

# **Illinois Community Colleges: Focus on the Finish**

A report to Governor Pat Quinn and the Illinois General Assembly

Lt. Governor Sheila Simon

January 2012



January 2012

Dear Governor Quinn and Members of the General Assembly,

I am writing to share my recommendations for higher education reform based on a fact-finding tour of the state's 48 community colleges. As the Governor's point person on education reform, I made it my mission in 2011 to get a ground-level view of how all our public, two-year institutions are serving students and educating our future workforce.

The economic predictions aren't pretty. For every 100 jobs of the future, 24 could go unfilled due to a lack of skilled employees. Until this skills gap is closed, our state is at risk of losing quality employers who seek to locate in areas with a stronger talent pool.

Our community colleges are positioned to bridge this skills gap. To do so, they must shift their focus from access to completion. If a student walks through the door of a community college, the odds should be that they'll walk out with a career certificate or college degree. Last school year, just one in five students achieved that distinction after three years on campus.

In preparing this report, I am mindful of the financial realities of our state. As a result, my recommendations address how we can best use existing resources to improve education. More students must start college ready for college-level work. Students who aren't ready need relevant remedial education embedded in career or degree-track coursework. And programs should be structured to fit the needs of students who balance school with work, family, and commutes.

As policymakers, we also must work alongside educators to adopt a uniform way to measure success, share results with the public and reward effectiveness. We should view every completed course, certificate, degree, and transfer as a step toward jobs recovery and a healthy state economy.

Sincerely,

Sheila Simon

## Executive Summary

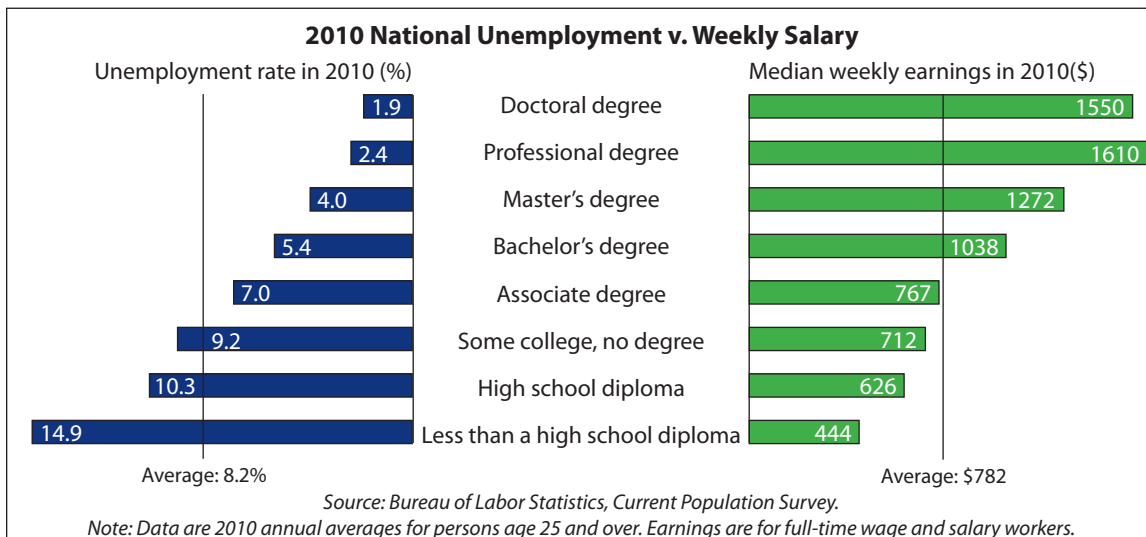
Community colleges are the future of the Illinois economy. Nearly 1 million students pass through their doors each year in search of accessible, affordable education and career training. Unfortunately, too many students leave campus without the certificate or degree necessary for a good-paying job. Slightly fewer than one in five Illinois students who began their studies as first-time, full-time students at Illinois community colleges in the fall of 2007 graduated by the summer of 2010. In order for our state to attract and retain businesses – and do right by our students – we need to dramatically increase this success rate.

As the Governor’s point person on education reform, I completed a statewide fact-finding tour of all 48 Illinois community colleges in 2011. I wanted to hear firsthand how schools were working to improve completion rates, and to gather input on how the state could facilitate their success. Given that community colleges reach more students – but graduate fewer – than other higher education institutions, their performance is critical to creating a globally competitive workforce.

Today, the Illinois workforce is slightly ahead of most states, with 41 percent of our nearly 7 million working-age adults (25-64 years old) holding at least a two-year degree. But if we do not increase the proportion of certificate and degree holders over time, Illinois will not only fall behind our neighbors, but also lose out on international job investment. As Chair of the P-20 Council’s Joint Educational Leadership Committee and a member of Illinois’ Complete College America team, I am working to increase the proportion of Illinoisans with meaningful college and career credentials to 60 percent by 2025.

During the tour, I found that colleges are actively pursuing the state’s “60 by 2025” completion goal. I witnessed several small scale, but promising, reforms to prepare incoming students and reduce the time it takes for them to earn credentials and enter the regional and national workforce. These emerging on-the-ground practices, coupled with overviews of national research and completion strategies, provide the foundation for this report.

## Education pays



## Four Steps to Focus on the Finish

There are more than 700,000 unfilled jobs in the Midwest today, yet the Illinois unemployment rate hovers around 10 percent. Community colleges need to connect students to the workforce. To make this connection, we must:

### Step 1: Start on the right path

- ◆ Improve, diagnose college readiness
- ◆ Add up the math courses
- ◆ Earn dual credits

### Step 3: Draw a better map

- ◆ Smooth transfers
- ◆ Audit associate degrees
- ◆ Target financial aid

### Step 2: Know who we serve

- ◆ Reinvent remediation
- ◆ Provide wrap-around supports
- ◆ Recognize diversity

### Step 4: Reward success

- ◆ Measure milestones
- ◆ Increase transparency
- ◆ Tie funds to progress

## Methodology

This report highlights completion efforts at Illinois community colleges in sections entitled On the Ground and Appendix. The program descriptions and completion data in these sections were reported by the colleges between February and November 2011 at my request. I posed four open-ended questions to administrators to elicit this information:

- ◆ What are you doing to improve completion rates?
- ◆ What are you doing to connect students to the workforce?
- ◆ How are you measuring the success of these initiatives?
- ◆ What completion challenges are you facing that would benefit from state assistance?

The answers selected for the On the Ground and Appendix entries are intended to document the wide range of completion efforts currently underway at schools across the state. They should not be read as a comprehensive analysis.

## Acknowledgments

My staff and I would like to thank the educators at each community college for their time, energy, and dedication to teaching, and for helping us identify areas for improvement in our education system. We also would like to acknowledge the Illinois Community College Board, Illinois Board of Higher Education, P-20 Council, and Illinois' Complete College America team for their work in establishing and pursuing the "60 by 2025" goal. We hope to build on their quality work.

# Table of Contents

## Chapter 1: Start on the right path

1.1 Improve college and career readiness.....	2
1.2 Add up the math courses.....	4
1.3 Diagnose college readiness.....	6
1.4 Earn dual credits.....	8

## Chapter 2: Know who we serve

2.1 Reinvent remediation.....	12
2.2 Provide wrap-around supports.....	14
2.3 Recognize diversity.....	16

## Chapter 3: Draw a better map

3.1 Smooth transfers.....	20
3.2 Audit associate degrees.....	22
3.3 Target financial aid.....	24

## Chapter 4: Reward success

4.1 Measure milestones.....	28
4.2 Increase transparency.....	30
4.3 Tie funds to progress.....	32

<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>35</b>
------------------------	-----------

<b>Illinois completion rates by campus.....</b>	<b>36</b>
---	-----------

<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>37</b>
----------------------	-----------

<b>References.....</b>	<b>49</b>
------------------------	-----------

# Chapter 1

## Start on the right path

Just one in four Illinois high school graduates in 2011 met college readiness standards in all four core subjects – math, science, English and reading – based on their ACT test scores. We can systematically improve college and career readiness by blurring the lines between high school and community college and making the senior year of high school more meaningful. Our recommendations:

- 1.1 Improve college and career readiness
- 1.2 Add up the math courses
- 1.3 Diagnose college readiness
- 1.4 Earn dual credits

## 1.1: Improve college and career readiness

### Overview

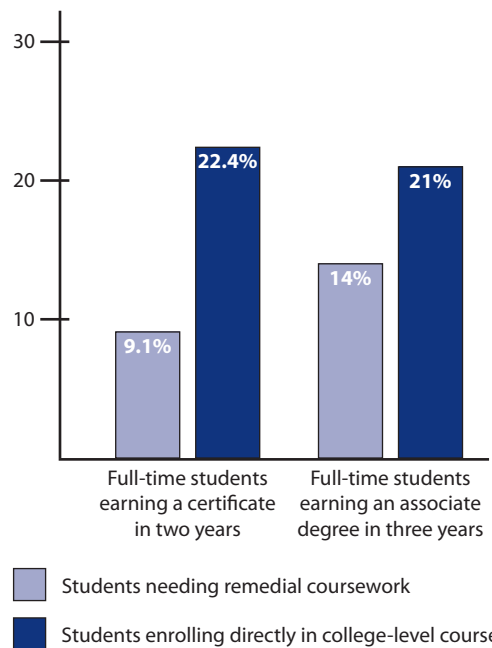
It's sad but true: Too many students entering Illinois community colleges are not ready for college-level work. Nearly half of 2006-08 public high school graduates transitioning as full-time community college freshmen enrolled in at least one remedial course, according to the Illinois Community College Board. Students who enter unprepared are more likely to leave college with debt, but without a degree or certificate. Illinois needs to build a systematic approach to college and career readiness, using existing legislation as its foundation.

### On the Ground

The General Assembly adopted the College and Career Readiness Program in 2007, creating a pilot program to perform five tasks at select schools: diagnose college readiness, reduce remediation, align high school and college curriculum, provide resources to high school seniors, and measure the effectiveness of the intervention strategies. The pilot program was reauthorized and expanded in 2010 for three additional years. The state has appropriated \$750,000 for implementation. The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and the Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) at the University of Illinois are beginning to collect quantitative and qualitative data on the program from seven participating colleges: **College of Lake County** in Grayslake; **John A. Logan College** in Carterville; **Kankakee Community College** in Kankakee; **Moraine Valley Community College** in Palos Hills; **Shawnee Community College** in Ullin; **South Suburban College** in South Holland; and **Southwestern Illinois College** in Belleville. Ultimately, the successes at these schools will be used to develop a framework for statewide implementation.

#### **Illinois students more likely to graduate when prepared for college-level work**

Illinois students that place into remedial-level coursework are less likely than their college-ready peers to complete a certificate or an associate degree. We must address remedial issues to ensure students are in an environment where they can and will succeed.



*Note: Entry cohort of full-time students seeking a certificate in fall 2005: 2,288. Those needing remedial help: 1,080.*

*Entry cohort of full-time students seeking an associate degree in fall 2004: 22,098. Those needing remedial help: 12,891.*

*Data based on most recent cohort available.*

*Source: Complete College America*

## 1.1: Improve college and career readiness

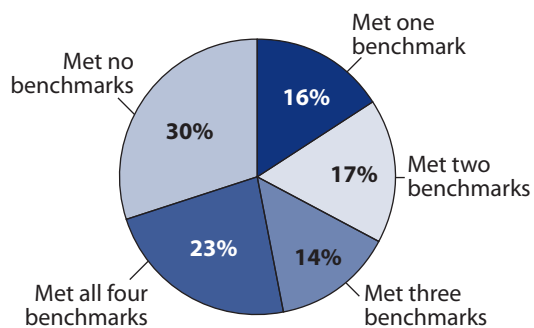
### What should we do?

#### Create statewide college and career readiness framework

Community colleges should collaborate with K-12 education in a systematic way to set expectations and measure the impact of this secondary and post-secondary collaboration.

#### It's a Fact

Based on ACT scores, three out of four Illinois high school graduates in 2011 did not meet college readiness benchmarks in math, science, English and/or reading.



Source: ACT

### How should we do it?

**Improve data collection:** The Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) published an evaluation of the College and Career Readiness pilot projects in August 2011 that noted a lack of data on student outcomes. In the project's fifth year, OCCRL will work closely with ICCB and the seven pilot sites to measure student performance and address key questions about how many students have been served, whether college-level remediation has been reduced for participating students, whether policies and programs have potential for implementation in other sites, and how the state's evaluation system can be enhanced to better measure student transition from high school to college. Implementation of the state's longitudinal database will help track student outcomes across higher education.

**Universal assessment:** The College and Career Readiness Pilot Program should be updated to require a common college placement test that determines which courses students are prepared to take. Early, uniform testing and college readiness cutoff scores should be the same system-wide.

**Disseminate best practices:** The pilot sites are developing approaches to curriculum alignment and alternative remediation instruction, and best practices are emerging on the use of assessment data and college success workshops. This information should be shared on the OCCRL website and used for professional development.

