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

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Illinois’ higher education and workforce systems are failing Black students. Between 2015 and 2018, postsecondary enrollment for Black Illinoisans dropped 29.2%, indicating a crisis for Illinois and its Black students. Additionally, Black students in Illinois who do enroll in college are significantly less likely than their white peers to be retained by institutions and to complete with a degree or credential.1 To address racial equity gaps that exist from high school graduation through entry in the workforce, over 40 leaders from across the state representing secondary and postsecondary education, elected officials, government agencies, business, community-based organizations, and philanthropy were convened by Chicago State University President Zakhary Scott to form the Equity Working Group for Black Student Access and Success in Illinois Higher Education. With the mission to identify actions needed to close equity gaps to enable Black students, families, and communities to thrive and survive in Illinois, the Equity Working Group (EWG) was created by two key questions: How can we address systemic racism that shows up in our institutions? How can we orient our educational policies to be equitable. How can we address systemic racism that shows up in our institutions? How can we orient our educational practices and policies to be equitable. How can we address systemic racism that shows up in our institutions? How can we orient our educational practices and policies to be equitable. How can we address systemic racism that shows up in our institutions? How can we orient our educational practices and policies to be equitable. How can we address systemic racism that shows up in our institutions? How can we orient our educational practices and policies to be equitable. How can we address systemic racism that shows up in our institutions? How can we orient our educational practices and policies to be equitable. How can we address systemic racism that shows up in our institutions? How can we orient our educational practices and policies to be equitable. How can we address systemic racism that shows up in our institutions? How can we orient our educational practices and policies to be equitable. How can we address systemic racism that shows up in our institutions? How can we orient our educational practices and policies to be equitable. 

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

ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

MAKE HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE FOR ALL ILLINOIS BLACK STUDENTS

All Black students in Illinois should be able to access and afford a high-quality postsecondary education. College access and affordability present a significant barrier to Black students’ enrollment and success in Illinois higher education. To make higher education accessible and affordable for all Illinois Black students, Illinois must:

DIRECTIVES

• Remove the ability to pay as a barrier for Black students through barrier-reduction grants that provide small amounts of funding for higher education, which might otherwise prevent students from persisting in college.

• Increase need-based funding and programs to help low-income Black students overcome cost barriers in their postsecondary education.

• Make college more affordable for Black students through strengthening early connections to college-affirming experiences, including increased high school counseling and culturally-responsive financial literacy and financial planning support for Black students and their families.

Indicators of Success

With greater targeted financial aid and barrier-reduction grants, the average net price of low-income Black families is at an affordable level, as defined by the Institute for Higher Education Policy or a similar metric adopted by Illinois. MAP is fully funded so that all eligible students receive a MAP grant equal to the cost of tuition.

• Racial equity gaps in student loan default rates and amount of debt held after graduation are eliminated.

INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS & SUPPORT

FOSTER BLACK STUDENTS’ ACADEMIC SUCCESS BY PROVIDING ROBUST INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTS

All Black students should be provided the supports and structures they need to thrive in Illinois higher education. Illinois’ higher education systems need a plan to play an active role in supporting Black students to succeed in college by providing robust supports for academic, basic needs, and individual well-being success at each step in the student journey. Higher education institutions must foster Black students’ academic success by doing the following:

DIRECTIVES

• Improve Black students’ access to existing dual enrollment and dual credit programs, and expand dual enrollment programming offerings to high schools serving predominantly Black communities.

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

• Revise advising criteria to eliminate structurally racist practices and increase targeted outreach to Black high school students.

Indicators of Success

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

ENROLLMENT & PROGRAM CHOICE

SUPPORT BLACK STUDENTS TO ENROLL & PROGRESS

All Black students in Illinois should have access to the full range of programs of study offered, and programs of study and support to help them enroll in higher education and progress towards completion of their degree. Black students make up a declining share of undergraduate enrollment in Illinois, and many of those who do enroll lack the guidance they need to progress towards completion. In order to support Black students to enroll and persist, Illinois institutions must:

DIRECTIVES

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

• Close equity gaps in access to advisors, and provide adequate academic advising to students that is asset-based, proactive, and sustained to strengthen Black students’ sense of purpose and self-efficacy.

