteran students, students looking to go into education and students pursuing STEM careers or the health career field.”

Williams said he also plans to conduct “a climate survey to get a sense of what’s going on at GSU, how students feel, how faculty and staff feel, perhaps having listening circles with them to find out issues that are very important to them that need to be addressed right away.”

Williams, who has a master’s degree in higher education from Chicago State University, has nearly two decades of experience working in leadership and administration in higher education positions, including at Triton College in River Grove, where he served as dean of student services and Title IX coordinator. There he founded and implemented Triton Men Pursuing Higher Education, a multifaceted mentoring program that aided in the recruitment, retention and graduation of minority males, he said.

“We worked with minority men, primarily African-American and Latino men,” he said. “We provided wrap-around services. Each male was paired with a mentor at the institution or an alumni. They would meet one to two times a month and collectively as a group once a week, and the young men served as mentors to middle and high school students to create a pipeline because for many of our first-generation students, particularly men of color, they lack that role model. So, it’s important for them to see people who look like them doing things they aspire to do.

“With the first . . . 25 students, all graduated in a two-year period,” he said, noting, “at some community colleges, the graduation rate for men of color is about 7 percent. The fact that we were able to do what we did was astounding. The model is being discussed at different conferences around the country.”

The program expanded to Elgin Community College and Waubesa Community College in Sugar Grove, he said. He added at Triton, a similar women of color mentoring program also was developed, and he is looking to bring that to GSU.

Asked what lessons about diversity he wants GSU graduates to take with them into their careers and life, he replied, “GSU is reflective of our society, the makeup of the institution. It’s about respecting everyone’s beliefs, their background, their ideologies. That’s very important to me. It’s important for students as a whole to know how to navigate the nuances they’re going to face once they leave GSU.”

Communication is key to fostering a culture of respect and understanding, he said. Williams, who at age 9 emigrated from Panama to New York with his mother, has long held that belief.

That’s what prompted him to join Zeta Beta Tau, a predominantly Jewish and white fraternity while he attended Brooklyn College. His decision to do so followed the high-profile death in 1986 in New York of Michael Griffith, a 23-year-old New York City resident, who died after being struck by a car as he fled a mob of angry white teens. That experience and other racial tensions had a profound effect on Williams, who recalled racial tensions were high in the city and at the college.

“For me it was difficult to understand why something as simple as the color of a person’s skin would create barriers from getting people to truly know one another,” he said. “It was something I couldn’t get. As a child in central and south America, what I saw as an issue was more classism as opposed to racism, so this was very vexing to me, something I

wanted to understand better, to create conversations to bring about understanding.”

So, he decided to join Zeta Beta Tau, he said. Chapter members spent time with his family and in his home, and he spent time with theirs. He later became chapter president, he said.

“I learned a lot about the Jewish faith, and I was able to dismantle some preconceived

notions that people may have had about black men,” he said.

In order to dismantle stereotypes and foster and maintain a culture of respect at GSU, it’s important to have “honest conversations, courageous conversations and safe conversations, to not hold things back but discuss things in a productive way, to create that safe space for people to seek understanding,” he said.

Article [Link](#)



NIU primed to tackle racial and economic inequities in graduation rates

NIU Today / April 24, 2019

Identifying equity as a top priority, NIU aims to close graduation gaps for students of color, first-generation college-goers and low-income students.

University leaders, including NIU President Lisa Freeman, recently joined representatives from 25 community colleges and universities throughout northern Illinois as part of the Illinois Equity in Attainment Initiative led by the Partnership for College Completion. The group met at NIU's Naperville campus.

They came together to share information and brainstorm ways to address achievement gaps prevalent in Illinois and throughout the country.

Working to create a campus-wide ILEA Equity plan, NIU is primed to tackle the issue, say those involved.

Closing the gap requires an institutional effort, said NIU Senior Associate Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer Vernese Edghill-Walden, Ph.D., as opposed to the creation of a single program.

"You can have all the strategies in the world, but if you never change your institutional culture those strategies will fail," she said. "We have to change our culture. I think we're moving in that direction, but we have a lot more to do."

Evaluating graduation equity rates even before joining the initiative, NIU has made strides the past four years, leaders say.

NIU's [Strategic Enrollment Management Plan](#) spells out the university's commitment to be a leader in the area of

equitable access for students from diverse backgrounds. Among the plan's many objectives is to clearly identify gaps and create comprehensive plans to reduce them.

Working with fellow educators can only enhance that effort, NIU leaders say.

"The conference confirmed for me we have all of the ingredients to achieve at that level and to get our institution to where we need to go," said Renique Kersh, Ph.D., associate vice provost for Student Engagement and Success.

According to a [2017 Partnership for College Completion report](#), 33 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 Latinos, 49 percent are earning degrees, a gap of 17 percentage points. Only 37 percent of low-income students graduate in six years compared to 75 percent of wealthier students.

The ILEA Initiative calls for 60% of Illinois residents to achieve earned degrees by 2025.