**Promote collaboration:** One of the least expensive methods of bridging the high school-community college divide is faculty collaboration, both in-person and online. Creating opportunities for educators at both levels to learn from each other creates conditions for success.



## 1.2: Add up the math courses

### Overview

The math deficiencies of incoming freshmen are alarming. More than one-third of recent public high school graduates transitioning as full-time community college freshmen in 2006-08 enrolled in at least one remedial math course, according to the Illinois Community College Board. Research suggests that high school graduates need four years of math (Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II and data analysis/statistics) to succeed in a post-secondary setting. Illinois, like the majority of states, requires three years, though some high schools voluntarily require more math.

### On the Ground

Approximately 80 percent of incoming high school graduates at **Kankakee Community College** test into developmental math, and many students need more than one course to get up to college-level work. To reduce these dramatic remedial needs, KCC began a pilot program with select feeder high schools in 2009-10 to better align curriculum across all math courses, diagnose trouble spots during junior year through the COMPASS test, and influence students to take math their senior year. Mimicking a KCC teaching technique, three local high schools introduced a computer-based math program in 2010-11 that lets students move quickly through familiar skills and spend more time on specific deficiencies. Every student in the pilot improved a grade level, and 14 percent of those juniors scored college-ready on the year-end COMPASS assessment (compared to just 8 percent of incoming graduates at KCC that same year). These results prompted two additional schools to adopt the computer-based program in 2011-12. And beginning in 2012-13, Tri-Point High School will require all students to take four years of math to receive a high school diploma, up from the state mandate of three years.

#### It's a Fact

46%

Nearly half (22,041/48,328) of recent Illinois public high school graduates transitioning as full-time community college freshmen in 2006-08 enrolled in at least one remedial course.

36%

Over one-third (17,527/48,328) of recent Illinois public high school graduates transitioning as full-time community college freshmen in 2006-08 enrolled in at least one remedial math course.

21%

One in five (10,330/48,328) recent Illinois public high school graduates transitioning as full-time community college freshmen in 2006-08 enrolled in at least one remedial English course.

*Source: Illinois Community College Board*

## 1.2: Add up the math courses

### What should we do?

#### Require four years of math for high school graduation

Because only three years of mathematics are required for graduation, many community college students arrive at campus after at least a one year vacation from math class. The result: Some community colleges report up to 90 percent of their students test into remedial math, often delivered as multiple semesters of non-credit bearing work. Illinois should join the 12 states that have elevated their diploma requirements, and require four years of math for high school graduation.

#### How should we do it?

##### Implement Common Core:

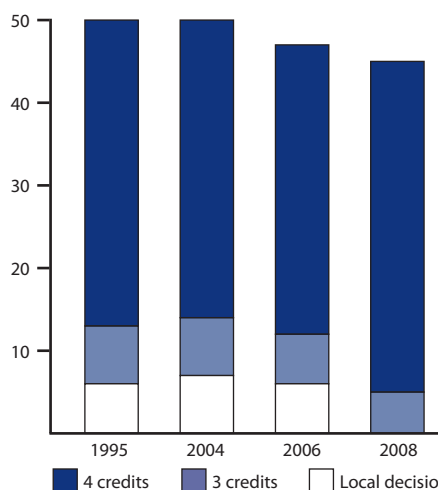
Illinois should revamp high school mathematics coursework to implement the Common Core standards in math and hold students to meeting those standards prior to graduation. A four-year math sequence that would provide more time to learn the content and prevent the memory loss involved in taking the senior “math vacation” is preferred. The math sequence could potentially be met through a variety of course options, including courses offered in career and technical education and also prior to high school, such as 8th grade Algebra I.

**Add up the math:** In 2005-06, Illinois increased its minimum math graduation requirement from two years to three. Yet some schools voluntarily require four years. Illinois should partner with a research institution to study the cost and effectiveness of the schools that require four years.

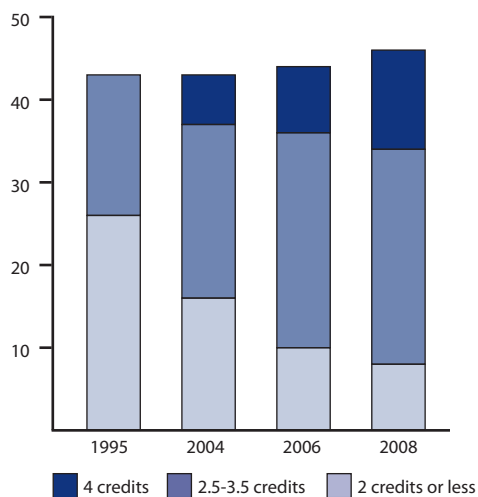
#### National graduation requirements

Most states set policy on the minimum number of year-long courses required for high school graduation. Forty states require four years of English instruction and 12 require four years of math.

##### English/Language Arts



##### Mathematics



Note: Some states did not participate in the survey and/or do not have statewide graduation requirements.

Source: Council of Chief State School Officers

## 1.3: Diagnose college readiness

### Overview

Standardized testing gets a bad rap when used alone to measure student and school success. Yet if test results are used diagnostically, rather than as labeling or sorting devices, they can be empowering for students and parents in the process of college preparation. Tests like the ACT and SAT are useful for predicting freshman-year college success, and are weighed by many colleges and universities in admissions. In Illinois, the ACT is administered to all high school juniors as part of the Prairie State Achievement Exam. Another form of college testing is placement testing, which uses more detailed exams to determine which courses students should take. Some Illinois community colleges offer their placement tests to high school students, allowing them to diagnose their academic strengths and weaknesses well before high school graduation, make better course choices through their senior year, and avoid the need for remedial coursework in college.

### On the Ground

**Harper College** has teamed up with its three feeder high school districts to form the Northwest Educational Council for Student Success. Since its inception, the council has collaborated on college readiness testing and course offerings to reduce the need for remediation. In 2010-11, more than 5,700 high school juniors in Harper's district opted to take the COMPASS math placement test to gauge their college readiness, up 50 percent from the prior year. When these juniors enrolled for senior year classes, their advisors strongly encouraged a fourth year of math and explained the true cost of remedial coursework that does not apply toward a degree. The college also stressed that most students who skip a year of math see their math placement scores decrease, placing them at risk for additional remedial college courses. The message is getting through: more than 90 percent of all high school seniors enrolled in math in the three districts in 2011-12.

Harper also reports:

- ◆ In the fall of 2010, 44 percent of all recent high school graduates from these three feeder districts started in college-level math. The following fall, 50 percent of all recent high school graduates from these districts started in college-level math.
- ◆ The demand for multiple remedial courses has decreased, potentially putting students on a quicker path toward a degree or certificate. In 2011, 27 percent of recent high school graduates needed multiple remedial courses to become college-ready, down from 31 percent in 2010.

### *What should we do?*

#### **Require uniform, diagnostic testing**

Illinois needs a uniform, diagnostic assessment for college and career readiness in high school. The placement test scores should be explained to students and parents in real terms and guide course selection for students through senior year.

### *How should we do it?*

**Modernize state assessment:** The Illinois State Board of Education is a governing member of the Partnership for the Assessment of College and Careers (PARCC), an alliance of states working together to develop common assessment tools to serve nearly 25 million students. PARCC's work is funded through a four-year, \$185 million dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Partners include about 200 higher education institutions and systems representing hundreds of campuses across the country. The new PARCC system, which will replace the Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) and Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE), measures each grade level against college and career readiness standards. The computer-based assessments, given up to four times a year, will provide immediate feedback on student growth so teachers can shape instruction for current students in real time. PARCC will be used as an indicator of college readiness beginning in the 2014-15 school year.

#### **Encourage early placement testing:**

While the PARCC assessments are being developed and implemented, community colleges should work with their feeder high school districts to diagnose college readiness. The test results should be presented in context of college cost and time to degree.

## 1.4: Earn dual credits

### Overview

All 48 community colleges are partnering with high schools to ease student transitions, reduce tuition costs, and decrease time to degree through dual credit programs. In fiscal year 2010 alone, 79,676 Illinois high school students participated in dual credit, up from 56,963 four years earlier, according to the Illinois Community College Board. During this high-growth time, the Dual Credit Quality Act of 2009 was adopted to guide improvements in course quality, transferability, and access for at-risk students. Low-income students are more likely to complete a bachelor's degree in a timely fashion if they take high school and college courses simultaneously, according to forthcoming research from Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville.

### On the Ground

#### **Danville Area Community College**

offers three dual credit opportunities to district students through their Project Lead the Way, Middle College, and College Express initiatives. Project Lead the Way offers up to 14 credit hours to high school students interested in the pre-engineering field, while Middle College is designed to encourage higher education success in students with barriers to high school completion. College Express is the largest dual credit program and is offered to high school juniors and seniors who want to get a head start on medical or technical careers. Through College Express, high school students can enroll at DACC and earn up to 16 college credit hours while simultaneously working on their high school diploma. High school districts cover the bill for tuition, books, and in some cases, bus transportation to DACC, saving students an average of \$2,000. DACC launched College Express with 100 high school students in 2005, and it enrolled 500 students in 2011. The best news: Students in College Express are more likely to complete a certificate or degree. Forty-four percent of high school students in the program in 2005-06 have received a credential, compared to an average completion rate of 35 percent for first-time, full-time students.

#### **Lewis and Clark Community College**

has a dual credit program that stands out for its quality and size. Lewis and Clark is the only Illinois community college to be accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships. The college's dual credit course offerings account for almost 9 percent of all offerings across the system, while its enrollment accounts for more than 12 percent of total enrollment across the system. The college offers a dual credit placement test to students at the 16 public high schools and three private high schools in its district. Students who are deemed qualified for the college or career courses can attend for free and, depending on the college or university they attend, transfer courses as core requirements or electives. The program has saved parents and students more than \$18 million in tuition and the overall success rate is high: 98 percent of all students earn a grade C or above, and approximately 90 percent enroll at post-secondary institutions following their high school graduation.

### What should we do?

#### Expand Dual Credit

All high school students should have access to free or reduced price community college credit in career or degree-track courses. This will make their junior and senior years more productive and cut down on the cost and time spent achieving a credential.

#### How should we do it?

**Promote dual credit:** To help students avoid the “senior slump,” advisors should promote dual credit opportunities so more students can save time and money by enrolling in freshmen level classes at community colleges.

**Target minority populations:** Nearly equal proportions of male and female students take dual credit courses, but the ethnicity gap is wide. Eight in 10 high school students who took community college courses in 2008 were white. Latino students accounted for 9 percent, African American for 8 percent, Asian for just over 2 percent and multiracial at 1 percent.

**Improve transferability:** Community colleges need to continue to work with public and private four-year institutions to ensure that dual credit courses are accepted as college-level credits and applied toward bachelor’s degree requirements. Courses that cover content approved for an associate degree and are taught by qualified faculty should transfer seamlessly across the systems.

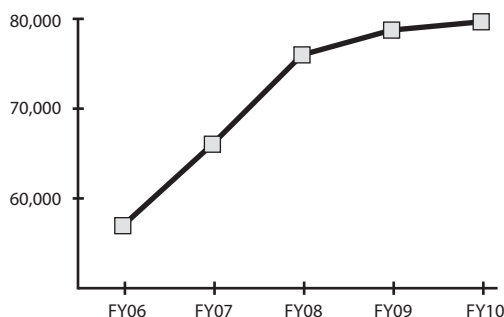
### Did you know?

#### Dual Enrollment v. Dual Credit

Through dual enrollment, high school students enroll in college-level courses at the college campus and may receive exclusively college level credit or both college and high school credit. Through dual credit, high school students participate in college-level courses and receive both high school and college credit. Dual credit courses can be taught in the high school, on the college campus, online or at another location by instructors who meet community college faculty requirements. Dual credit agreements are administered by the Illinois Community College Board. In both dual credit and dual enrollment instances, students pay little or no college tuition.

### It’s a Fact

Dual credit courses are gaining popularity. From FY06 to FY10, enrollment in dual credit courses increased 39.9 percent, from 56,963 to 79,676.



Source: Illinois Community College Board

## College completer

### **Carla Childs, 38, Waubonsee Community College**

Carla Childs is a single mother of six, including two adopted children and one who has epilepsy. When she took her eldest daughter to Waubonsee Community College to sit for the placement exam, Carla took it, too, in order to “practice what she had preached to her children for so long: Education is important.”

After attending full-time for five semesters, Carla became the first person in her family to earn a degree. She graduated in May 2011 with honors and is now pursuing a degree in sociology and criminal justice at Southern Illinois University. Some day she hopes to attend law school.

The biggest challenge at community college was not the coursework, but scheduling, Carla said. She had to fit classes around her children’s education, activities and meals. Having evening and online classes were a huge help in making school possible.

Before enrolling at Waubonsee, Carla said she was afraid of her son’s homework. Now she corrects his fractions and feels a sense of pride when her kids say “Mommy is smart.”

“I am focused on my future, my family and improving society. The only way I can make a mark is through education,” she said.