Indicators of Success

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

REFERENCES

https://www.ibhe.org/equity.html

1 Illinois’ higher education and workforce systems are failing Black students. Between 2015 and 2018, postsecondary enrollment for Black Illinoisans dropped 29.2%, indicating a crisis for Illinois and its Black students. Additionally, Black students in Illinois who do enroll in college are significantly less likely than their white peers to be retained by institutions and to complete with a degree or credential.1 To address racial equity gaps that exist from high school graduation through entry in the workforce, over 40 leaders from across the state representing secondary and postsecondary education, elected officials, government agencies, business, community-based organizations, and philanthropy were convened by Chicago State University President Zakhary Scott to form the Equity Working Group for Black Student Access and Success in Illinois Higher Education. With the mission to identify actions needed to close equity gaps to enable Black students, families, and communities to thrive and survive in Illinois, the Equity Working Group (EWG) was created by two key questions: How can we address systemic racism that shows up in our institutions? How can we orient our educational practices and policies to be equitable.

EQUITY WORKING GROUP FOR BLACK STUDENT ACCESS & SUCCESS

Student Journey

• Asset Based, Culturally Responsive

• Bridge

• Dual Enrollment

• Integrated Advising

• Student Well-Being

Affordability

• Financial Aid

• MAP Funding

• MAP Eligibility

• Net Price

Ensure Black students and their families have the information and assistance they need to access financial aid and to make informed decisions about the cost of higher education.

• Job Pathway

• Career Readiness

• Bridge to Success

Indicators of Success

Racial equity gaps in undergraduate achievement and success for Black students and programs of study offered, and increasing financial resources for institutions serving large numbers of Black students, institutional leadership must prioritize making college and university campuses safe and supportive environments to which Black students’ sense of belonging is prioritized and in which Black students see themselves represented in the faculty and staff that serve them. From this grounding, solutions aimed at dismantling unfair barriers to Black student success must be paved at each step of the educational journey.

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REFERENCES

https://www.ibhe.org/equity.html
All Black students in Illinois should be able to get a job in their field of choice after graduation, earn the same wages as non-Black peers, and have the same opportunities for advancement in their careers as their non-Black peers at the same level of education.

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

**DIRECTIVES**
- Provide holistic student supports in levels of structural racism on their experiences
- Provide equitable access to dual-enrollment programs of study aligned to careers, holistic advising, and a culturally responsive and safe campus climate.
- Implement Effective Data Use: Collect, share, and utilize robust data on the persistence and completion of Black students.
- Connect College to Careers: Invest in large-scale efforts to connect Black students with career opportunities and create match programs to expand hiring opportunities for Black students in well-paying fields.

**HOLISTIC WELL-BEING**

All Black students in Illinois should have access to quality, antiracist mental health services for Black students on campus that attend to the lived experiences of Black students and their families.

- Examine campus policies and hiring practices to determine equitable access to dual-enrollment programs.
- Examine campus climate and cultural programming to support academic and non-academic needs of Black students.
- Implement robust funding of student aid for Black students and families across the state.
- Provide more culturally competent financial literacy and financial planning education for Black students and families.

**STUDENT WELL-BEING**

Prioritize Black Students’ Holistic Well-Being

- Develop stronger relationships with Black students and families.
- Foster connections throughout their time in college.
- Provide anti-racist training and professional development to hiring practices and other internal company practices.
- Implement evidence-based practices that lead to equitable dual-credit/dual-enrollment programs.
- Collect, partner, and regularly publish finely disaggregated data on progress toward equity goals.

**NOTE:** This icon highlights recommendations that are based directly on student input, gathered from the Equity Working Group’s student panel and focus groups.
Students are the experts, and should be deeply involved in sustained efforts to evaluate and redesign the systems of student support.

Data should be collected, analyzed, and shared over time to ensure that equity goals are being met, both within institutions and at the state level.

It is not enough for a program to exist; investments must be made to increase access for Black students and programs should be evaluated on their contributions to closing racial equity gaps.

Addressing the challenges facing Illinois’ Black students requires thinking differently about funding priorities. There is a need to both innovate within current budget constraints and also...
The financial burden of college presents a challenge to many Black students, not only as they consider enrolling in higher education, but also as they seek to persist and ultimately earn their degrees. For many students, one financial challenge—a car accident, medical emergency, lost job, or even the price of textbooks—can make the difference between earning their degree or not. Many Black students in Illinois are particularly vulnerable to this type of financial barrier—61% of Black families live in liquid asset poverty, meaning that their savings cannot cover three months of basic expenses, compared to only 28% of White families.1 Barriers to graduation are often the result of amounts of money intended to cover costs that present a barrier to students’ path to a degree—can make the difference between dropping out and remaining in school for many students. According to a 2014 community needs survey by All Chicago, a non-profit that provides emergency funds to students in Chicago, 25% of students surveyed who dropped out for financial reasons needed as little as $1,000 to remain in school.2 Additionally, returning students often face challenges re-enrolling if prior account balances remain. Policies for returning students should be examined to support debt forgiveness when it poses a barrier for students to return to complete their education.