NIU was among the only institution at the recent summit with members of its [Board of Trustees](#) in attendance.

"It spoke to the commitment not only of our president, who was asked to speak, but also our trustees committed to this project," Kersh said.

A first-generation college student and the daughter of Mexican immigrants, NIU Trustee Veronica Herrero of Chicago spoke at the event about the critical need for all trustees

to understand what equity in higher education means and how it impacts the long-term sustainability of institutions.

Herrero told the crowd President Freeman has weaved equity and inclusion work into every aspect of the university.

“Addressing equity gaps, student success outcomes of our black and brown students, and improving inclusive practices and cultural competence in and out of the classroom are all board level, presidential goals that we help President Freeman to champion,” she said.

As part of efforts to create an ILEA Equity Plan and assess its strengths and areas in

need of improvement, NIU recently sent out an Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool survey to faculty, staff and administrators. Of the 25 institutions in the ILEA, NIU received the largest survey response, with about 300 respondents, Edghill-Walden said.

Coming soon, the survey results identified a need for a clear definition of what equity means at NIU, as well as increased communication of the work being done to close graduation gaps, Edghill-Walden said. Similar to the way in which NIU recently updated its [mission](#), the plan is to engage the university community to create that definition, she said.

Article [Link](#)



■ [PCC in the News](#)

■ [PCC Blog](#)

Prioritizing Equity in Postsecondary Education for Chicago's Students

Monday, 20 May 2019

To: Mayor-Elect Lori Lightfoot

Re: Prioritizing Equity in Postsecondary Education for Chicago's Students

Who We Are

The Partnership for College Completion (PCC) is a non-profit organization aimed at eliminating state and institutional achievement gaps in college degree completion for low-income and first generation students and students of color in the seven-county region in and surrounding Chicago by 2025.

Policy Recommendations to Help Close College Achievement Gaps

Governance and Finance

- Establish a community college equity council and taskforce on funding and partnerships
- Maintain a diverse and equity-minded Board for City Colleges of Chicago (CCC)
- Advocate for state-level funding formula change

Expand CPS institutional framework for addressing inequity to CCC

Similar to the equity council and ensuing policy statement that the Mayor-elect's campaign outlined for CPS, a community college equity council could provide crucial guidance for the [direction of City Colleges of Chicago \(CCC\)](#). Further, to secure additional resources and partnerships needed for our students, the Mayor's Office should regularly convene a funding and partnerships taskforce of community college representatives, students, non-profit advocacy organizations, and members of Chicago's business and philanthropic communities.

Diverse and equity-minded CCC Board of Trustees

CCC serves all of the City and much of the State's public 2-year students, many of whom are low-income and more than 70% of whom are Black or Latino, and the current board is relatively representative of its student population. New members must continue to reflect the diversity of CCC's campuses and have a strong understanding of how to best serve a diverse student body.

Advocate for state-level funding formula change

The current funding formula for community colleges does not adequately factor in equity and requires an additional \$13 million in funding irrespective of formula just [to achieve its baseline level](#). For CCC to succeed, it needs for Illinois to have a more equitable, sustainable, and evidence-driven community college funding formula. The Mayor's Office, perhaps through the aforementioned taskforce, should make recommendations to the General Assembly and Governor's Office about funding formula changes that bring equitable funding to CCC.

Human Capital

Retain CCC Chancellor Juan Salgado and CPS CEO Dr. Janice Jackson

In their short time leading Chicago's education systems, both CPS CEO Dr. Janice Jackson and CCC Chancellor Juan Salgado have championed initiatives aimed at improving equity and transparency and have been laser-focused on improving student outcomes at every stage of the education pipeline. Retaining and supporting Chicago's equity-minded leaders, and their initiatives, is a critical first step to maintaining momentum towards closing Chicago's equity gaps in high school and college completion.

Student Supports

- Make scaling co-requisite remediation a top priority for CCC
- Reevaluate Star Scholarship program criteria



- Scale transitional math implementation

Make scaling co-requisite remediation an immediate, top priority for CCC

Developmental education, or remediation, is one of the greatest college completion barriers and equity issues facing Chicago. Developmental education classes costs students time and money and do not count toward degree completion. Black and Latino students are disproportionately represented in developmental courses, and of those who enroll in developmental coursework, only 9% of Black students and 16% of Latino students will graduate, compared to 25% of their White peers. About 12,000 City Colleges students were placed into developmental education in FY17, and fewer advanced to take a college-level class (33%) than decided not to come back the next year (51%). Co-requisite remediation is a method of development education that doubles or triples rates of students passing college-level courses by enabling them to take credit-bearing courses as soon as they get to college, while providing them with in-time support. City Colleges can implement at scale, and in doing so help thousands more students persist, and ultimately transfer or graduate from CCC, but to do so, reform must be a clear, high priority.