# Chapter 2

## Know who we serve

The traditional community college student is nontraditional. A look at enrollment demographics in credit-bearing courses at Illinois community colleges in 2010 illustrates this point: 55 percent of students were women, 37 percent were African-American, Latino or Asian, and their average age was 30. Nearly two-thirds of the students attended part-time. We need to tailor our programs to modern-day students who are balancing school with jobs, families, and commutes. Our recommendations:

- 2.1 Reinvent remediation
- 2.2 Provide wrap-around supports
- 2.3 Recognize diversity



## 2.1: Reinvent remediation

### Overview

Remedial education in community colleges is not working. Only about one in 10 Illinois students who start behind actually finish a certificate or degree, according to Complete College America. The problem is time. Students who linger in several semesters of remedial, or developmental, coursework are more likely to lose motivation and drop out. Colleges that are reinventing their approach to remediation are taking the single most important step toward decreasing time to degree and increasing completion rates.

### On the Ground

The Math On Demand (MOD) Program at **Wilbur Wright College** is a computer-based developmental math program that focuses on individualized math learning and teaching. MOD offers an advising component and contextualized math instruction based on students' academic goals and career interests. Instructors are on hand to answer questions as they arise. Students who demonstrate competency on the end-of-semester COMPASS test may bypass one or two developmental math courses for direct placement into credit-bearing math. The course success rate (C or better) increased from 65.5 percent in 2010 to 81.6 percent in 2011. Using the MOD framework, Wright launched a six-week summer bridge program for students whose average ACT scores were 14 and/or had initial placement scores below the college credit level. All participants have demonstrated test gains, with 21 percent testing out of developmental math courses entirely in Fall 2011.

**Elgin Community College** (ECC) established the Alliance for College Readiness in 2006 to bring together educators from ECC and the area's four public high school districts to align math, English and reading curricula. The Alliance created a summer bridge program to increase student placement into college-level coursework. Previously open to recent high school graduates

who tested "almost college ready" in writing, math, or both, the program was opened in 2011 to returning adult students and students needing mid-level developmental coursework. A total of 36 students enrolled in the courses, which met for three weeks and were team taught by high school and ECC faculty, with the assistance of a reading specialist. Fifteen students tested "completely college ready" after the bridge work, potentially cutting a semester on their way to completion. Since the Alliance's inception, 111 students have participated in the summer bridge program, with 73 percent eliminating the need for some or all developmental coursework.

In Fall 2011, full- and part-time faculty at **Prairie State College** redesigned the entry-level developmental writing course to make it more challenging by emphasizing short essay writing and embedding remedial paragraphing skills into the college-worthy assignments. In fall 2012, the college intends to offer a new upper-level developmental writing course that is linked to a first-year, college-level composition course. This accelerated learning model will bring remedial students into a credit-bearing course and supplement their learning with a three-hour developmental course with the same instructor.

### *What should we do?*

#### **Transform developmental courses**

Illinois community colleges should start as many students as possible in first-year, full-credit courses. This can be accomplished by embedding developmental coursework in degree-track courses, adding extra time to schedules for skill development, providing academic, career and financial supports, and through intensive bridge programs that prepare students for entry-level classes quickly and effectively.

#### *How should we do it?*

**Sync scores:** The Illinois Community College Board convened the Developmental Education Advisory Committee to link K-12 Common Core and remedial education. It will examine and recommend models of developmental education, and put forth cutoff scores for different levels of developmental education that should be adopted system-wide.

**Follow the blueprint:** The Complete College Illinois team created a blueprint for the redesign of remedial education. Its core elements on delivery of instruction – modularization, co-enrollment and contextualized instruction – should remain at the center of developmental reinvention efforts at the Illinois Community College Board and across the system.

**Chart progress:** The College and Career Readiness Act requires the Illinois Community College Board to address five goals, including a reduction in remediation. To date, its efforts to redesign courses have helped 384 recent high school students transition to credit-bearing courses or higher levels of developmental work. Participating schools need to improve their data collection on student progress and share best practices/remediation frameworks with schools throughout the state online and through professional development.

## 2.2: Provide wrap-around supports

### Overview

Students at two-year colleges often lack the know-how to direct their own progress, according to James E. Rosenbaum, professor of sociology, education, and social policy at Northwestern University. Instead of giving students the freedom to fail, he found that institutions report higher completion rates for packaged programs that reduce confusion and connect to the regional workforce. Borrowing tactics from successful for-profit colleges and technical programs, Illinois community colleges are beginning to explore packaged programs, career ladders, and intrusive advising techniques that connect or wrap academic, financial, and career advising around student needs.

### On the Ground

**Parkland College** is reworking the way it interacts and advises students with its new initiative, First Year Experience (FYE). FYE is an intrusive and centralized advising program that interacts with students from the moment they submit an application until completion of their first year. Previously, student resources were scattered across campus. Orientation, which was offered only online, was not required. Now, students are required to attend an on-campus orientation prior to the start of school and are encouraged to access websites and how-to videos for additional information about financial aid, academic advising and placement tests. The students continue to receive developmental guidance, including mandatory pre-registration meetings with an academic advisor, until they earn 30 credit hours. The instant and persistent connection is designed to ensure that students are taking credit-bearing courses applicable to their field of study and persist to the next year of college work. Administrators also are developing student cohorts called First Year Academies as a way to connect peers in similar fields and encourage each other to accomplish academic milestones. One such example, the Health Professions Academy, groups developmental students seeking health-field degrees

and teaches developmental coursework as it relates to the industry. Students who successfully complete the program are guaranteed placement in various health profession programs.

The Administration of Justice associate degree program at **Southwestern Illinois College** (SWIC) prepares students for careers in all levels of law enforcement, as well as entry-level corrections and private security positions. Prospective students can visit the SWIC website to view the entire program, its required courses, full schedule and job placement outcomes. This packaging cuts down on confusion, chance of mistake and the possibility of taking unnecessary courses.

**Shawnee Community College** has partnered with the Corporation for Supportive Housing to develop a career ladder strategy in property management and a sequenced certification program. This career ladder pathway will prepare individuals first for employment as a property management clerk, and later, as a leasing specialist.

## 2.2: Provide wrap-around supports

### *What should we do?*

#### **Fit programs to student lives**

Community colleges should restructure programs or procedures to offer predictable paths to significant, progressive milestones. Today's students need shorter, faster paths to certificates and degrees of value.

### *How should we do it?*

**Reduce freedom to fail:** Simplify the registration process so students make the “big choice” of their goal, but the colleges make the “small choices” on program paths. Enroll students in cohesive programs when possible, rather than making them sign up every term for courses.

**Set the clock:** Staggered start dates and block scheduling can meet the needs of students balancing jobs and families. Offer this option to general education students, in addition to those in career and technical programs.

**Intrude with advisors:** Students must receive wrap-around support services that include, but are not limited to, intensive financial aid advisement, orientation, assessment of progress, tutoring, and career development services.

**Engage employers:** The Illinois Community College Board and individual colleges should create advisory boards and career programs with input and buy-in from local and regional employers to ensure students earn certificates and degrees that will lead to good-paying jobs.

## 2.3: Recognize diversity

### Overview

Completion rates are low across the board, but they are even lower for African American and Latino students. Closing this achievement gap is not only a civil rights issue, but an essential step toward economic viability. Illinois will be successful only if we recognize and promote the advancement of the various groups that compose our state. Many community colleges are now disaggregating data by ethnicity and supporting students with early intervention, advising and learning communities.

### On the Ground

**Illinois Central College** launched its African American Student Success Initiative in fall 2007 after administrators found that African American students' success lagged far behind other student populations in both remedial and degree-track courses. The multi-faceted initiative introduced more meaningful orientations, wrap-around support systems, African American mentors and data sharing with faculty. Using a new Minority Success Dashboard, the college tracked and flagged students for intervention services if their grade point averages fell below a C level. It also convened two retention and support groups, Harvesting Dreams and Harvesting Dreams Two, for African American men and women, respectively, so peers could discuss their challenges and develop strategies to enhance their personal, academic and career success. The initial results? African Americans increased their course success rate by more than 4 percent between 2007 and 2010, which outpaced the college average.

**Harry S. Truman College** in Chicago offers a Transitional Bilingual Learning Community (TBLC) program to Latino students who otherwise may not be college-bound. The two-semester, full-time program is open to Spanish-speaking students who lack financial resources, and scholarships are available to most students. Unlike a traditional GED or Adult Education program, the TBLC offers college credits for the majority of their courses, and it attempts to build a community atmosphere through curricular and co-curricular activities. The goal is for all students to enter into English-speaking courses their second year. TBLC students are four times more likely to continue their education, earn an associate degree and transfer to another higher education institution than other Latino students at Truman.

### *What should we do?*

Improving African American and Latino students' success isn't just about programs, it's about institutional culture that accepts responsibility and values effectiveness. Community colleges need to identify achievement gaps, use the data to develop strategies targeting minority students, and evaluate the success of those strategies on a continual basis.

### *How should we do it?*

**Evaluate the data:** The outcomes of targeted programs should be tracked. Important measures include retention, transfers, graduation, job placement, and progression through developmental and credit-bearing courses. The results should drive program changes.

**Be accountable:** Performance milestones should be reported by ethnicity and gender in consumer report cards and incorporated into performance funding metrics.

**Build community:** Learning communities or cohorts can motivate and stimulate the academic growth of minority students. Integrate supplemental instruction, tutoring, study groups and mentoring into the cohort program to drive completion.

## College completer

### **Efrain Martinez, 49, Elgin Community College**

As the economy contracted over the past few years, Efrain Martinez saw the size of his employer's business shrink around him. In 2010, he learned that his job of 22 years at Door Systems in Itasca also would be eliminated.

Efrain's minimal English skills and lack of income and college credential put him in a tough spot. But with the support of his wife and two children, he enrolled in the Integrated Language and Career Training Program at Elgin Community College in January 2011.

He became part of the program's first ESL cohort, or learning community, that progressed through the year-long welding certificate program together.

A program coordinator and an adult education faculty member attended all classes with the cohort and assisted students in overcoming personal barriers, developing resumes, connecting with the workforce and building work skills.

This provided contextualized review and reinforcement of welding content, vocabulary and comprehension.

Efrain thought of the teachers and students as a family, a successful one at that. Every member who enrolled with Efrain earned a welding certificate in December 2011.

"I wanted to increase my skills and have more opportunities. Thanks to the program, I have a new job," he said.



Efrain Martinez, third from left, with Lt. Governor Sheila Simon during her visit to Elgin Community College.

# Chapter 3

## Draw a better map

The Illinois education system can be illustrated as a leaky pipeline. Students drop out, rather than flow from high school to community college to university. We need to examine these transition points and create clear, affordable, and efficient pathways that link high school diplomas, career certificates, and college degrees. Our recommendations:

- 3.1 Smooth transfers
- 3.2 Audit associate degrees
- 3.3 Target financial aid



## 3.1: Smooth transfers

### Overview

Community college is the starting point for many Illinoisans seeking an accessible and affordable route to a bachelor's degree. But, overall, just three in 10 students who entered community college in fall 2006 transferred to a four-year institution by fall 2010. Full-time students were twice as likely to successfully make the transfer, according to the Illinois Community College Board. Illinois needs to build clear transfer pathways so students can stay on track and reduce the time it takes to earn a high-quality degree. The Illinois Articulation Initiative is the best place to start.

### On the Ground

The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) is a statewide transfer agreement among more than 100 colleges and universities in Illinois. All the participating schools agree to accept a transfer package of IAI-coded general education requirements, in lieu of their own general education requirements. IAI also is articulating one to four entry-level courses for several popular majors across the state, though some universities have opted out of particular majors. IAI works best for students who complete the general education package and know their intended transfer destination or course of study. Students who have not decided on a major or a transfer destination, or who transfer before finishing the complete package of 12 to 13 general education courses, may find that they need to repeat coursework to fill perceived gaps. The IAI is a collaborative effort between the Illinois Community College Board, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, and the Transfer Coordinators of Illinois Colleges and Universities. To date, more than 22,800 courses have been articulated for statewide transfer.

Beyond the IAI, Illinois community colleges create specific articulation agreements with private and public institutions in Illinois and across the nation to ensure students can transfer without losing credits. These formal articulation agreements between schools allow students to apply credits earned in a specific program at a community college toward advanced standing, equal transfer, or direct entry into a program at the partner four-year institution. Many schools design articulation agreements for non-traditional students who may not be able to attend classes on campus due to work, family, or other obligations. **Lake Land College** in rural Mattoon, for instance, holds articulation agreements with University of Illinois at Springfield and Franklin University that allow students to complete bachelor's degrees online. Notably, 97 percent of Lake Land students that transfer to four-year public universities in Illinois earn higher GPAs than native university students and other transfers. The average GPA of Lake Land transfer students in fall 2010 was 3.10, according to the college's office of institutional research.

### What should we do?

Administrators should smooth the transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions. Illinois transfer students should perform as well or better academically at four-year institutions than students who begin their careers at those universities. This requires high-quality college coursework and universal pathways to transfer.

#### How should we do it?

**Find the leaks:** Conduct a comprehensive transcript audit to identify where and why community college credits are not being accepted at four-year institutions.