Higher education institutions, non-profit organizations, and other partners can help to close these gaps in Illinois by providing small-dollar barrier-reduction funds. These grants can come in a variety of forms: retention grants, which target students who are near graduating their degree but are kept from graduating by small cost barriers; emergency funds, which target students at any point in their time at college who are experiencing a financial emergency or need additional money to pay rent or buy textbooks; and debt forgiveness for returning students who may have small, lingering account balances that prevent them from re-enrolling.3 All types of grants are crucial for many Black students experiencing financial hardship.

CURRENT STATE

PROVING PROMISING PRACTICES

- All Chicago Emergency Fund: All Chicago Emergency Fund is a model for the ways in which CBHs, postsecondary institutions, and funders can work together. In 2020, All Chicago had 13 partner organizations that work closely with students who help connect emergency or completion grants, either by their advisors or by institutional data on tuition payments, financial aid, etc. - The COAID (Community College Afghan Immigrant Development) program was implemented for 79% of grant recipients identified as Black/African American.4
- Georgia State University Panther Micro-Grant: Georgia State uses robust data on students’ academic progress, coursework, and outstanding tuition balances to identify the students who could be retained with small-dollar grants. Students are offered micro grants on the condition that they agree to certain activities, such as meeting with a financial counselor to create a plan for how they will finance the rest of their education. In 2018, more than 2,600 students were retained through the Panther Retention Grant program.5
- City Colleges of Chicago’s Chancellor’s Retention Fund: Launched in Spring 2020, the fund removed outstanding debt from the Fall 2019 semester so that low-income students could remain enrolled in the spring.6

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

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

This can be done by:
- Leveraging cross-sector partnerships and institutional funds for barrier-reduction grants to Black students in need.
- For programs that are created, tracking data on how many students are reached by race, amount, retention, and graduation rates.
- Following best practices to make barrier-reduction grants as inclusive and effective as possible for Illinois’ Black students.

SHORT TERM

Aid providers including 2- and 4-year institutions, philanthropy, and government agencies.
- Make institutional emergency aid more accessible for Black students and develop retention/completion grant programs to provide small barrier-reduction grants for Black students who are at risk of dropping out due to financial need.
- Set aside funds for grants of up to $100-$1,000 per student to help students complete their degree or persist in the face of financial emergency.
- Students should be automatically identified for retention or completion grants, either by their advisors or by institutional data on tuition payments, financial aid, etc.
- The COAID (Community College Afghan Immigrant Development) program was implemented for 79% of grant recipients identified as Black/African American.
- Do not place GPA/academic eligibility criteria on retention/completion grants.
- Follow best practices for grant distribution and follow-up with students when designing the grant system.
- Implement debt forgiveness programs for Black students who would like to return, but have small amounts of outstanding debt.
- Administrative holds for small dollar amounts that prevent students from registering for classes play a large role in equity gaps in persistence and completion for Black students. Defer Forgiveness programs should be implemented and made accessible.
- Use broad eligibility criteria to be able to serve as many low-income returning students as possible.
- Publicize the program widely in Black communities to encourage low-income Black students to return to higher education.
- Release administrative holds and allow students to register in a timely manner.

GRANTS PROVIDERS, INCLUDING 2- AND 4-YEAR INSTITUTIONS, PHILOSOPHY, AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.
- Collect institutional data on community need and grant distribution.

ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

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

The COVID emergency grant process can serve as a model here—IBHE distributed grants to universities, and universities commercialized those funds with students. Collect robust data on program effectiveness of grants and publish data through impact reports and accessible data dashboards on a regular basis.

2- and 4-year institutions and Philosophy
- Institutions should develop a high-quality system of early alerts to connect students in need with barrier-reduction grant money.
- Institutional data on community need and grant distribution can be leveraged to develop early warning indicators that help universities plan interventions to keep students on track to graduation.
- Follow the example of institutions such as Georgia State University, who use predictive analytics to schedule advisor interventions, communicate with students about financial supports, etc., when students are in danger of not being able to continue completing their degrees.
- Philosophy can support such efforts by providing the funding necessary to build out these systems.