Reevaluate STAR Scholarship criteria for equity

The Star Scholarship is a driving force behind the improved outcomes and enrollment stability at CCC. More importantly, it offers college access and opportunity to our most under-served and under-resourced student groups. This opportunity should not be limited to students who have achieved a 3.0 *and* a certain threshold on standardized tests. Expanding Star scholarships will increase enrollment at CCC and ultimately improve the pipeline that runs from CPS graduation to economic opportunity in Chicago.

Scale transitional math implementation

Every year, nearly 46% of Illinois high school graduates and 61% of CPS students who enroll in community college in the state are placed into developmental education. In 2016, Governor Rauner signed the Postsecondary Workforce and Readiness (PWR) Act, designed to bridge K-12 and postsecondary institutions, including four strategies aimed at helping students [become college and career ready](#). One such strategy is [transitional math](#) instruction, which empowers high schools and community colleges to enter into a partnership to help high school students with math readiness needs. If successfully implemented, transitional math will decrease the number of Illinois' high school graduates who are placed in remediation and improve college-level course pass rates. So far about a dozen schools are already implementing transitional math, and more are looking into expanding this initiative. For the City to position itself as a leader in college readiness, scaling transitional math and English within CPS and at charter schools must be a priority that the new administration drives.

12 Like Share 0 Save

< SAT's Adversity Index and the limitations of stand... Illinois P-20 Council Equity Targets Webinar >

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ERSH CON Partnership for College Completion
<http://partnershipfcc.org/newsroom>
View author's profile | More posts from author

The Partnership for College Completion is a new nonprofit organization launched to catalyze and champion policies, systems and practices that ensure all students in and around Chicago - particularly low-income, first-generation students - graduate from college and achieve their career aspirations

AUTHOR'S RECENT POSTS	
Wealthy parents reportedly giving up custody of kids to get need-based financial aid	Wednesday, 31 July 2019
Suburban parents reportedly giving up custody of kids to get need-based financial aid	Wednesday, 31 July 2019
Suburban parents reportedly giving up custody of kids to get need-based financial aid	Tuesday, 30 July 2019

SIGN-UP TO RECEIVE OUR COMMUNICATIONS

email address
Subscribe

CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



- [PCC in the News](#)
- [PCC Blog](#)

SAT's Adversity Index and the limitations of standardized tests in assessing students potential for college success

Tuesday, 21 May 2019

The College Board, which markets and sells the SAT, announced last week that it will release an "adversity index" that it has been testing for the past several years, to all colleges by 2020. This index aims to put students' academic achievements into the context of where they lived and attended high school. This measure of relative advantage or disadvantage will be available to admissions counselors at the colleges to which students apply, though not to students themselves. This new measure, while well intended, highlights the limitations of standardized tests in assessing students potential for college success.

In promoting the new measure, the College Board admits that a standardized test cannot fully gauge a student's potential and that in admission decisions, context matters. The stated goal of the "disadvantage level" is to help colleges identify resourceful students who have persevered in the [face of adversity](#). Other than one example, however, the College Board has not detailed how the score should be used to contextualize SAT scores to improve equity in admissions decisions.

Moreover, it is unclear how the adversity score could correct either the deeper issues underlying how college admissions are affected by the adversity they seek to identify, or even the immediate issues that use of this test has created. This new measure, like the use of the SAT in scholarship and remediation decisions, could also have unintended consequences that negatively affect the students it claims to help.

Many studies show that the SAT is not as predictive of college performance as high school GPA, and that standardized test scores more closely correlate to family income and [parents' education levels](#). For example, one study shows a 400-point gap between the highest and [lowest-income test-takers](#). Large racial gaps also persist -- In Illinois, black and Latino students averaged 924 and 969 composite scores, respectively, compared to 1,113 for whites and 1,202 for Asian test takers. Drawing on these disparities, critics of the SAT have long argued that the test reflects and exacerbates racial and socioeconomic inequities. By leaning in on the adversity score, the College Board seems to agree. So, it raises the question: if a college really wants to bring equity in admissions across the diversity of postsecondary institutions, and measures like high school GPA are more predictive of college performance and graduation, why use the SAT at all?

Of course, the College Board would not recommend discontinuing use of the SAT, which [added more than 130,000 Illinois test takers in scaling last year](#). However that idea is gaining traction, as a growing number of institutions are implementing test-optional admissions. This practice was recently adopted by the University of Chicago, for example, showing that this practice can be viable for institutions of [any selectivity level](#). Early results from nearly 30 colleges show that moving away from standardized tests like the SAT can de-emphasize measures that correlate strongly with wealth and race, giving low-income students and students of color more access to institutions that lead [to greater economic opportunity](#).

By including adversity scores along with test results, the College Board is essentially acknowledging the SAT's role in perpetuating inequity in college admissions, but it passes responsibility for actual change on to colleges and universities. Institutions should seize this opportunity to deemphasize standardized tests altogether in favor of measures, like high school GPA, which are more predictive and can increase access and equity in college admissions decisions.



