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**7TH ANNUAL COLLEGE CHANGES EVERYTHING[®] CONFERENCE WILL ADDRESS EFFORTS TO
EQUIP ALL STUDENTS FOR POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS**

July 20th Conference Examines Equity in College and Career Readiness Initiatives

CHICAGO – Now that Illinois has a budget and higher education is funded, it is more important than ever that Illinois renews its collective efforts to improve postsecondary access and success for the state’s new, continuing, and future college students. On July 20th, Illinois educators, government, business and non-profit leaders, other professionals and students will come together for the seventh annual [College Changes Everything[®] \(CCE\) Conference](#), the state’s premier higher education conference focused on improving efforts to make college possible for all Illinois students.

The state’s two-year budget delay created significant obstacles for institutions, families and students—with many students scrambling to find alternative ways to pay for college, leaving the state, or simply dropping out. Yet research shows that a high quality postsecondary credential or degree impacts not only future income, but health and happiness quotients. Moreover, with 8 of 10 Illinois employers requiring such credentials, an educated populace is a key economic driver for the state.

“Our students are our future, and getting them on—or back on—track to attend and graduate must be a priority for Illinois,” said Eric Zarnikow, executive director of the [Illinois Student Assistance Commission](#) (ISAC), the agency that sponsors the CCE Conference in collaboration with other partners. ISAC also helped develop the [College Changes Everything[®]](#) college access movement, designed in part to help advance the state’s goal of increasing the proportion of adults in Illinois with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60% by the year 2025.

To achieve this goal, Illinois must improve postsecondary success for a variety of student populations, and this year’s CCE Conference asks participants to consider the varying needs of these populations as well as their barriers to success. Workshops and discussions will focus on equitable practices in college access and career readiness, ways to reduce or eliminate opportunity gaps for underrepresented students, and how we can engage all students in ways that are inclusive, culturally responsive, and socially just.

Dr. Kyle A. Reyes, Special Assistant to the President for Inclusion at Utah Valley University (UVU) and Assistant Professor of Education at UVU will deliver the keynote. Reyes, who teaches courses in Multicultural Education, ESL Methods and Family & Community Partnerships, focuses his research on conditions for underrepresented student success throughout P-20 educational institutions. Dr. Reyes

will also host a breakout session on using family and community partnerships to collaborate for equity, and will moderate a student perspectives panel during lunch.

The 2017 CCE Conference will be held at the Tinley Park Convention Center in Tinley Park, Illinois on Thursday, July 20 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The registration fee of \$40 includes a light breakfast, lunch, and all conference materials. For more information or to register online, visit [2017 CCE Conference](#).

The CCE Conference is a collaborative effort of volunteers including its sponsor, ISAC, as well as the Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board, Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Illinois College Access Network, Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities, Advance Illinois, Center for the Study of Education Policy at Illinois State University, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University, Generations Serving Generations, ACT Now, and Women Employed.

Join us on social media with the 2017 CCE Conference hashtag: #CCE4me

About College Changes Everything

College Changes Everything™ is a college access movement that recognizes that college can be a life changing experience not only for students, but also for families and communities. In Illinois and across the nation, those who obtain education beyond high school not only see a significant impact on their potential career prospects and future salary, but also change levels of poverty, life expectancy, crime and obesity rates in their communities. Join the conversation and help make college relevant and possible for everyone by sharing your story about how college changed, is changing or can change everything for you. Find out more and share your story at www.collegechangeseverything.org.

About ISAC

The mission of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) is to help make college accessible and affordable for students throughout Illinois. ISAC provides comprehensive, objective, and timely information on education and financial aid for students and their families—giving them access to the tools they need to make the educational choices that are right for them. Then, through the state scholarship and grant programs ISAC administers, ISAC can help students make those choices a reality. www.isac.org

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