REFERENCES

Access & Affordability

The only way to ensure effectiveness of the MAP program is to fund the program to match the level of student need. In fiscal year 2020, MAP received a $50 million increase in funding from the state, which increased the number of MAP recipients by 10,050 and the average award size by $260.11 In fiscal year 2021, the Governor’s Office proposed that MAP’s budget be increased by an additional $50 million, but the budget was held steady at $451.3 million. It has been estimated that around an additional $290 million per year is required to fully fund MAP.12

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

Current State

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

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

Proposed Solutions by Sector

Goals: Increase MAP funding and flexibility to help low-income Black students overcome cost barriers in their postsecondary education.

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

This can be done by:
- Collecting, sharing, and utilizing robust data on MAP both for the applicants who receive MAP and for those who do not.
- Creating a set-aside of 15% of MAP funding for community college students to ensure that they are not disproportionately harmed by the first-come-first-serve disbursement model.
- A model for implementation could be the set-aside of $75 million for community college students that was proposed by the Governor’s Office in February 2020. This amount reflects the estimated amount needed for MAP and Pell to cover full tuition and fees for nearly all MAP-eligible community college students.14
- State, Philanthropy, and Employers
  - Pilot a MAP Summer Grant program for one to two years to test the impact of extending grant terms from 9-months to 12-months.
  - All students who are eligible for MAP can apply to use MAP funds over the summer.
  - Funding will be provided by foundations, philanthropic groups, corporate partners, etc. and will be an add-on for summer use.
  - The administration of the program will be consistent with existing MAP functions under ISAC.
- Data should be collected to track academic progress, demographics (age, gender, race) and overall usage of the program.

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

References
8 Basic ISAC Program Data, Illinois Student Assistance Commission.
10 Basic ISAC Program Data.
11 Data provided by ISAC.
am-added-10-000-students/article_202e1a59-4df5-574b-3d8a-79d53d8a76eb.html#:~:text=The%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%...
and culturally-responsive financial literacy and financial planning support for Black students and their families.

**SECTION 15**

**Make college more accessible by strengthening early connections to college-affirming experiences, including asset-based high school counseling.**

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

**CURRENT STATE**

**LEGISLATION**

- IL Public Act 101-0180 requires high school and post-secondary institutions to file a FAFSA to sign a waiver to opt out, in order to graduate beginning in the 2020-21 school year.
- School Code Section 27.12-1. on Consumer Education requires that grade 9-12 curriculum include a financial literacy component and establishes a Financial Literacy Fund in the State treasury to fund awards for schools meeting financial literacy goals. There is no specified length of financial literacy instruction required for students in Illinois, and in the proposed curriculum released by the Illinois State Board of Education, 2019, college funding plans only a small role.
- The Student Investment Account Act was signed into law in August 2019. It gives the Governor the power to allocate an annual investment of 5 percent (approximately $800 million based on current estimates) from the State Investments portfolio for low-income student loans, refinancing of outstanding student loans, and other innovative college financing approaches.¹
- The Student Loan Bill of Rights, passed by the Illinois legislature in 2017, requires certain state requirements for student loan servicers. The act prohibits practices that can be misleading for borrowers and requires companies servicing student loans to inform borrowers about all affordable loan plans. Additionally, the act lays out the criteria that must be met to receive a license to service student loans in the state of Illinois and prohibits those without licenses to operate as a student loan servicer.

**PROSPECTIVE PRACTICES**

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

**REFERENCES**

Dual credit programs allow students to earn college credit while still in high school and can help close achievement gaps and strengthen students’ sense of academic purpose and belonging in college. Indeed, the Illinois Community College Board has described dual credit as a “win-win” arrangement for all parties—students can get ahead on accumulating credits; and “the enhanced high school and college faculty dialogue can contribute to a better alignment between secondary and postsecondary education.”

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

However, increased numbers of dual credit programs have not resulted in equal access to these programs. In fact, Black students are almost half as likely (47% less likely) to be enrolled in early college programs as would be expected based on their overall enrollment in Illinois high schools. Large because of inappropriate eligibility requirements that raise artificial barriers (e.g., the use of high-stakes placement tests that lack validity) to the location and marketing of dual enrollment programs, Black students are underrepresented in these important opportunities.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

• **GOAL:** Improve Black students’ access to dual enrollment and credit programs, and expand dual programming offerings to high schools serving predominantly Black students.