10 Like Share 0 Save

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ERSH Partnership for College Completion
CON in to close it <http://partnershipfcc.org/newsroom>
View author's profile | More posts from author

The Partnership for College Completion is a new nonprofit organization launched to catalyze and champion policies, systems and practices that ensure all students in and around Chicago - particularly low-income, first-generation students - graduate from college and achieve their career aspirations

AUTHOR'S RECENT POSTS

- [Wealthy parents reportedly giving up custody of kids to get need-based financial aid](#) Wednesday, 31 July 2019
- [Suburban parents reportedly giving up custody of kids to get need-based financial aid](#) Wednesday, 31 July 2019
- [Suburban parents reportedly giving up custody of kids to get need-based financial aid](#) Tuesday, 30 July 2019

SIGN-UP TO RECEIVE OUR COMMUNICATIONS

CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

200 S Michigan Ave - Ste 1410, Chicago, IL, 60604 | (773) 340-9087 | info@partnershipfcc.org | [Privacy Policy](#)



Report Highlights Higher Ed Inequity In Chicagoland

Peter Medlin / WNIJ / July 17, 2019

Even with Chicagoland students in the same income range, white students have a much greater chance of getting a degree than students of color.

That's according to a [new report from the non-profit Partnership for College Completion](#). The group just released a report highlighting college access and success disparities in northern Illinois.

It finds gaps exist regardless of academics and have more to do with race and family income levels.

More than 70,000 college-goers applied for financial aid in the region in 2017. More than 40% were black or Latino. But in that year, students of color received fewer than 3,000 degrees at local public four-year universities.

The report recommends institutional changes at schools like remedial education and advising reforms, and also policies like increases in need-based financial aid -- especially because of the first-come first-served nature of MAP grants.

"This absolutely has a disproportionate impact on students who are the first in their

family to go to college, of course, low-income students, and students who are attending high schools that aren't as well equipped to make sure that students know how to complete FAFSA and know that they have to complete it very early," said Lisa Castillo Richmond, Managing Director of the PCC.

According to the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, over 100,000 Illinois students every year who are eligible for MAP funding receive nothing.

The report also talks about Illinois' issues with students leaving the state for college.

"We are also concerned about the students that are applying for financial aid and applying to college and then at the time of matriculation or are not showing up at any institution, whether it's inside or outside of the state," said Castillo Richmond. "And we think of this as the more acute challenge for the state."

Among FAFSA-filing students, white students are the most likely to leave while Latino students are by far the least likely to leave the state.

Article [Link](#)



New Report Finds Stark Inequity in Chicago Higher Education

Sara Weissman / Diverse Issues in Higher Education / July 18, 2019

None of the Chicago-area four-year public universities, as of 2016, has been able to graduate more than half of their Black and Latinx students.

The Partnership for College Completion shared this and other findings in a report released Thursday based on a regional study of college enrollment and graduation rates for low-income and minority students in and around Chicago.

The seven-county Chicago area is home to 54 schools – including public, private, non-profit two- and four- year institutions – which enroll 319,000 undergraduates.

“One of our goals as an organization and in our work is, number one, lifting up data, research and information to really highlight the college completion crisis in the state of Illinois, and that reflects a broader college-completion crisis across the country,” said Lisa Castillo Richmond, the managing director of the Partnership for College Completion. “We want to drive action.”

While many reports explore national trends in college enrollment and completion, this report is unique in its local focus, analyzing data county by county.

“We’re really interested in hyper-localizing issues of reform,” said Kyle Westbrook, the executive director of Partnership for College Completion. “We do feel really strongly that most of the changes that we need to see happen will happen at the state and

local level, where folks are closer to the issues, closer to the solutions and closer to our students.”

Based on data from financial-aid applicants in the region, among other sources, the study found that a large number of students from the Chicago area are leaving the state for college, or debating whether to attend college at all because of affordability concerns.

Out of 70,000 local applicants who apply each year, only 2,600 students of color graduated in the Chicago area in 2017. While White applicants complete college within six years at a rate of 68 percent, low-income Black and FAFSA filers have six-year completion rates at 30 percent and 38 percent, respectively.

Westbrook said state legislators are concerned about enrollment. Applications at public universities in the Chicago area increased by only half the rate of the national average between 2011 and 2016.

But they’ve been so focused on addressing out-migration – students leaving the Chicago area for college – that they’ve ignored local students struggling to afford Chicago schools. FAFSA filers with the least financial need were three times more likely to leave the state for college. White students were the most likely to leave the state for college, while Latinx students were least likely.

“There’s a pool of students and a pool of talent in this state that aren’t just going out of state for college,” Westbrook said. “They’re

not going to attend at all. We're leaving a lot of talent on the table because of the state's slow and steady disinvestment in higher education."

The report describes a lack of funding for Monetary Award Program grants, the state's financial aid system for low-income students. The study found that nearly 60,000 eligible students apply for these awards and don't receive them because there isn't enough aid to go around. Grants also cover fewer costs.