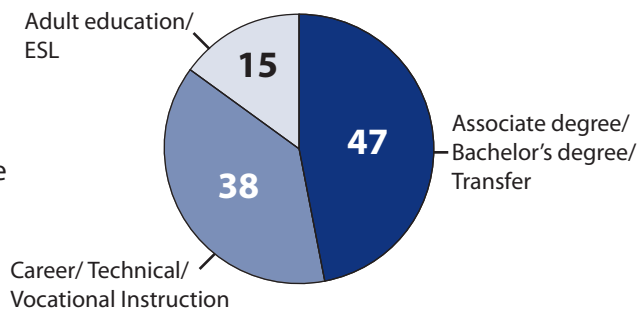
**Honor IAI:** Require four-year institutions to sign a binding agreement that they will honor all required Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) general education and major courses. If a four-year institution decides not to honor a course, it must inform the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) in writing prior to the semester that the course is not accepted.

**Stamp of approval:** Create a General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) “transfer credential” that signifies the completion of the general education courses and signifies sophomore status at an Illinois college or university. This creates a clear pathway and milestone for new and adult students.

**Control credit creep:** Cap associate degrees at 60 credit hours system-wide to help control credit creep and more efficiently move students toward bachelor’s degrees. The cap will denote the credit hours required for an associate degree; students may still take more credits by choice and/or if they change intended majors.

### What are credit-seeking students pursuing?

Illinois community colleges provide a high-quality education to a wide range of students. Some may enroll to brush up on a particular skill, while others seek an associate degree before transferring to a four-year institution. At right, 2010 student enrollment:



Source: Illinois Community College Board

## 3.2: Audit associate degrees

### Overview

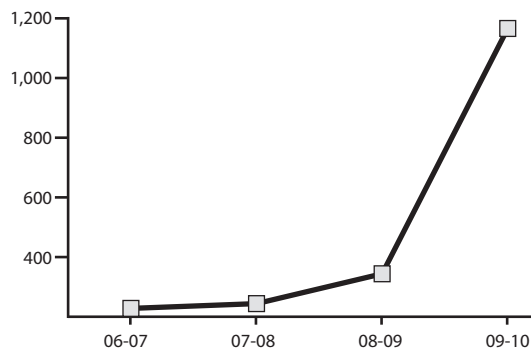
Education pays when it comes to earnings and employment. In 2010, working-age adults with an associate degree earned 7 percent more than peers with some college but no degree, and they were 31 percent more likely to have a job, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Illinois community colleges and universities should work together to make sure students receive the associate degrees they have rightfully earned. One model illustrates how this can be accomplished on a regional basis.

### On the Ground

The **South Metropolitan Higher Education Consortium (SMHEC)** brings together public, private and for-profit colleges and universities in Chicago's south suburbs to help students succeed in education and the workforce. The unique 12-school consortium piloted a "reverse transfer degree" program in 2011, aiming to help more students earn an associate degree. In May 2011, the four-year institutions in the consortium identified 60 students majoring in elementary education and business who previously attended a two-year institution in the consortium and earned 45 or more credits, but had not earned an associate degree prior to transferring. Forty of these students were interviewed to determine why they transferred prior to receiving a degree. Thirty-one of the students interviewed gave permission for the community colleges to audit their transcripts to determine if they had completed university courses that could transfer back and fulfill remaining requirements for associate degrees. The audit found that six actually received an associate degree after filing their application for university admissions (but had not updated their transcripts), while eight students were not eligible for an associate degree. The remaining 17

#### Success story

El Paso Community College (EPCC) and the University of Texas at El Paso used a federal grant to develop a fully automated reverse-transfer system. Thanks to new data-sharing agreements and technology, the university tracks down students who completed a minimum of 25 percent of their degree at EPCC prior to transferring, and alerts them if they fulfilled the balance of an associate degree at the university. Before the electronic system went live, the university manually identified hundreds of students who finished their associate degrees via university courses. In 2009-10, when the automated credit-transfer system came online, more than 1,000 students were awarded associate degrees at EPCC.



students were eligible and will receive associate degrees from their native community colleges. SMHEC intends to expand the reverse transfer system-wide, across all majors. Some community colleges have started running reports to identify existing students with 45 credit hours or more, to alert students they may be close to completing a degree.

## 3.2: Audit associate degrees

### What should we do?

#### Require reverse transfer audits

Institutions of higher education should share student information in a manner compliant with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) for the purpose of awarding more associate degrees, as this credential can make students more employable and increase their earning potential.

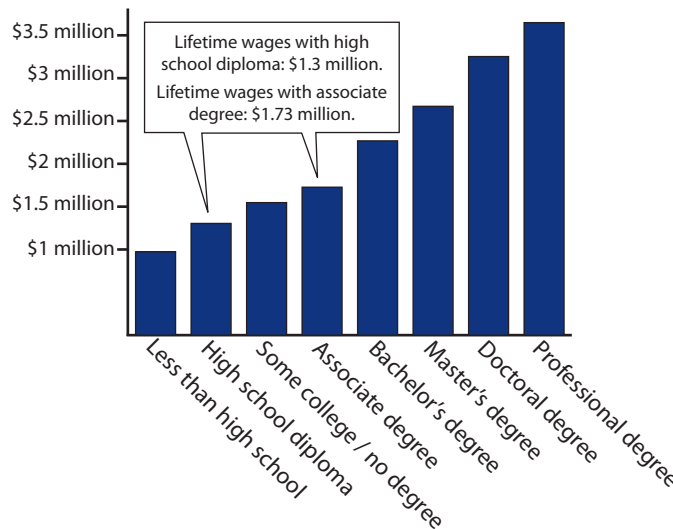
#### How should we do it?

**Work backwards:** Community colleges should work directly with their primary transfer recipients on reverse transfer degree audits, to assess the impact of reverse degree awards on their completion rates and student employment prospects. Four-year institutions could ease this information sharing by asking students to waive FERPA on their applications.

**Routine audits:** Community colleges should run degree audits each semester on students with 45 or more credits and alert them when they are approaching an associate degree.

### Lifetime earnings

The median lifetime earnings of full-time, full-year workers steadily increase as higher levels of education are attained. Workers with an associate degree earn \$430,000 more over their lifetime than those with just a high school diploma.



*Note: Figures are based on the 2009 dollar*  
*Source: 2000 U.S. Census Bureau; March 2008 and 2009 Current Population Surveys; 2007-2009 American Community Survey; Georgetown University*

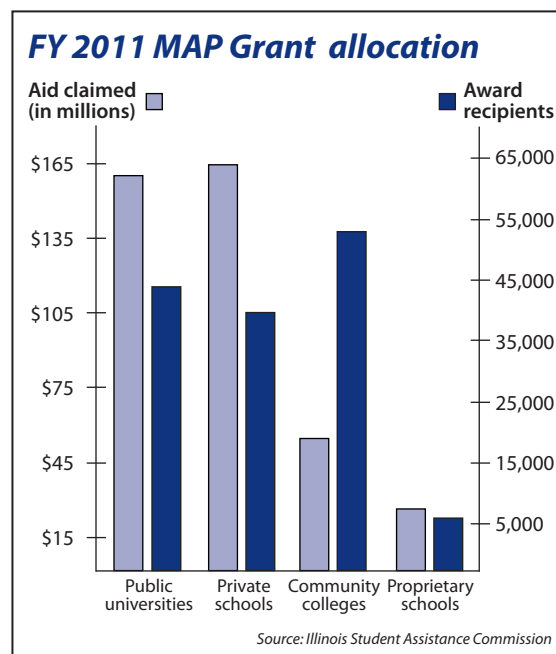
## 3.3: Target financial aid

### Overview

Illinois college seniors who graduated in 2010 carried an average of \$23,885 in student loan debt. At the same time, the national unemployment rate for recent college graduates climbed to 9.1 percent – the highest annual rate on record for college graduates aged 20 to 24. Community colleges are emerging as a quality and affordable option for many students looking to avoid this debt and earn career-enhancing credentials while on the job or on the way toward a bachelor’s degree. In order to ensure that students continue to move through our education pipeline, we must strengthen the Illinois Monetary Award Program (MAP). This state-funded grant program aims to make college affordable and accessible for Illinois residents attending Illinois institutions of higher education.

### On the Ground

A total of 29 community colleges and nine four-year universities are currently piloting MAP 2+2 programs that aim to help students stretch their state grant dollars and incur less debt. For example, students accepted at Northern Illinois University who live in the **Illinois Valley Community College** district can opt into a 2+2 program. Participating students must be accepted at NIU, but agree to attend IVCC their freshman and sophomore years. The students are awarded MAP funding based on NIU’s tuition and fees and guaranteed a spot at NIU their junior and senior years. Because the IVCC tuition is generally less than the MAP Grant award, the students “bank” the difference and apply it to their NIU bills. According to the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, students in the pilot program will end up paying between \$6,000 and \$8,000 out of pocket for a bachelor’s degree, while students at NIU all four years would pay about \$20,000 out of pocket, not including room and board. The 2011-12 school year is the first year of the program and student progress is being monitored to see if the pilot is successful and should be expanded.



### What should we do?

#### Expand grants for community college students

In 2002, the maximum MAP award covered the full amount of tuition and fees at public community colleges and four-year universities. By FY12, coverage fell to 56 percent at community colleges and 39 percent at public universities. A growing number of students are being denied awards as need outpaces available funding. Illinois must prioritize MAP funding for all students and recognize the importance of community colleges in our education pipeline.

#### How should we do it?

**Prioritize MAP funding:** One of the best ways to ensure success in the future is by investing in education now. State leaders should make MAP Grant funding a statewide priority to illustrate the importance of higher education in growing the economy.

**Queue completers:** MAP grants are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. ISAC accepts applications up to the point it expects to reach its appropriation, which means the application cutoff date depends on the volume of applications it receives. In order to extend the application period, and make better estimates of when funding is truly expended, only students who submit completed applications should be allowed in the queue.

**Weight independence:** MAP awards depend on several factors, including cost of attendance, expected family contribution, and credit hours. The formula could differentiate between students who are dependent or independent, making more money available to students who live on their own. This would effectively translate to additional assistance for nontraditional and community college students. We must ensure that independent students who return to school, particularly after a job loss, are not locked out of the system.

#### Possible MAP scenario

In FY11, all MAP Grant funds were awarded by April 19. The chart at the right identifies one of many possible scenarios should the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) adjust its award formula. If \$150 million (of \$403.3 million) in MAP Grant funding were set aside for independent students, application processing for FY 11 independent students could have been extended through June 2.

	Actual FY11 recipients	Proposed recipients	Student difference
Public universities	44,743	45,817	1,074
Private schools	40,692	40,787	95
Community colleges	53,411	61,224	7,813
Proprietary schools	8,364	9,229	865

Source: Illinois Student Assistance Commission

## College completer

### Blake Leitch, 29, Lake Land College

Blake Leitch is an Army veteran, Purple Heart recipient and Lake Land College graduate.

Blake enlisted in the United States Army on September 11, 2001 and was medically retired five years later after sustaining injuries from a roadside bomb in Iraq. Looking to improve his career prospects as a civilian, he returned to his hometown of Mattoon in 2009 and enrolled full time at Lake Land College, where he was elected student trustee and represented all community college student trustees on the Illinois Community College Executive Board.

Blake used his position to advocate for veteran students like himself who return to college with medical conditions such as post traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury. In just six months, Blake created and raised money for a student-veteran scholarship and lobbied for designated veterans centers on all college campuses across the state. His message made it all the way to Washington, where he served as the sole student representative at a 2011 U.S. Department of Education Summit on Community Colleges.

Now a transfer student at Eastern Illinois University pursuing a bachelor's degree in communications, Blake continues his advocacy work through Student Veterans of America and has recently started his own business, IHeartVets.com, to support educational opportunities for veterans and their families. He is married with an 18-month-old son.

"Veterans will never go back to having the same experiences as a civilian," Blake said. "Having a veteran center on every community college and university campus is important to provide a sense of community to student veterans."



# Chapter 4

## **Reward success**

Community colleges are open to everyone, but that does not mean they cannot be held accountable for their performance. Like K-12 systems, colleges should agree on progress and success measurements, and share these results with the public. Our recommendations:

- 4.1 Measure milestones
- 4.2 Increase transparency
- 4.3 Tie funds to progress



## 4.1: Measure milestones

### Overview

Community colleges serve all kinds of people seeking all kinds of outcomes, including high school students pursuing dual credit, adults seeking to retool or improve their skills, and university students looking to save money and time on their way to earning a bachelor's degree. Yet community colleges are often judged by a single measure: The percent of students who earn an associate degree. Under this measurement, many students who achieve their personal goals are considered "non-completers." Illinois needs a single, uniform metric system to accurately gauge effectiveness and pursue our "60 by 2025" goal. While the Illinois Community College Board is working with Complete College America to compute college completion data for our 48 schools, several of the local institutions are also working with national organizations to track completion.