**SHORT TERM**

**Two- and four-year institutions and high schools**

• Build new partnerships between colleges, universities, and local high schools that currently lack dual credit and dual enrollment programs—especially in districts that serve higher numbers of Black students—should make expanding dual credit and enrollment programs a priority.

**CURRENT STATE**

**LEGISLATION**

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

**PROMISING PRACTICES**

• Rockford Public School District 205 and Rock Valley College have partnered to provide targeted reading interventions to students who do not meet eligibility criteria, allowing them to remain in the dual credit program.

• Eastern Illinois University has demonstrated that online dual enrollment can expand the university’s reach and allows students to bypass barriers such as distance from a community college campus or shortage of qualified teachers.

**REFERENCES**


18 “Expanding Equity in Dual Credit.”
19 “Expanding Equity in Dual Credit.”
20 "Expanding Equity in Dual Credit.”
Rather than placing the burden on Black students to navigate systems that were not designed to support their success, colleges and universities must commit themselves to taking responsibility for reforming inequitable systems. By every measure, Black students are retained and graduated at lower numbers than their White peers. This is especially the case for Black students who are first-generation college goers and from low-income backgrounds. Efforts aimed at creating seamless and well-supported transitions for students, including bridge programs and transfer improvement efforts, are improving outcomes for Black students. Bridge and cohort programs that provide integrated supports should be expanded and targeted to honor the strengths and meet the needs of persistently underserved student populations, including returning adults. Additionally, institutions must reform policy and practice to ensure that Black baccalaureate-seeking community-college students are able to transfer seamlessly, have all their transfer credits applied toward their degree, and receive tailored advising to finance and achieve their goals.

Black students are less likely than White students to transfer having already received an Associate’s degree...and they are less likely to be retained after transferring than White students

INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND SUPPORT

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

CURRENT STATE

LEGISLATION
• The Bridge Program for Underserved Students Act (110 ILCS 170), provides a framework for public universities to receive state appropriations to support bridge programs. This act needs additional state funding behind it to be fully effective.14

PROMISING PRACTICES
• Chicago State University’s Rise Academy program provides a full tuition scholarship, a concentrated summer academy for incoming students and ongoing academic support through individualized advising, academic skills workshops each semester, and a cohort community that helps them feel at home on campus.15

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Provide a range of bridge and cohort programs for Black first-generation students, Black students from low-income backgrounds, Black transfer students, and Black adult learners to ease the transition into college.

This can be done by:
• Committing additional resources to the development of existing bridge programs;
• Developing new bridge programs, especially for target groups that may not be currently represented in existing bridge programs (transfer students, returning adults);
• Strengthening partnerships between two- and four-year institutions to improve seamless transitions and equitable outcomes for Black transfer students;
• Committing to long-term data collection and analysis on the outcomes for students involved in bridge and cohort programs.

SHORT TERM
Two- and four-year institutions
• Commit additional resources to the development of currently existing bridge programs;
• Invest additional resources to expand existing programs and to ensure programs inclusive of best practices such as peer mentoring and asset-based academic skills workshops;
• Develop new bridge and cohort programs, especially for target groups that may not be currently represented in existing bridge programs;
• Focus on extending institutional support combined with cohort-based peer support to Black transfer students, returning students, and adult students.

LONG TERM
Two- and four-year institutions and State
• Commit to long-term data collection and analysis on the outcomes for students involved in bridge and cohort programs in order to assess effectiveness and improve bridge and cohort programs long-term, gather institutional data and survey responses from program participants in order to guide future additions and changes to the programs.

• Analyze qualitative data on student experiences, along with quantitative institutional data such as graduation rate, retention rate, etc. for program participants.

• Commit to long-term data collection and analysis on the outcomes for students involved in bridge and cohort programs in order to assess effectiveness and improve bridge and cohort programs long-term, gather institutional data and survey responses from program participants in order to guide future additions and changes to the programs.