The program used to fully cover a student's attendance costs. Now, it covers only two-thirds of the cost of attendance at community colleges and one-third of the cost at public universities.

The report recommends a series of policy changes at the college and state level based on the study's findings. It encourages institutions to weigh GPAs more heavily than standardized test scores in admissions, since prioritizing scores puts low-income students and students of color with less test preparation resources at a disadvantage.

The study found that 58 percent of African-American financial aid applicants and 41 percent of Latino students scored in the lowest ACT category. The report calls on the state to fully fund all eligible MAP applicants and direct

funds away from for-profits, which account for 34 percent of student loan debt while serving only 8 percent of Illinois' college students.

To push some of its policy goals forward, the Partnership for College Completion started the Illinois Equity in Attainment initiative, a coalition of 27 Chicago-area higher learning institutions that have committed to create equity plans with the organization's help. The group meets twice a year to discuss shared problems and work on setting benchmarks.

Richmond finds the initiative a reason for hope.

"They're taking a deep look internally at how they're organized and who they're supporting and how," she said.

At the state level, there have been promising changes, as well. This year, the state allocated another \$50 million to MAP grants, praised in the report as a step in the right direction.

"We are optimistic but we also don't think it's time to take the goal posts down and pat ourselves on the back," Westbrook said. "We're at the very beginning of what we hope will be a long-term investment in resources and attention to the equity issues that our state faces."

Article [Link](#)



Access and Affordability Limiting Equitable College Enrollment, Achievement in Chicago Region

Ashmar Mandou / Lawndale News / July 18, 2019

College enrollment and completion in the Chicago area is being limited by access and cost issues tied to race, family wealth and income, and the availability of financial aid, according to a new report released today by the Partnership for College Completion (PCC). The report, *College-Going and Completion in the Chicago Area: A Regional Analysis*, breaks ground in examining enrollment, attainment, and completion in the seven-county metropolitan Chicago area, using a number of sources including a unique regional analysis of data from financial aid applicants. The report finds that despite a diverse pool of more than 70,000 college-going applicants from this region every year, more than 40 percent of whom are Black or Latino, the local four-year public universities together produced only 2,600 degrees for students of color in 2017. PCC urges administrators, educators and policymakers to prioritize higher education access and affordability with a concentration on equity to ensure the future prosperity of the region and state.

College-Going and Completion in the Chicago Area focuses on the students from and

attending college in the Midwest's hub of economic opportunity, where two decades of state disinvestment in students and institutions has affected the seven-county region's 54 public and private nonprofit two- and four-year colleges and the 319,000 undergraduate students they enroll. As a result, the report finds high prices for four-year colleges and declining numbers of students attending college in the region or deciding not to pursue higher education at all, together underscoring the challenge of wide access to high-quality postsecondary opportunities. The report proposes bold equity-focused policy ideas that include: revising college admissions standards to increase the weight of GPA over ACT/SAT test scores, which disadvantage low-income students and students of color; restoring full funding of the Monetary Award Program (MAP), which provides grants to low-income students and now covers only two-thirds of the cost of attendance at community colleges and one-third of the cost at public universities for less than half of eligible students; and, stopping the flow of state aid to for-profit colleges.

Article [Link](#)



Suburban parents reportedly giving up custody of kids to get need-based financial aid

Sarah Schulte / ABC 7; WLS-TV / July 30, 2019

ABC 7; KGO-TV / July 30, 2019

Sarah Schulte / ABC 7 as appears in Chicago Crusader / July 31, 2019

Wealthy suburban parents in the Chicago area are using a legal loophole in order to get their children more need-based financial aid, according to a report by ProPublica Illinois.

The report discovered dozens or more cases where parents hired lawyers to petition the court to turn over guardianship to a friend or relative so the student could be declared financially independent and qualify for financial aid.

ProPublica Illinois reporter Jody Cohen said she sifted through 1,800 probate petitions from 2018 and 2019, but more than 40 guardianship petitions stood out to her.

They were formal petitions filed by lawyers on behalf of well-to-do parents who were, for example, doctors and real estate agents in suburbs like Buffalo Grove and Deerfield, giving up custody of their kids during their junior or senior year of high school.

In response, the Department of Education is suggesting changes be made to close the loop hole.

It's adding language that says if a student enters into a legal guardianship, but continues to receive financial and medical support from their parents, they are still a dependent student.

While the practice of doing this is a loophole, it is not illegal. But it sparks an ethical problem if financial aid is limited and takes away from a potential student with a real need.

Kyle Westbrook leads the Partnership for College Completion, an advocacy organization for improving college outcomes for low income students.

"We think of it as hundreds of thousands of dollars that should have gone to low-income students and likely the difference between some students going to college and not going," said Westbrook.

Last year, more than 80,000 students who were eligible didn't get the aid because the money ran out.

For low income students that could mean the decision not to go to college.