### On the Ground

Five of Illinois' community colleges are working with Achieving the Dream, a national nonprofit dedicated to helping more community college students succeed, particularly students of color and low-income students. Institutions working with Achieving the Dream focus on improving – and tracking – a student's progress through milestones within three years. These indicators include the rate at which students successfully complete remedial instruction and advance to credit-bearing courses; enroll in and successfully complete the courses they take with a grade of C or better; persist from one term to the next; and earn a certificate or associate degree. The five participating colleges are: **Danville Area Community College**, **Elgin Community College**, **Harper College** in Palatine, **Morton College** in Cicero and **Triton College** in River Grove. Achieving the Dream is currently working with 130 institutions in 24 states and the District of Columbia, serving more than 1.6 million students. The goal is to reach at least 160 institutions by 2012–2013.

#### It's a Fact

19.4%

Just 19.4% of all first-time, full-time Illinois community college enrollees graduate with an associate degree within three years of enrolling.

Source: Illinois Community College Board, 2010

Three Illinois community colleges piloted the Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA), a national framework developed by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) with input from colleges across the country. It follows students for six years after enrollment, tracking college readiness, progress and completion, and job preparation and employment. This complements data collected by Complete College America, which calculates certificate and degree completion on a shorter time frame. The AACC wants states to adopt its metrics, enabling colleges to benchmark their progress against peer institutions nationwide and produce public dashboards of their results. **College of Lake County** in Grayslake, **Parkland College** in Champaign and **Waubensee Community College** in Sugar Grove were pilot sites.

### *What should we do?*

#### **Adopt a uniform metric system**

Illinois needs a single, uniform metric system to accurately gauge schools' effectiveness, compare their performance against peer institutions and pursue our "60 by 2025" goal. The state and schools should track and report milestones that reflect student and school success. To establish continuity and promote public understanding, the milestones should align with the state's emerging performance funding model and the Complete College America metrics. For instance, students, parents and taxpayers should know about:

- ◆ Degree and certificate completion: Students completing a degree or certificate within 150 percent of the time (i.e. three years for a two-year degree).
- ◆ Degree and certificate completion of "at risk" students: "At risk" students can be defined several ways, including those receiving a Pell grant, or students who were enrolled in remedial education.
- ◆ Transfer to a two-year or four-year institution: Full-time and part-time students who make lateral transfers or transfer to a four-year institution prior to completing a degree or certificate.
- ◆ Remedial and adult education advancement: Remedial students who advance to college-level courses and adult education students who advance to remedial or college-level courses.

### *How should we do it?*

**Adopt the metrics:** The Illinois Community College Board is currently working with the Board of Higher Education to design metrics for performance funding. Once adopted, these should be the standard measures for the 48 schools and be the starting point for an annual community college consumer report.

## 4.2: Increase transparency

### Overview

The Illinois Community College Board tabulates and publishes extensive information collected by its schools regarding enrollment, completion, faculty and students each year. But often the numbers that generate the most attention focus on enrollment, not completion. Colleges should release an annual consumer report with statewide and disaggregated performance data on various subgroups, similar to those published by K-12 institutions, that share both enrollment and completion data.

### On the Ground

**College of Lake County** in Grayslake is shifting its focus, and data-tracking efforts, to “momentum points,” or various milestones along a student’s path to degree and certificate completion. Faculty and administrators have computer access to real-time data on individual student progress and college-wide metrics to better monitor progress and intervene early should a problem arise. This internal transparency and data-sharing promotes interventions that can help students complete their goals faster, while spending fewer financial aid dollars. Some monitored momentum points at CLC include fall-to-fall and fall-to-spring persistence, developmental math course retention, student pass rates and enrollment, transfer and completion rates. Between fall 2008 and fall 2010, retention at CLC increased from 46.4 percent to 49.6 percent. Student pass rates also increased during that same time, from 69.1 percent to 76.5 percent. This self-evaluation enables the institution to know its deficient areas, how it stacks up to other similarly structured institutions across the state and country, and to work toward improvement. CLC is posting select data online for the public, as well.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the state’s P-20 Council have developed, and the legislature approved, a new, user-friendly school report card for grade and high school districts that will be rolled out in 2013. Focus groups have concluded that the new direction for the report card is easier to read and understand, and would be a resource that participants are likely to use. Among the features on its two pages, the school report card will list school and student characteristics, curriculum information, and school performance and achievement data. The report card also offers a section for the principal to briefly describe special programming, school awards, programs of study, and extracurricular activities. Extensive information also will be housed online. Illinois institutions of higher education do not currently produce annual consumer reports.

### What should we do?

#### Publish annual community college consumer reports

The amount of data collected and published annually by the Illinois Community College Board is extensive, yet much of the information needs to be “right-sized” so that stakeholders and taxpayers can understand school performance. A statewide and institution-based consumer report would improve the understanding of college performance.

#### How should we do it?

**Consumer reports:** The P-20 Council’s Data and Assessments Committee has approved a new K-12 School Report Card. The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity is supporting the school report card project by developing metrics for career readiness and success that leverage workforce longitudinal data, including tracking transitions to employment. Community college report cards or consumer reports – based on Illinois’ performance funding model and Complete College America metrics – are a logical Phase 2 of this project.

**Get informed:** Illinois leaders set a goal: We want 60 percent of our working-age population holding a degree or certificate by 2025. Community colleges should inform themselves, staff and the public how many additional completers are needed at each institution and make an annual update on their progress toward that goal.

#### Consumer report

A community college consumer report could be modeled on the K-12 school report card and should contain demographic, retention and completion information, and provide an area for commentary from administrators.

ABC Community College  
Hometown, IL

President Jane Smith

##### 2011 school information:

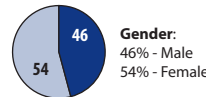
Enrollment: 6,200  
Students in remedial coursework: 14.2%  
Completion rate: 21%  
Transfer rate in two years: 31%  
Semester-to-semester retention: 74%  
Students entering directly from high school: 25%

##### Curriculum information:

Associate degree programs offered: 39  
Certificate programs offered: 12  
Credit and non-credit courses offered: 237  
Dual credit courses with high schools: 14

##### President’s remarks:

At ABC Community College, we strive to provide the best educational opportunities for our district residents. We have recently expanded our dual credit offerings so all high school juniors and seniors have the opportunity to take college-credit level coursework. Our five technical programs are paired with local businesses to provide skills-training and internship placement for displaced workers.



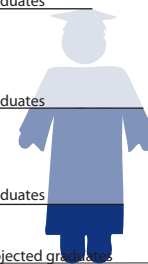
ABC must graduate 58 additional enrollees every year to help Illinois reach its “60 by 2025” completion goal. We are making progress.

2025: 3,720 graduates

2020: 3,430 graduates

2015: 3,140 graduates

2012: 2,966 projected graduates



## 4.3: Tie funds to progress

### Overview

State funding for community colleges currently is based on mid-term credit hours – an enrollment, not a completion figure. The addition of a performance funding component will play an important role in achieving the state’s “60 by 2025” college completion goal. The Illinois Board of Higher Education is working on a fair and equitable system to allocate a portion of state resources to higher education institutions based on student success. These metrics will influence funding beginning with the fiscal year 2013 budget. Illinois is among 20 states that have performance funding models underway or in development.

### In Other States

**Washington** introduced the Student Achievement Initiative in 2006-07 and is an example of a bonus-only performance funding system for just community colleges. Its approach measures several momentum points, including first-year success, math proficiency, and completion. Colleges used the first year of the initiative to establish baseline data. The next two years, the state provided seed money to colleges to prepare for the fall 2009 launch of the performance funding model. A total of \$3.6 million in performance bonuses were awarded in 2009-10 and 2010-11, constituting less than one percent of the system’s annual budgets and inspiring rather small-scale changes. **Ohio** has borrowed heavily from the Washington framework, but has set 20 percent as its budget target for a fully implemented performance funding system.

In **Indiana**, all public higher education institutions are subject to a performance funding formula that pulls money out of each institution’s base operating budget and reallocates it based on factors such as course and degree completion. In 2013-14, the performance funding percentage of the overall higher education budget will increase from 5 to 6 percent (roughly \$73 million based on current funding levels), moving to 7 percent in 2014-15. The net effect on schools? Operating

#### **Recommended Principles:**

- ◆ Performance funding should recognize that two-year public community colleges are open admissions and serve at-risk students.
- ◆ Community colleges should be judged against themselves when measuring year-to-year performance.
- ◆ Incentive funds should be awarded on a competitive basis.
- ◆ The performance funding model should be adjusted annually. In the short term, colleges must have the opportunity to collect baseline data and implement policy changes.

appropriations vary widely, some schools losing all the money that’s pulled out, while others gain it.

### *Measures proposed by Illinois Community College Board*

- ◆ Degree and Certificate Completion: Students completing a degree or certificate.
- ◆ Degree and Certificate Completion of “at risk” students: The community college system, for this metric, is defining “at risk” students as those who are academically or financially at risk of not achieving their educational goals. This will measure student completion for students receiving a Pell grant and/or students who were enrolled in remedial education.
- ◆ Transfer to a four year institution: Full-time and part-time students who transfer to another institution of higher education within three years for full-time students and five years for part-time students.
- ◆ Remedial and Adult Education Advancement: Remedial students who advance to college-level courses and adult education students who advance to remedial or college-level courses.
- ◆ Momentum Points: First-time/part-time students completing 12 credit hours, first-time/full-time students completing 24 hours in the first year, and adult education students moving a “grade” level based on pre- and post-test performance. For purposes of this metric, completion of remedial courses is included and adult education grade levels are based on National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS) standards.
- ◆ Transfer to a community college: Full-time and part-time students who transfer to a community college within 18 months of leaving the initial community college. Lateral transfer is recognized as an important performance measure because lateral transfer students remain in higher education and reasons for lateral transfer are often prompted by changes in student’s home residence, employment, or pursuit of a program not offered by the home institution.

### *What should we do?*

#### **Launch First Phase of Performance Funding in FY13**

Adopt the metrics: The Illinois Community College Board proposed six metrics to the state’s Performance Funding Steering Committee in November 2011. The Board of Higher Education should adopt the metrics, in accordance with Public Act 97-0320.

### *How should we do it?*

**Review and award progress:** The Illinois Board of Higher Education should conduct annual reviews of the performance funding model to ensure schools are being measured and progressing toward appropriate targets. Meaningful amounts of state funding should be tied to year-over-year progress.

## Degree seeker

### **Pam Eaves, 60, Carl Sandburg College**

When Pam Eaves graduated high school and began working at Protexall, President Nixon had just taken office. Thirty-nine years later, the Galesburg textile company where she worked her entire professional life closed down.

But Pam wasn't ready to retire. "I feel like I'm 30 and I plan to work for at least another 10 years," she said. "I just need to have somewhere to belong."

After pounding the pavement to find a new job, Pam found she needed an advanced credential to be considered an eligible job candidate. Her local unemployment office turned her to Carl Sandburg College where she enrolled in January 2010 and is currently working toward an administrative office professional associate degree. Pam has earned honors each semester and anticipates graduating in May 2012.

The biggest honor, though, was when Pam was elected as the campus student trustee to represent a study body that spans recent high school graduates to returning adults. She has found the experience to be enlightening and is encouraged by the school community every day.

"I'll miss being in school and seeing my new friends, but I'm ready to get back to work," Pam said.



## Conclusion

Community colleges are no longer the best kept secret in Illinois education. They are front and center in our battle to reduce unemployment and create a robust economy for generations to come. Our request of them is deceptively simple: Help more of your students finish what they start. This means providing more students the credentials and skills they need to fill the jobs of today and tomorrow.

To achieve this goal, community colleges need partners who acknowledge and foster their missions. Community colleges are the go-to educational option for displaced workers, first-generation college students and at-risk populations; in fact, they turn no one away. The colleges need to understand that open-door admissions policies are not an excuse for revolving doors. They will be a part of the educational accountability movement as long as we cast them in a leading role in our economic recovery.