• Analyze qualitative data on student experiences, along with quantitative institutional data such as graduation rate, retention rate, etc. for program participants.
INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND SUPPORT

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

Inequitable admissions practices such as standardized test requirements create an additional obstacle for many Black students to find a college and enroll. Recent data from the College Board shows that standardized tests continue to produce disparate outcomes by race—in 2019, for example, 80% of White students met a college readiness benchmark while only 46% of Black students reached the same level. 20

By revising admissions practices to become test-blind or instead using more holistic methods of evaluating students, institutions can begin to eliminate obstacles to Black student enrollment.

High-quality college counseling and university informational sessions at the high school level can also make a significant impact on Black students’ sense of academic purpose and belonging in college. By increasing culturally competent outreach efforts to high schools that serve predominantly Black students and providing every Black student with focused college counseling, Illinois educators and other stakeholders can reduce equity gaps between Black and White students in college admissions and enrollment.

CURRENT STATE

PROMISING PRACTICES

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

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

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

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

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

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

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

SHORT TERM

2- and 4-year institutions and State

• Review admissions criteria to be more inclusive, including implementing test-optimal or test-blind admissions.

• Remove the requirement for standardized test scores for college admission.

• Use high school GPA, recommendation letters, essays, projects, and other criteria to inform admissions decisions.

• Wave application fees that may be an obstacle for low-income Black students.

2- and 4-year institutions and high schools

• Strengthen recruitment practices to better support Black students through training and targeted, personalized support.

• Train college recruitment officers for implicit bias and cultural competency.

• Emphasize personalized attention for Black students in recruitment efforts, strengthening the bridge to college enrollment for students who don’t have models of college-going behavior in their families or communities.

• Emphasize personalized attention for parents as well to establish trust among families in the admissions and financial aid process.

• Increase targeted, culturally competent outreach to Black high school students and communities.

• Prioritize recruitment at high schools that serve predominantly Black students.

• Allocate resources to expand culturally competent recruitment efforts to more Black students across the state.

• Run informational sessions for parents to help them understand the college admissions process and to support their children in applying.

LONG TERM

State and high schools

• Run statewide awareness programs to build Black students’ sense of academic purpose and belonging in college.

• Leverage the existing ISACorps network to increase college awareness programs for Black students across the state.

• Mandate cultural competency training for all college counselors and college recruitment officers.

• Run programs for parents and families as well as for students.

INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND SUPPORT

REFERENCES


106,036
296,426
383,076
75,635
12-month college enrollment rates for IL high school graduates, 2018
100% = 135,420 IL HS graduates

2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

Overall undergraduate enrollment trends for Black and White students in IL, 2015-2018

Black undergraduate enrollment
White undergraduate enrollment

Enrol in postsecondary
Do not enroll

BLACK HS GRADUATES
WHITE HS GRADUATES

48%
44%
30%
30%

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

REFERENCES
Developmental education, once known as remediation, was intended to be a supportive experience for students, preparing them to succeed in college-level courses. However, over a decade of evidence from around the country shows definitively that traditional structures of remediation have not achieved the goal of supporting student success. Instead, these policies and practices have served as an invidious sorting mechanism. Statewide, less than 20% of students placed in traditional remediation ultimately graduate.21 For Black students, who are disproportionately placed in developmental courses at both public universities and community colleges, the rate of success is cut in half. According to a 2014 cohort study, 77% of Black community college students are placed into remedial courses through the use of high-stakes placement tests that national research suggests lack validity and reliability.22 As a result and less than 5% of them will go on to graduate.23 Unfair placement policies and non-credit-bearing or “prerequisite” developmental course sequences present the largest obstacle to student retention and completion. Lowering barriers to Black student success requires scaled reforms of placement policies and the structure of remediation. A significant amount of work has already gone into developmental education reform in Illinois, culminating in the Senate Joint Resolution 41 Report published in July 2020, which includes a detailed plan on how to scale current reform efforts and track progress. First, institutions should move away from the use of high-stakes placement tests and instead use multiple, evidence-based criteria to significantly increase the number of students accessing credit-bearing gateway math and English. Additionally, Illinois should transition away from traditional models that do not grant credit for completing developmental coursework and should instead use corequisite support models which provide remediation in the context of credit-bearing gateway courses.