ABC7 Article [Link](#)

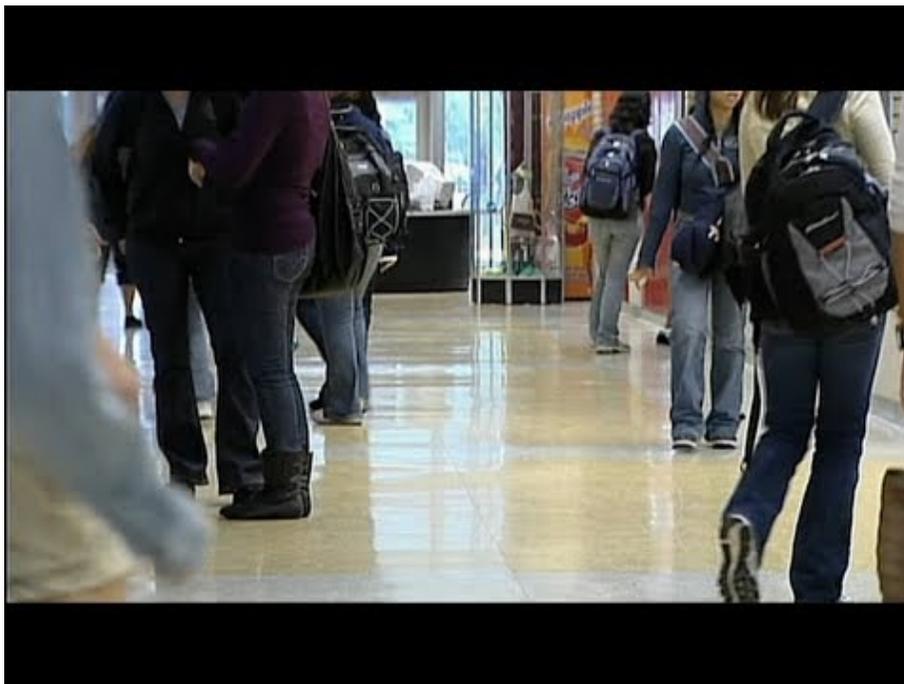
KGO-TV Article [Link](#)

Chicago Crusader Article [Link](#)



Suburban parents reportedly giving up custody of kids to get need-based financial aid

Sarah Schulte / ABC 7; WLS-TV / July 30, 2019





New Illinois law aims to increase high schoolers seeking federal aid for post-grad plans

Adeshina Emmanuel / Chalk Beat / Aug. 6, 2019

To help pave the way to college, [a new state law will require](#) Illinois high school seniors to complete an application for federal student aid in order to graduate.

The law, which goes into effect in fall 2020, takes a page from Chicago Public Schools, where about three in four high school seniors last school year completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, known as FAFSA. The school district requires seniors to finish a detailed post-secondary plan in order to graduate.

The new law allows families to sign a waiver, for those not wanting to complete the application.

In June, the school board updated the district's school rating system to factor in high schools' success helping students complete their post-high school plans, known as "Learn. Plan. Succeed." plans. A district spokeswoman said Chicago would continue tracking FAFSA completion rates and work with schools to ensure the state requirement is met.

Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed the law Friday to nudge more students to access federal dollars for their post-secondary plans, whether they're paying for college or vocational schools.

"This law will help give students the freedom to choose the pathway that's best for them – not the path they're forced down because nobody gave them the information to explore their options," Pritzker said in a statement. "My administration will do everything in our power to make college an option for any student who wants that opportunity."

Illinois became the second state to enact such a measure.

While the latest district data show that more than 75% of Chicago Public School seniors last school year completed a FAFSA as of late June, only 59% of Illinois seniors did so, putting the state ninth in the nation.

Danny Mason is director of teacher support at the Chicago office of OneGoal, a nonprofit which offers one-on-one coaching to help low-income high school students transition to college. He said that the college debt crisis has forced educators to be more proactive about supporting students' post-graduation journey. Families have to be more financially literate, he said, and have conversations about paying for college earlier in high school than before.

He said the district created a task list for seniors.

"One of those tasks is getting these federal dollars," he said.

Mason said that the state and districts should focus their energy on figuring out ways to help students who are ineligible for FAFSA or are limited in seeking financial aid, particularly immigrants and undocumented students.

Emily Goldman, policy manager at the Partnership for College Completion, predicts that Illinois will see an increase in students applying for financial aid, much like what happened in Louisiana, the first state to pass a FAFSA graduation requirement. Louisiana now leads the nation in FAFSA completion rates.

She said that the requirement should come with support for students and families in districts with historically low FAFSA completion rates. Goldman emphasized that "counselors should continue to be diligent about protecting undocumented students and students with

other barriers to FAFSA completion outside of their control,” by ensuring that the opt-out process is seamless.