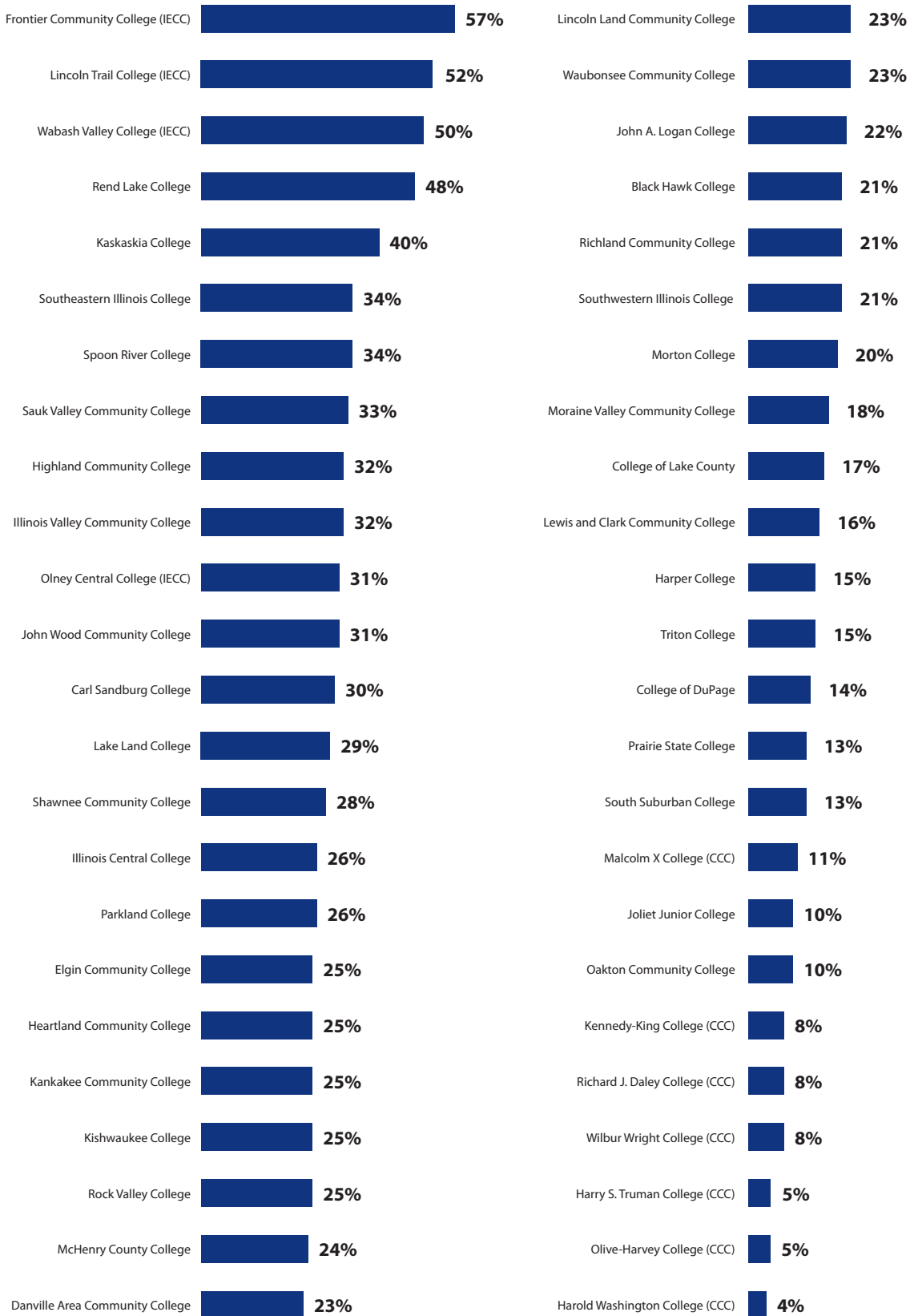
Moving forward, community colleges are in an excellent position to anchor a coordinated, efficient, and integrated system of public education in Illinois. These developing hubs of regional P-20 service coordination connect high schools, four-year schools, and employers. Our reforms should enhance these connections to improve learning and efficient use of tax dollars.

If every ending is a new beginning, then every college completion is a step toward a better life and stronger economy. Let's stay focused on the finish.



# Completion rates by campus

## Degree and certificate completion in three years or less



Note: IECC = Illinois Eastern Community Colleges; CCC = City Colleges of Chicago

Data: Reported by institutions to NCES Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Graduation rates are for first-time, full-time students completing certificate or degree within 150 percent of normal program time. Most associate degrees should be earned in two years, making 150% time equal to three years. Most certificates should be earned in one year, making 150% time equal to one and a half years.

Source: Complete College America; U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS 2009-10 Graduation Rates (most recent data available)

### ***Completion Highlights at Illinois' 48 Community Colleges***

#### **Black Hawk College, Moline**

The Black Hawk College Early Alert Program (EAP) launched in the fall of 2008 with the goal of helping vulnerable students stay in school by connecting them to targeted academic or support services. If a student is absent from or doing poorly in his or her classes, faculty members can go to the computerized class roster and notify the Early Alert staff by accessing a drop-down menu that contains categories of typical problems students face. After a student has been assigned a category, the student is referred to the department that can best serve the student's particular need, such as financial aid or academic advising. In three of the six semesters for which Black Hawk has collected data, students who participated in EAP had a higher retention rate than the students in the general student population.

#### **City Colleges of Chicago, Chicago**

"Reinvention" is the City College of Chicago's ambitious effort to remake the institution to maximize student success and increase its single-digit completion rate. The system's seven colleges are working to ensure students leave college-ready, career-ready and/or prepared to pursue their goals. The sweeping "reinvention" reforms will touch every aspect of the system, from student-centered registration to guided course selection, embedded remediation and clearer pathways to transfer to four-year institutions.

Beginning in January 2012, City Colleges will work to build its dual credit/enrollment program by allowing more high school students to attend courses

on its campus for free. Up to 100 seats at each of seven colleges will be open to qualified high school juniors and seniors.

Its colleges are:

**Richard J. Daley College** offers a healthcare bridge program that is designed to prepare unemployed and underemployed adults for a well-paying job in the healthcare industry. It offers a clear pathway to credentials, credit-bearing courses and careers. Of the 73 students who composed the incoming 2008 cohort, 100 percent completed the medical bridge program, 63 percent completed a basic nursing assistant certificate, 45 percent completed a patient care technician certificate and 30 percent went on to enroll in a college-credit bearing course by fall 2010.

**Harold Washington College** and Roosevelt University (RU) are partnering to significantly and sustainably increase the number of students that will complete STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) degrees. The institutions set two goals for August 2013: increase the number of Harold Washington students completing STEM associate degrees or transferring to STEM baccalaureate programs by 10 percent, and increase the number of RU bachelor's degrees awards in STEM majors by 20 percent. This will translate to 33 additional Harold Washington students earning associate degrees.

In spring 2011, the Washburne Culinary Institute at **Kennedy-King College** implemented a four-credit, Illinois Community College Board-approved course called "Nutrition for Chefs" that is team-taught by a dietician and three chefs. During the first two semesters, 80 students enrolled in the course, and the completion rate was an estimated 95 percent. The Washburne

Culinary Institute is seeking accreditation from the American Culinary Federation. If accredited, the students graduating with an AAS degree will obtain formal recognition as a certified culinarian or certified pastry culinarian. Washburne's AAS graduates are guaranteed placement in the culinary management bachelor's program at the Illinois Institute of Art or at Robert Morris.

**Malcolm X College** and **Olive-Harvey College** are the first two sites for a new "Colleges to Careers" program that links the schools to corporations and organizations in growing fields. Malcolm X College's proximity to the Illinois Medical District lends itself well to healthcare partnerships with: Rush University Medical Center, John H. Stroger Hospital of Cook County, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Advocate Healthcare, Baxter, Walgreens, Allscripts, and Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council. Olive-Harvey College will become a transportation and logistics industry hub, focused on enhancing existing programs and developing new offerings based on partnerships with: UPS, AAR, Chicago Transit Authority, Canadian National Railway, and BNSF Railway.

**Harry S. Truman College** offers a Transitional Bilingual Learning Community (TBLC) program to Latino students who are seldom recruited for college. The two-semester, full-time program is open to Spanish-speaking students who lack financial resources, and scholarships are available to students regardless of their immigration status. Unlike a traditional GED or Adult Education program, the TBLC offers college credits for the majority of its courses, and it attempts to build a community atmosphere through curricular and co-curricular activities. The goal is for all students to enter into

English-speaking courses their second year. TBLC students are four times more likely to continue their education, earn an associate degree and transfer to another higher education institution than other Latino students at Truman.

**Wilbur Wright College** offers Math On Demand (MOD), a computer-based developmental math program that focuses on individualized math learning and teaching. MOD offers an advising component and contextualized math instruction based on students' academic goals and career interests. Instructors are on hand to answer questions as they arise. Students who demonstrate competency on the end-of-semester COMPASS test may surpass one or two developmental math courses for direct placement into credit-bearing math. The course success rate (C or better) increased from 65.5 percent in 2010 to 81.6 percent in 2011.

### **College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn**

College of DuPage (COD) launched a "3+1" partnership with nearby Lewis University in 2011 to make it faster and easier for students to earn a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. Students enroll in COD's associate degree program and upon completion of the associate coursework, take advanced classes at the Glen Ellyn campus that will fulfill requirements for Lewis University's bachelor's degree in criminal/social justice. This program offers a significant cost-savings opportunity to students as they pay COD rates for their first three years in the program, and then a fraction of Lewis' rates for the final year.

### **Danville Area Community College, Danville**

Danville Area Community College offers three dual credit opportunities to district students through their Project Lead the Way, Middle College, and College Express initiatives. Project Lead the Way offers 14 credit hours to high school students interested in the pre-engineering field while Middle College is designed for students with barriers to high school completion to encourage high school completion and college success. College Express is the largest dual credit program and is offered to high school juniors and seniors who want to get a head start on medical or technical careers. Through College Express, high school students can enroll at DACC and earn up to 16 college credit hours while simultaneously working on their high school diplomas. High school districts cover the bill for tuition, books, and in some cases, bus transportation to DACC, saving students an average of \$2,000. DACC launched College Express with 100 high school students in 2005, and it enrolled 500 students in 2011. Early data on the program show positive results. In its first year, 49 percent of College Express graduates continued their education at DACC after high school, compared to 35 percent of other area graduates. Within five years, the rate was up to 56 percent compared to 37 percent overall. A higher proportion of College Express students also complete a certificate or degree; 44 percent of high school students in the program in 2005-06 have received a credential, compared to an average completion rate of 35 percent for first-time, full-time students.

### **Elgin Community College, Elgin**

Elgin Community College (ECC) established the Alliance for College

Readiness in 2006 to bring together educators from ECC and the area's four public high school districts to align curriculum from high school to college. The Alliance created a Summer Bridge program to increase student placement into college-level coursework in writing or mathematics. Previously open to recent high school graduates who tested "almost college ready" in writing or math, the Summer Bridge was recently opened to returning adult students and students needing mid-level developmental coursework. In summer 2011, a total of 36 students enrolled in the courses, which met for three weeks and were team-taught by high school and ECC faculty with the assistance of a reading specialist. Seventy percent of the students increased their placement at least one level and fifteen of the students tested "completely college ready" after the bridge work, potentially cutting a semester on their way to completion – a savings of \$3,000 per student. Since the Alliance's inception, 111 students have participated in the Summer Bridge program, with 73 percent eliminating the need for some or all developmental coursework. The curriculum and instructional alignment partnership is also seeing results: between 2006 and 2011, the proportion of recent high school graduates who enrolled ready for all college-level work increased to 30 percent, from 24 percent. Their math readiness jumped to 37 percent, from 29 percent, in the same time period.

### **Harper College, Palatine**

Harper College has teamed up with its three feeder high school districts to form the Northwest Educational Council for Student Success. Since its inception, the council has collaborated on college readiness testing and course offerings

to reduce the need for remediation. In 2010-11, more than 5,700 high school juniors in Harper's district opted to take the COMPASS math placement test to gauge their college readiness, up 50 percent from the prior year. When these juniors enrolled for senior year classes, their advisors strongly encouraged a fourth year of math by explaining the cost of developmental coursework that does not apply toward a degree. The college also stresses that most students who skip a year of math often see their math placement scores decrease, placing them at risk for additional developmental college courses. The message is getting through: more than 90 percent of all seniors at Harper's feeder schools enrolled in math in 2011-12.

### **Heartland Community College, Normal**

In 2009, Heartland implemented the Read Right methodology to help students develop their reading and comprehension skills. All students that test at the developmental reading level receive Read Right as part of their developmental reading instruction, though instructors may also refer students on an as-needed basis. Students have reported improved reading skills, comprehension and confidence, and inventory and standardized test results have confirmed these outcomes at statistically significant levels. In addition, institutional research has shown that the Read Right program can be credited with an 18 percent improvement in the success rate of Heartland students in Psychology 101; similarly, there was a 14 percent greater success rate for students in Sociology 101. Improvements and success in these courses are more authentic, administrators say, because they are more reading-intensive by nature than other subjects.

### **Highland Community College, Freeport**

Administrators at Highland Community College piloted a five-week Fast Forward summer bridge math program in 2011. Participating students brushed up on math skills with the goal of retaking a placement test and moving into a higher level of math. In its first year as a pilot program, 21 students participated. Fifteen of the students increased their placement score, and two students moved up two course levels upon completing the program. Traditional age, first-time, full-time developmental math students were targeted, but the school intends to offer the program to all students testing into developmental math.

### **Illinois Central College, East Peoria**

Illinois Central College in Peoria has dual credit agreements with 25 high schools in its district, but its partnership with Midland High School is unique. Commencing with the 2008-09 school year, up to 10 qualifying Midland seniors take a full course load at ICC instead of at their high school campus. This Fast Start program allows the students to get a real taste of college, while simultaneously earning credit toward a high school diploma and college degree. Midland students in the Fast Start program save on tuition costs, as the high school covers the reduced college tuition, and can potentially graduate college early and get into the job market more quickly. In the first three years of the program, 27 students participated and all but one went on to a four-year university.