CURRENT STATE

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

PROMISING PRACTICES:
Evidence from around the country suggests that default placement in college-level math and English with corequisite support should be the norm for the vast majority of students.24
• Many institutions around Illinois have already begun to adopt measures, as proposed by ICBCC. As of fall 2019, 15 community colleges had fully implemented multiple measures, and 12 others had partially implemented and had plans to fully implement by fall 2021.25 Some community colleges, including Illinois Central College, have eliminated placement testing for developmental education altogether.
• As part of a comprehensive approach to reforming remediation, college algebra should no longer be used as the default math for all programs. Instead, students should be provided with access to multiple math pathways, such as data science and statistics, that integrate rigorous math appropriate to different disciplines and to the well-paying careers of today and tomorrow.26

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

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

This can be done by:
• Using multiple placement criteria including GPA or pass/fail self-placements; rather than high-stakes placement tests, to increase Black student access to credit-bearing courses.
• Providing remediation in the context of credit-bearing courses through corequisite support models, rather than using traditional prerequisite course sequences.
• Providing multiple study pathways for non-STEM students aligned to programs of study and careers.

SHORT TERM
2- and 4-year institutions and State:
• Use multiple placement criteria to increase Black student access to credit-bearing courses.
• Offer students a variety of ways to demonstrate college readiness.

1. Cumulative high school GPA, including self-reported GPA, is the most reliable and accurate placement measure. A recent University of Chicago Consortium study found that GPA outweighs ACT scores as a predictor of college success.27
2. Placement tests are not valid or reliable predictors of college readiness and should not be used as a measure of student preparation for college-level work.

LONG TERM
2- and 4-year institutions and State:
• Scale reforms of credit-bearing course sequences, including use of corequisite support models.
• Scale reforms of developmental education, including fair placement policies.
• Scale reforms of the use of high stakes placement tests and lack validity and reliability.
• Scale reforms of the use of non-credit-bearing “prerequisite” developmental course sequences.

Current benchmarks, including the resolutions of the Illinois General Assembly, demonstrate that community colleges have already begun to adopt multiple measures for placement in developmental education, including a student’s cumulative GPA. It also requires that institutions submit by May 1, 2022 an institutional plan for scaling developmental education reforms to improve student placement and success. Beginning in 2023, IBHE and ICBCC will be responsible for sharing and collecting data to report back to the General Assembly on the status of these reforms.

REFERENCES
22 https://postsecondaryreadiness.org/multiple-measures-placement-using-data-analytics/

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Latinx</th>
<th>Asian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Students</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
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Students placed into Dev Ed by race
All community colleges, Fall Semester 2018-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Latinx</th>
<th>Asian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Students</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Current State

Legislation
- ASAP is a wrap-around program for low-income students, providing personalized academic and career advising in order to help students choose the courses that they need to progress towards their career goals.

Promising Practices
- City University of New York (CUNY) ASAP is a wrap-around program for low-income students, providing personalized academic and career advising in order to help students choose the courses that they need to progress towards their career goals. In 2017, a cohort study of ASAP students "...not only earned their associate degrees at a higher rate, they also earned their associate degrees more quickly than other students." 20
- Northern Illinois University launched a program called "NIU Navigate," which uses predictive analytics to alert staff of students who have veered off the path to graduation so that they can schedule advisor interventions. Georgia State has a similar program called "GPS Advising," which generated more than 50,000 individual meetings between advisors and students in 2019-2020. 19

The important role that advisors play in students' experiences was highlighted at Student Panels. Student advising should be one of the most powerful tools an institution has to support its students. Student advising should be intentional, sustained, and proactive. Advisors with the appropriate tools and training are crucial to students' success.

Proven Solutions by Sector

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

This can be done by:
- Providing advisors with the tools and training necessary to support Black students as they progress towards their degree of choice.

This can be done by:
- Training all college advisors in cultural competency and implicit bias.
- Making advisors’ caseloads manageable.
- Using predictive analytics to proactively schedule advisor meetings where needed.

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

- Commit to collecting data on racial equity where it is not already being collected.
- Provide robust training for advisors in the Illinois Articulation Agreement and ASAP policies, so that they can best advise potential transfer students and ensure that their students are aware of their credit transfer options.