Article [Link](#)



Uneven and unequal: Chicago-area colleges fail our students and economy

Kyle Westbrook / Crain's Chicago Business / Aug. 7, 2019

Within weeks, thousands of Chicago-area students will head to colleges and universities throughout Illinois in hopes of preparing for high-quality jobs and achieving economic success. Some will be saddled with student debt that they will be paying off for years. Others will find a range of hurdles — from campus culture to lack of support — that will cause them to stumble before graduating. And, despite ample evidence that college is a [wise investment](#), there are thousands more college-age students — especially African Americans and Latinos from low-income families — who will decide to forego college altogether.

This should be a golden age for college students in a job market that puts a premium on training and skills. Instead, across the seven-county Chicago region — and, indeed, the state — opportunity is uneven and unequal, influenced by race, class, and access to financial aid. New research — [College-Going and Completion in the Chicago Area](#) — finds that despite a diverse pool of more than 70,000 college-going applicants from this region every year, more than 40% of whom are Black or Latino, the local four-year public universities together produced only 2,600 degrees for students of color in 2017.

The 54 public and private nonprofit two-year and four-year colleges in the Northeast region, enrolling nearly three-

quarters of all Illinois students, are a critical part of creating and sustaining a statewide higher education system that drives Illinois' workforce and economy. But, even among children born into a family within the same income range, white students have a much greater chance of earning a degree than students of color. Six-year completion rates among low-income Black and Latino financial-aid applicants are 30% and 38%, respectively, compared to 68% for Whites.

The region and the state still bear the scars from more than two decades of under-investment in public universities. Applications grew at only half the rate of the national average between 2011-2016. The Monetary Award Program (MAP), which in 2000 covered the full tuition and fees for all eligible low-income students, now only covers 37% of tuition and fees at community colleges and 31% of the cost at public universities. Every year about 100,000 eligible students receive nothing. Underfunding MAP contributes to the chronic outflow of students to other states.

We can do better — and there are some hopeful signs. The new FY2020 state budget increases MAP funding by \$50 million. That's a start, but MAP should cover full tuition for all eligible students. It is one of the most effective tools for providing access and keeping students in state.

Two more steps should be taken to break down barriers to access and completion.

More schools should follow the lead of universities as different as DePaul University and the University of Chicago favoring test-optional admissions standards, rather than ACT or SAT scores, which work against low-income students and students of color. At the same time, remedial education programs need to be overhauled. The programs place far too many low-income, minority students in developmental courses, rather than college-level courses, and hinder graduation.

Article [Link](#)

Encouragingly, a state-level group is reviewing current policies.

We have an example of what's possible with focus and leadership. Consider the improvement in Chicago Public Schools high school graduation rates to 78% from 55% in just seven years. For the sake of our students and our economy, we should expect nothing less dramatic in seeing more students get into college and graduate.

Daily Herald

DAILY
CHRONICLE NORTHWEST
HERALD

House hearing Thursday to focus on how parents are exploiting financial aid loophole

Peter Hancock / The Daily Herald / Aug. 7, 2019

Peter Hancock / The Daily Chronicle / Aug. 7, 2019

Peter Hancock / Northwest Herald / Aug. 7, 2019

Two Illinois House committees will hold a joint hearing today in Chicago on the subject of wealthy parents who put their teenage children into guardianship to qualify for financial aid. It remains to be seen whether any of the attorneys or parents involved in that practice will show up to testify.

But even if they don't, Rep. LaShawn Ford, a Chicago Democrat who chairs the House committee that deals with funding higher education, said he hopes the hearing itself will deter other parents from trying to exploit the system.

"Bringing awareness to the issue should deter it in a big way," Ford said Wednesday.

The issue came to light in a story published July 29 by the nonprofit investigative news organization ProPublica Illinois.

Reporters had found dozens of cases of parents in Lake County who had petitioned a court to place their children in the custody of guardians -- often a family friend or relative -- so their children could declare themselves financially independent and thereby qualify for student financial aid, including grants from the state's Monetary Award Program grants.

Ford said he and other lawmakers had consulted with attorneys who advised them there was nothing illegal about the practice. But he said it raises a number of "moral" issues

because the MAP program has limited funding available, and typically as many as 80,000 applicants per year are denied grants because there is not enough funding to go around.

"I think the families may not understand the harm that they're doing," Ford said. "I don't know if they morally knew that they were robbing another student of the opportunity to go to college."

Ford's committee will meet jointly with the House Higher Education Committee in a hearing set to begin at 10 a.m. in the Michael A. Bilandic Building in Chicago.

According to an agenda that Ford provided, the hearing will involve four panels representing the University of Illinois, the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, other public universities and the Partnership for College Completion.

Ford said the committees had considered issuing subpoenas for representatives from law firms involved in the guardianship arrangements, as well as parents who had taken advantage of the process. But he said that process would have taken considerable time, so the committees instead invited those people to testify. As of Wednesday afternoon, he said, none had said they would attend.