### **Illinois Eastern Community Colleges**

The IECC system is comprised of four separate colleges: Frontier Community College, Fairfield; Lincoln Trail College, Robinson; Olney Central College, Olney; and Wabash Valley College, Mt. Carmel.

#### **Frontier Community College**

offers an accelerated transfer degree program, Frontier's Accelerated Student Transfer (FAST), where a student who is college ready, committed to learning, self-disciplined, and computer literate can complete an Associate in Science and Arts degree in nine months and then transfer to any public university in Illinois. The FAST program assists students with achieving their transfer goals by expanding options through a series of accelerated courses that are strategically scheduled at various points throughout the semester. In addition, the FAST program incorporates intersession classes to further accelerate the program completion timeline. The program is one reason 46 percent of Frontier students completed their degrees or certificates in 150 percent of time to completion in 2009, the top rate among the state's community colleges that year.

**Lincoln Trail and Olney Central College** were ranked in the top 120 community colleges nationwide in April 2011 by the Aspen Institute, an international nonprofit, based on their above average graduation and transfer rates. Aspen also looked at the number of low-income and minority students who completed their programs of study and if those rates improved over time. Both colleges attribute these high completion rates, in part, to the effective use of ACT, ASSET, COMPASS testing and a math placement exam. The tests have helped ensure first-time students are placed in the proper classes and have the basic

skills necessary to successfully complete their programs.

At **Wabash Valley College**, each Career and Technical Education program includes an internship component to give students hands-on experience and a "foot in the door" at an area employer. The programs have advisory councils composed of 10 individuals representing area businesses that correspond to the program's discipline. The councils meet on an annual basis to assess curriculum changes and to discuss the job outlook within the discipline.

#### **Illinois Valley Community College, Oglesby**

A MAP Grant 2+2 pilot program currently being offered at Illinois Valley and Northern Illinois University aims to help students stretch state MAP Grant dollars farther and earn a degree while incurring less debt. Participating students are accepted at NIU and then agree to attend IVCC their freshman and sophomore years as part of the 2+2 pilot program. These students are awarded MAP funding based on NIU's tuition and fees and are guaranteed a spot at NIU their junior and senior years. Because the IVCC tuition is generally less than the MAP Grant award, the students "bank" the difference and apply it to their NIU bills. According to the Illinois Student Assistance Commission and the college, a student in the pilot program will end up paying between \$6,000 and \$8,000 out of pocket for a bachelor's degree, while a student at NIU all four years would pay about \$20,000 out of pocket. These estimates do not account for room and board charges.

#### **Joliet Junior College, Joliet**

At Joliet Junior College (JJC), the math faculty has coordinated with feeder high school districts to offer dual

credit opportunities to give students a head start on college-level work. Faculty from JJC and the high schools also meet to discuss placement, align the course curricula and ensure that expectations for college-level rigor are being met. Additionally, high school and JJC mathematics teachers are collaborating on a mathematics problem repository where secondary and college teachers can contribute examples of high-level math questions to challenge their students. Currently, 81 percent of students taking placement tests at JJC place into developmental math; this collaboration aims to reduce such remediation needs.

### **Kankakee Community College, Kankakee**

Approximately 80 percent of incoming high school graduates at Kankakee Community College consistently test into developmental math, and many students needed more than one course to get up to college-level work. To reduce these dramatic remedial needs, KCC began a pilot program with select feeder high schools in 2009-10 to better align curricula across all math courses, diagnose trouble spots junior year through the COMPASS test, and influence students to take math their senior year. Mimicking a KCC teaching technique, three local high schools introduced an online math program in 2010-11 that let students move quickly through familiar skills and spend more time on specific deficiencies. Every student in the pilot improved a grade level, and 14 percent of those juniors scored college-ready on the year-end COMPASS assessment (compared to just 8 percent of incoming graduates at KCC that same year). These results prompted two additional schools to adopt the online program in 2011-

12. And beginning in 2012-13, Tri-Point High School will require all students to take four years of math to receive a high school diploma, up from the state mandate of three years.

### **Kaskaskia College, Centralia**

Kaskaskia College connects students with needed resources – even before students enter the classroom. Through New Student Orientation, students and parents are invited to learn about and access the college’s career fairs, job placement opportunities and skills workshops. First-time students who attend orientation earn an average GPA nearly a half point higher than non-attendees. The Success Center, another resource at Kaskaskia, uses Early Alert tools to track student progress and trigger extra assistance when needed to ensure students are able to stick to their completion timeline.

### **Kishwaukee College, Malta**

Kishwaukee College administrators highlighted a collaborative relationship with feeder school districts that aims to better align curricula and foster student success. The “articulation summits” with regional K-12 districts have resulted in a math curriculum that is aligned from grade school to high school, with an emphasis on college preparedness. Kishwaukee College plans to offer COMPASS college placement testing at the sophomore and junior high school levels so students may assess their academic needs and opt to take additional math courses before college enrollment, reducing their need for developmental classes.

### **College of Lake County, Grayslake**

College of Lake County in Grayslake is shifting its focus, and data-tracking

efforts, to “momentum points,” or various milestones along a student’s path to degree and certificate completion. Faculty and administrators have computer access to real-time data on individual student progress and college-wide metrics to better monitor progress and intervene earlier should a problem arise. This internal transparency and data-sharing promotes interventions that can help students complete their goals faster, while spending fewer financial aid dollars. Some monitored momentum points at CLC include fall-to-fall and fall-to-spring persistence, developmental math course retention, student pass rates and enrollment, transfer and completion rates. Between fall 2008 and fall 2010, retention at CLC increased from 46.4 percent to 49.6 percent. Student pass rates also increased during that same time, from 69.1 percent to 76.5 percent. This self-evaluation enables the institution to know its deficient areas, how it stacks up to other similarly structured institutions across the state and country, and to work toward improvement. CLC is posting select data online for the public.

### **Lake Land College, Mattoon**

Thanks to recent grants from the U.S. Department of Labor, Lake Land is providing non-traditional students hands-on experience in retrofitting buildings for solar and wind power and smart grid technologies. A significant number of students participating in the Community-Based Job Training Grant program are unemployed or dislocated workers. The school anticipates training 700 participants, about 90 percent of which will enter the workforce in green technology jobs upon completion.

### **Lewis and Clark Community College, Godfrey**

Lewis and Clark Community College’s nursing program is one of the largest in the state with an enrollment of approximately 285 students. The graduation and job placement rates are both above 90 percent and the success rate on the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) is above the national average. The program is housed in a 70,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility completed in 2007 that features a variety of specialized labs, including a Simulation Lab, Intensive Care Unit Lab, and Health Assessment Lab. The program has additionally been recognized for its innovation through the Lewis and Clark Family Health Clinic, a nurse-managed center. The clinic is the only one in the nation operated by a community college and assists in meeting the community’s health care needs. The clinic serves as an educational training site for nursing students.

### **Lincoln Land Community College, Springfield**

Lincoln Land Community College is exploring a “First Year Experience” program to help new students increase their likelihood of success. This program features an early alert system so assistance can be provided when a new student experiences academic or other issues. It is one of six initiatives that stem from LLCC’s participation in Foundations of Excellence, a nationally recognized self-improvement program.

### **John A. Logan College, Carterville**

John A. Logan College is one of seven schools that are part of the College and Career Readiness Act (CCRA). The



law established pilot projects meant to diagnose college readiness, reduce remediation, align high school and college curricula, provide resources to high school seniors, and measure the effectiveness of the intervention strategies. Logan created the Alliance for College Readiness to facilitate regular meetings between Logan faculty and high school teachers to align curricula; brought together high school teachers and Logan faculty to team teach reading, writing, and math; established an eight-week summer program in math and English; and created an online tutoring program accessible to students at any time. The final step for Logan is to develop an appropriate evaluation process to measure the success of these interventions.

### **McHenry County College, Crystal Lake**

In the past five years, more than half of the students at McHenry County College enrolled in developmental math. To reduce this need for remedial classes, MCC is developing a summer bridge program where high school and college faculty teach side-by-side to better align their coursework and ease the transition to college.

### **Moraine Valley Community College, Palos Hills**

About 350 students at Moraine Valley Community College signed an Agree to Degree pledge during the college's Fall Fest in September 2011. The Agree to Degree campaign aims to motivate students to attain a certificate or degree from the two-year institution before transferring to a college or university or entering the job market. Moraine Valley was successful in getting 97 students to make the more challenging pledge of doing "whatever it takes" to graduate.

This includes proactively talking to teachers, regularly meeting with counselors, and routinely sitting down for discussions with their academic advisor. Agree to Degree is one component of the Democracy Commitment Project, a national initiative that involves engaging community college students in democratic principles, social justice and service learning in and outside the classroom.

### **Morton College, Cicero**

Morton College is one of five of Illinois' community colleges working with Achieving the Dream, a national nonprofit dedicated to helping more community college students succeed, particularly students of color and low-income students. Morton is working to improve – and track – these students' progress through intermediate milestones, including the rate at which students successfully complete remedial instruction and advance to credit-bearing courses; persist from one term to the next; and earn a certificate or associate degree. To increase persistence among GED students, the board waives two semesters of tuition and fees for students who complete the Morton College GED program, pass the GED exam and attend the GED graduation ceremony. Recipients who maintain a 2.5 GPA the first two semesters may apply for an additional two semesters, potentially earning an associate degree at little to no cost.

### **Oakton Community College, Des Plaines**

Oakton Community College is working with students who need developmental math through a new program, ROADMath, funded through the National Center for Academic Transformation's "Changing the Equation" initiative.

Students spend at least one hour each week in math lab where they use interactive computer software to practice skills, and can receive instant, one-on-one help from faculty and volunteer tutors who staff the lab. According to NCAT research, institutions that implement Changing the Equation can expect to see an increase of students successfully completing a pre-college math course by more than 50 percent.

### **Parkland College, Champaign**

Parkland's newest completion initiative, First Year Experience (FYE), is an "intrusive" and centralized advising program which interacts with first-time, degree-seeking students from the time they submit an application throughout their first year at Parkland. Previously, student resources were scattered across campus. Orientation, which was offered only online, was not required. Now as part of FYE, students are required to attend an on-campus orientation prior to the start of school and are encouraged to access websites and how-to videos for additional information about financial aid, academic advising and placement tests. The students continue to receive developmental guidance, including mandatory pre-registration meetings with an academic advisor, until they earn 30 credit hours. This instant and persistent connection is designed to ensure that students are taking credit-bearing courses applicable to their field of study and persist to the next year of college work. Administrators are also developing student cohorts called First Year Academies as a way to connect peers in similar fields and encourage each other to accomplish academic milestones. One such example, the Health Professions Academy, groups developmental students seeking health-

field degrees and teaches developmental coursework as it relates to the industry. Students who successfully complete the program are guaranteed placement in various health profession programs.

### **Prairie State College, Chicago Heights**

Prairie State College is working with the Global Skills for College Completion project, financed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to redesign its developmental English courses. The English department chair is a part of an online community of 25 top developmental education instructors from community colleges across the U.S. who are coaching each other on teaching practices. In fall 2011, Prairie State full- and part-time faculty worked together to make the entry-level developmental writing course more challenging, by emphasizing short essay writing and embedding remedial paragraphing skills into the college-worthy assignments. Beginning fall 2012, the college intends to offer a new upper-level developmental writing course that is linked to a first-year, college-level composition course. This accelerated learning model will bring remedial students into a credit-bearing course and supplement their learning with a three-hour developmental course with the same instructor. The ultimate goal is to increase pass rates at upper level developmental English to 80 percent. The statewide remediation completion rate is roughly 66 percent.

### **Rend Lake College, Ina**

Approximately half of Rend Lake students test into developmental math or reading classes. To cut down on remediation time, the school has implemented a College Prep Cohort program to provide essential teaching and support services to its students. Tutors are available in the

classroom to address student questions in real-time, while additional tutoring services are available for free at the Learning Enhancement Center. Between the program's inception in FY04 and FY07, completion rates of these students have increased from 22 percent to 33 percent.

### **Richland Community College, Decatur**

The Heartland Technical Academy has moved to the Richland Community College campus. The Academy provides career exploration and training to nearly 600 high school juniors and seniors in 20 program areas. Students at the Academy have access to a technology-enriched dual-credit curriculum, taught by a highly competent staff. The Heartland Technical Academy and Richland staffs have worked together to ensure that the Academy's curriculum aligns with Richland's curriculum. In doing so, students will be able to experience a seamless education highway transfer upon graduation of high school.

### **Rock Valley College, Rockford**

The Rock Valley faculty has transformed developmental courses to reduce the time it takes to transition to college-level coursework and obtain a degree or certificate. Through a restructured delivery of developmental math courses, faculty at Rock Valley now offer eight-week math modules, in addition to traditional 16-week classes. The restructuring eliminates overlap in beginning and intermediate algebra, and is more efficient for students. Should a student pass one eight-week module, but fail another, he or she would only need to retake one eight-week component, not the full 16-week course. Since the course redesign, the student pass rate in developmental math is over

70 percent, up from about 50 percent under the former structure. Additionally, there has been a 50 percent decrease in the withdrawal rate of students since the course redesign. These data show more students successfully completing the modules and being prepared for college-level, credit-bearing work while effectively managing their financial resources, administrators said.

### **Carl Sandburg College, Galesburg**

At Carl Sandburg, placement testing has shown that nine out of 10 students are not prepared for college-level math, six out of 10 are not ready for college-level writing, and five out of 10 are not prepared for college-level reading. Through an Illinois Community College Board grant, Sandburg has developed a curriculum to embed remedial coursework within the health sciences field. The Bridge Program for Developmental Coursework aims to advance student cohorts through preparatory-level, college-level and program-specific courses together, improving retention and completion rates through contextualized learning and career exploration.

### **Sauk Valley Community College, Dixon**

Sauk Valley Community College is working to reinforce math concepts in the school's nursing program. Following their first year in the ADN program, students are required to take a comprehensive nursing math skills test. Should students not meet expectations, those falling short are required to take a summer course focused on nursing math skills. The math coursework is embedded and repeated in this credit-bearing summer class so students may better grasp materials relevant to their career studies, administrators said. Since

the inception of this summer program in fiscal year 2008, 17 students have tested into the summer remediation bridge, and 15 students, or 88 percent, have successfully gone on to complete their AAS degree or are enrolled in their second year of study.

### **Shawnee Community College, Ullin**

Shawnee has partnered with the Corporation for Supportive Housing to develop a career ladder strategy in property management and a sequenced certification program. This career ladder pathway will prepare individuals first for employment as a property management clerk, and later, as a leasing specialist.

### **South Suburban College, South Holland**

South Suburban is part of a 12-school consortium that piloted a “reverse transfer degree” program in 2011, aiming to help more students earn an associate degree. In 2011, the four-year institutions in the consortium cumulatively audited transcripts for 31 transfer students to determine if they had completed university courses that could transfer back and fulfill remaining requirements for associate degrees. The cumulative audit found 17 students were eligible. They will now receive associate degrees from their native community colleges. The consortium intends to expand the reverse transfer system-wide, across all majors.

### **Southeastern Illinois College, Harrisburg**

Southeastern Illinois College’s (SIC) diesel technology program is unique in that it is the only community college program certified by the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation for Medium Heavy Duty Trucks in the state

of Illinois. The program has partnered with employers like Fabick-Caterpillar to offer internships and provide a pathway to meaningful employment. SIC’s diesel technology program offers specializations in both medium heavy duty trucks and heavy equipment and offers the opportunity to earn a one-year certificate or two-year associate in applied science degree. Students who enroll in the degree program will earn a certificate after completion of the first year. From summer semester of 2009 to spring semester of 2010, the completion rate for students in the diesel technology degree and certificate programs was 33 percent, with more than 80 percent of those graduates finding employment in the field.

### **Southwestern Illinois College, Belleville**

Graduates of the 10-week training program at the Southwestern Illinois Police Academy (SWIPA) meet the entry level requirements of any local or county law enforcement agency in Illinois. SWIPA also has an Intern Police Academy allowing students a chance to receive state certified police academy training. Every intern who has attended the academy since the intern program began in May 2009 has passed the state certification exam and 90 percent have been hired as part-time or full-time peace officers. This program helps small police departments that cannot afford the cost or time to send new hires to academy and makes graduates more marketable.

### **Spoon River College, Canton**

Spoon River is one of three Illinois community colleges (and 20 nationwide) selected to participate in the Plus 50 Completion Strategy, a grant project of the American Association of Community

Colleges. Spoon River will target services at baby boomers, ages 50 and up, who may have started college, but never finished. The goal is to help them complete certificates and degrees that lead to employment.

### **Triton College, River Grove**

Triton College is among five Illinois community colleges working with Achieving the Dream, a national nonprofit organization whose focus is to reduce academic achievement gaps among minority and low-income students who are attending community colleges. Triton is implementing a college readiness initiative, requiring students to take placement tests to determine enrollment in developmental or credit math, reading and English courses. The students' success rates will be tracked, and the data used to reform existing programs or develop new ones that increase student retention, degree completion and transfers to four-year universities. Officials predict that, within four to eight years, a substantially higher percentage of students, especially low-income students of color, will experience success, with no reduction in enrollment for these populations.

### **Waubonsee Community College, Sugar Grove**

Waubonsee is one of 40 community colleges nationwide (and one of three in Illinois) that piloted the Voluntary Framework of Accountability for the American Association of Community Colleges. The pilot developed measures that for the first time will allow colleges to compare their data with peers and more accurately gauge employment information. Waubonsee's data collection included the promotion of proficiency credit; identification

of current and former students that require only a course or two for degree/certificate completion; the search for specific certification that enhance the employability of baccalaureate and master's degree holders; and the consideration of college systems and processes that inadvertently obstruct students' ability to pursue degrees/certificates to completion.

### **John Wood Community College, Quincy**

John Wood Community College (JWCC) offers stackable certificates in the landscape and turfgrass program and construction management program. Students get to select from three certificates within each program, and coursework taken while earning the initial certificate reduces the amount of hours needed to complete a second and third certificate. Upon completion of the third certificate, students will have met requirements for an associate in applied science degree in their selected program. JWCC offers certificates in garden center/retail sales, landscape management and turf management in the landscape and turfgrass management AAS program, and certificates in rough frame carpentry, finished carpentry and construction management in the construction management AAS program.

## References

- Achieve. February 2011. "Closing the Expectations Gap 2011: Sixth Annual 50-State Progress Report on the Alignment of High School Policies with the Demands of College and Careers." <<http://www.achieve.org/files/AchieveClosingtheExpectationsGap2011.pdf>>.
- Achieve. May 2008. "The Building Blocks of Success: Higher-Level Math for All Students." <<http://www.achieve.org/files/BuildingBlocksofSuccess.pdf>>.
- ACT. 2011. "Illinois; The Condition of College and Career Readiness, 2011." <<http://www.act.org/newsroom/data/2011/states/pdf/Illinois.pdf>>.
- ACT. "High School-to-College Success Report, Illinois 2006-2008 Freshmen." <[http://iccbdsrv.iccb.org/hscollegesuccess/docs/P\\_20062008\\_14\\_9996\\_S\\_S\\_COLL-CSR\\_Two\\_Year\\_Institution\\_Composite.pdf](http://iccbdsrv.iccb.org/hscollegesuccess/docs/P_20062008_14_9996_S_S_COLL-CSR_Two_Year_Institution_Composite.pdf)>.
- American Association of Community Colleges. November 2011. "Voluntary Framework of Accountability Metrics Manual Version 1.0." <[http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/vfa/Documents/VFA\\_Metrics\\_Manual\\_v1\\_0.pdf](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/vfa/Documents/VFA_Metrics_Manual_v1_0.pdf)>.
- Bragg, Debra D., Lorenzo D. Baber, Daniel Cullen, George Reese, and Matt Linick. August 2011. "Evaluation of Illinois College and Career Readiness (CCR) Act pilot projects year four (2010-11): Summary report." <[http://ocrl.illinois.edu/files/Projects/ccr/Report/CCR\\_Year\\_Four\\_Report.pdf](http://ocrl.illinois.edu/files/Projects/ccr/Report/CCR_Year_Four_Report.pdf)>.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. May 2011. "Education Pays..." <[http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep\\_chart\\_001.htm](http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm)>.
- Carnevale, Anthony P., Stephen J. Rose and Ban Cheah. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. August 5, 2011. "The College Payoff: Education, Occupations, Lifetime Earnings." <<http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/collegepayoff-complete.pdf>>.
- Cheeseman Day, Jennifer and Eric C. Newburger. U.S. Census Bureau. July 2002. "The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings." <<http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-210.pdf>>.
- Complete College America. September 2011. "Illinois 2011; Time is the Enemy." <<http://www.completecollege.org/docs/Illinois.pdf>>.
- Complete College America. September 2011. "Time is the Enemy." <[http://www.completecollege.org/docs/Time\\_Is\\_the\\_Enemy.pdf](http://www.completecollege.org/docs/Time_Is_the_Enemy.pdf)>.
- Dougherty, Kevin J., Rebecca S. Natow, Rachel J. Hare, Blanca E. Vega. October 2010. "The Political Origins of State-Level Performance Funding for Higher Education: The Cases of Florida, Illinois, Missouri, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Washington." <<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=819>>.
- Ekal, Donna and Paula M. Krebs. June 19, 2011. "Reverse-Transfer Programs Reward Students and Colleges Alike." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <<http://chronicle.com/article/Reverse-Transfer-Programs/127942/>>.
- Greene, Thomas G., C. Nathan Marti, and Kay McClenney. "The Effort–Outcome Gap: Differences for African American and Hispanic Community College Students in Student Engagement and Academic Achievement." *The Journal of Higher Education*. <<http://www.ccsse.org/center/resources/docs/research/79.5.greene.pdf>>.
- Illinois Board of Higher Education. July 2009. "The Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success." <[http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/masterPlanning/materials/070109\\_PublicAgenda.pdf](http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/masterPlanning/materials/070109_PublicAgenda.pdf)>.
- Illinois Board of Higher Education and Illinois Community College Board. July 2006. "Policies and Procedures Manual; Illinois Articulation Initiative." <<http://www.itransfer.org/IAI/Fact/Forms/IAILibrary/IAI/policiesandprocedures.pdf>>.

## References

Illinois Community College Board. January 2011. "Annual Student Enrollments and Completions in the Illinois Community College System Fiscal Year 2010." <<http://www.iccb.org/pdf/reports/10enrollmentrpt.pdf>>.

Illinois Community College Board. January 2006. "Promise for Illinois Revisited; A Strategic Plan for the Illinois Community College Board." <<http://www.iccb.org/pdf/PromiseRevisited2006.pdf>>.

Illinois General Assembly Higher Education Finance Study Commission. December 2010. "The Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success." <<http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/SJR88/Materials/FinalReport.pdf>>.

Illinois General Assembly Joint Task Force on Community Colleges. December 2006. "Final Report." <<http://www.iccb.org/pdf/reports/General%20Assembly%20Joint%20Task%20Force%20Report.pdf>>.

Illinois P-20 Council. January 2011. "Education for Our Future: First Report and Recommendations of the Illinois P-20 Council to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the People of Illinois." <[http://www.isbe.state.il.us/reports/P-20\\_jan\\_2011.pdf](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/reports/P-20_jan_2011.pdf)>.

Illinois Student Assistance Commission. November 2007. "Changes in Affordability of a College Education for Dependent Students in Illinois, FY 1997 – FY 2007." <<http://www.collegeillinois.org/dotAsset/db188702-0053-4a16-bb69-89b7c55ce156.pdf>>.

Jones, Stan. January 2011. "Freedom to Fail? The Board's Role in Reducing College Dropout Rates." <<http://www.completecollege.org/docs/Freedom%20to%20Fail%20w%20copyright.pdf>>.

Lichtenberger, Eric. Preliminary research presented September 2011. "The association between dual credit and dual enrollment and an accelerated time to bachelor's degree completion among the Illinois High School Class of 2003." Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville.

Lumina Foundation for Education. September 2010. "Illinois; A Stronger Nation through Higher Education." <[http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/A\\_stronger\\_nation.pdf](http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/A_stronger_nation.pdf)>.

National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. June 2011. "Affordability and Transfer: Critical to Increasing Baccalaureate Degree Completion." <[http://www.highereducation.org/reports/pa\\_at/index.shtml](http://www.highereducation.org/reports/pa_at/index.shtml)>.

Perna, Laura, Joni Finney and Patrick Callan. November 2011. "A Story of Decline: Performance and Policy in Illinois Higher Education." <[http://www.gse.upenn.edu/pdf/irhe/Performance\\_Policy\\_Illinois\\_Higher\\_Education.pdf](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/pdf/irhe/Performance_Policy_Illinois_Higher_Education.pdf)>.

Rosenbaum, James E., Julie Redline, and Jennifer L. Stephan. Summer 2007. "Community College: The Unfinished Revolution." <[www.dropbox.com/u/4723110/Rosenbaum\\_UnfinishedRevolution.pdf](http://www.dropbox.com/u/4723110/Rosenbaum_UnfinishedRevolution.pdf)>.

Rosenbaum, James E., and Kelly Iwanaga Becker. Fall 2011. "The Early College Challenge: Navigating Disadvantaged Students' Transition to College." <<http://www.aft.org/pdfs/americaneducator/fall2011/EarlyCollege.pdf>>.

Shulock, Nancy and Davis Jenkins. March 2011. "Performance Incentives to Improve Community College Completion: Learning from Washington State's Student Achievement Initiative." <<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=880>>.

Stillman, Lauren and Rolf K. Blank. 2009. "Key State Education Policies on PK-12 Education: 2008." <[http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2008/Key\\_State\\_Education\\_Policies\\_2008.pdf](http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2008/Key_State_Education_Policies_2008.pdf)>.

The Project on Student Debt. November 2011. "Student Debt and the Class of 2010." <<http://projecton-studentdebt.org/files/pub/classof2010.pdf>>.