Daily Herald Article [Link](#)

Daily Chronicle Article [Link](#)

Northwest Herald Article [Link](#)



9th Annual College Changes Everything® (CCE) Conference addresses barriers

The Chicago Crusader / Aug. 7, 2019

How do we get students—especially low-income and first-generation students—to and through postsecondary education? While removing academic and financial barriers is important, it is not sufficient to improve equity. According to Merita Irby, co-founder and executive vice president of The Forum for Youth Investment and chief architect of The Forum’s signature initiative, Ready by 21®, “Equity has to be linked to readiness. We have to get kids ready to play in the game.”

In “Changing the Odds: Pathways to Young Adult Success,” Irby’s recent keynote to the almost 500 attendees at the 9th Annual College Changes Everything® (CCE) Conference, she emphasized the significance of support for students in building skills and forming an identity that will make post-secondary education a possibility for each of them individually. Developmental experiences that build four foundational components—self-regulation, knowledge, mindsets and values—are a critical factor in removing barriers to attainment, said Irby.

Flashtalks from Lisa Castillo Richmond, managing director of the Partnership for College Completion, and Zaldwaynaka “Z” Scott, president of Chicago State University, focused on attainment initiatives here in Illinois. Numerous breakout sessions examined collaborative efforts to address both developmental barriers to access and achievement as well as barriers facing specific student populations, including undocumented students and homeless students.

During a lunchtime panel of young adults who had been in foster care, the panelists highlighted some of the topics Irby

covered during her keynote address, but also discussed their experiences, challenges, and the various pathways they took to postsecondary education.

Celebrating the 10 year anniversary of the Illinois Student Assistance Corps (ISACorps), the program and all its members—past and present—received the CCE Champion Award. The award is presented each year to a person or an organization that has made significant contributions to help the state improve college access and completion efforts for Illinois students. The ISACorps, a group of recent college graduates who are trained to serve for two years as near peer mentors to high school students, assist students and families statewide in navigating the process of planning and preparing for postsecondary success. In the last decade, the ISACorps has interacted with more than one million students and parents, held more than 37,000 college access and financial aid events, and provided direct assistance to more than 55,000 students. Students who have interacted with the ISACorps are more likely to enroll in college and less likely to enroll out-of-state.

In addition to the CCE Champion Award, State Senator Pat McGuire, who is chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee, presented Jacqueline Moreno, ISAC’s managing director of College Access Initiatives, with an Illinois State Senate Certificate of Recognition in celebration of a decade of service of the ISACorps.

The annual CCE Conference is the state’s premier higher education conference focused on improving efforts to make college possible for all Illinois students. The CCE Conference is sponsored by the Illinois Student

Assistance Commission in collaboration with partners: Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois College Access Network, Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities, Advance Illinois, Center for the Study of

Education Policy at Illinois State University, Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University, Generations Serving Generations, ACT Now and Women Employed.

For more conference highlights, follow the hashtag #CCE4me on Twitter and Instagram.

Article [Link](#)

Appendix C

PCC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Beth Swanson, **(Board Chair)** *CEO, A Better Chicago*

Liz Thompson **(Board Vice-Chair)**, *President, The Cleveland Avenue Foundation for Education*
(630) 222-3835

Adam Levine, **(Board Treasurer)** *President, Circle of Service Foundation*
773-844-1433

Laz Lopez, **(Board Secretary)** *Associate Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, High School District 214*
(847) 718-7611

Dave Agazzi, *Former Vice President of Administrative Affairs, College of Lake County*
(847) 682-0907

Kevin Considine, *President and CEO, Lake County Partners*

Margaret Daniels Tyler, *Social Venture Advisor, The Tyler Group with the Strategic Consulting Network*
(857) 472-0427

Greg Darnieder - *Former Senior Advisor to the Secretary on the College Access Initiative, U.S. Department of Education*
(202) 277-0877

Joan DiLeonardi, *Chair of Board of Trustees, Oakton Community College*

Arne Duncan, *Managing Director, Emerson Collective*
(312) 626-1138

Sherry Eagle, *Executive Director Emeritus, Institute for Collaboration, Aurora University*
(630) 844-4626

Judy Erwin, *Managing Director, Kivvit*
(312) 415-8029

Brian Fabes, *CEO, Civic Consulting Alliance*
(773) 519-0844

Nivine Megahed, *President, National Louis University*
(312) 261-3230

Robert Pullion, *Foundational Talent Training Program Manager, Zurich North America*

Tim Schwertfeger, *Former Chairman and CEO, Nuveen Investments*
312-208-5480

Douglas Wood, *Senior Fellow Justice, Equity and Opportunity, Aspen Institute*

PCC STAFF

Kyle Westbrook - *Executive Director*

(773) 230-4328

Michael Abrahamson – *Policy Analyst*

Lisa Castillo Richmond – *Managing Director*

Emily Goldman - *Policy Manager*

Paula Hanley – *Program Manager*

Jonathan Lopez – *Communications and Operations Manager*

(773) 564-3641

Julian Williams – *Program Manager*