Form more transfer agreements between...
PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

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

SHORT TERM

2- and 4-year Institutions
- Regularly examine school use of campus and/or local police
- Include Black student groups and faculty/staff in review and decision-making processes
- Examine student codes of conduct
- Create a plan to review and regularly revise student code of conduct, prioritizing the inclusion of Black student and alumni voices
- Use campus climate and culture assessments and micro-surveys to better understand campus climate and to guide policy changes
- Following the best practices recommendations from the University of Southern California Center for Race and Equity and others, conduct an initial, robust assessment of campus climate and climate to identify institution-specific issues and opportunities for growth
- Use micro-surveys throughout the year to check in on finances, mental health, capacity, and outcomes
- Micro-surveys should be given to students, faculty, and staff to gain a holistic view of campus climate
- Use the results of climate assessments and surveys to direct institutional reforms and policy changes

LONG TERM

State and local policymakers:
- Determine standards for Illinois institutions’ student codes of conduct that center Black students
- Given a history of inequitable framing and application of student codes of conduct, set principles for revisions to codes of conduct for 2- and 4-year institutions that will encourage inclusive policies and anti-racist application of codes of conduct
- 2- and 4-year institutions
- Implement changes in state-wide standards to codes of conduct
- Conduct surveys on campus culture and climate annually to track institutional progress and policy changes over time

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

SHORT TERM

2- and 4-year institutions
- Allocate new and protect current, resources to create and support on-campus Black communities, such as living/learning communities, Black student unions, intercultural centers, Black student peer mentoring communities
- Prioritize resiliency in budget adjustments for Black student communities
- Ensure recruitment and admissions staff are trained to highlight existing programs and to provide information on Black student communities-building opportunities during recruiting and admissions events
- Remove barriers for potential and current Black students to learn about opportunities on campus and to engage with all student spaces on campus
- Remove the cost barrier to participating in certain on-campus communities by eliminating any additional fees required to take advantage of such opportunities

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

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

SHORT TERM

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

REFERENCES

Black youth—especially those who grew up in low-income families—are at higher risk for depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues as a result of discrimination, poverty and trauma that they experience. Racial tensions on campus and beyond can create further stress and anxiety for many students. Additionally, Black students are less likely to seek help for mental health issues due to stigma.31 Student panelists emphasized the importance of mental health supports for Black college students. One panelist, who has two of her friends who left school for mental health issues, and connecting students to mental health resources. However, institutions estimate that it would take $17 to $20 million in additional funding over the next three years to fully implement the law, funding which has yet to be provided.32 Additionally, the bill does not mention the issue of cultural competency, which many Black students have highlighted as crucially important to an effective mental health infrastructure for Illinois’ Black students.

In order to support Black students’ well-being and mental health on Illinois campuses, institutions must increase holistic student supports and services on campus, with a focus on hiring Black therapists.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

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

This can be done by:
• Funding the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act;
• Requiring mental health providers to be licensed therapists;
• Requiring mental health providers to be certified in cultural competency and implicit bias;
• Ensuring that mental health supports continue beyond college, into the workplace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

STATE

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

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

State, and 2-and-4 year institutions
• Require mental health support providers to be licensed therapists and trained in cultural competencies and implicit bias;
• Hire licensed therapists, along with counselors, to provide mental health services on campus, with a focus on hiring Black service providers.

Provide cultural competency and implicit bias training for all mental health employees on campus.

When mental health services are being provided by an off-campus local provider, require that they be certified in cultural competencies and implicit bias.

• Require all faculty and staff to be trained in culturally competent mental health awareness

Employees
• Expand offerings of trauma-informed and mental health benefits and support in the workplace

Ensure increased outreach and communication is informed by anti-racist and implicit bias training.

REFERENCES

33 Kate McGee, “A Law Aims To Improve Mental Health Services At Colleges, But There’s No Money To Make It Happen,” WBEZ, September 9, 2020, https://www.wbez.org/stories/a-law-to-improve-mental-health-services-at-illinois-universities-has-no-funding/7a568c15-e6b9-4999-bf6d-b14a5e7d8dfe

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

—NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY STUDENT PANELIST
The close equity gaps in Black student enrollment retention, persistence, and completion, institutions must become more supportive and safe for Black students. In July 2020, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act to begin to address these issues. The bill was aimed at raising awareness about mental health issues, and connecting students to mental health resources. However, institutions that receive DFI fellows are required to provide these students with ample professional development opportunities, such as mentors, workshops, part-time jobs on campus, and assistance in finding post-graduation employment.

In 2018, the Illinois General Assembly passed House Resolution 1098, which created the Black History Curriculum Task Force to conduct an audit of high school districts’ history curricula and ensure that they sufficiently incorporate African American history. In 2020, the Black Caucus began to push for additional legislation mandating the inclusion of African American history in Illinois social studies curriculum.

In January 2021, the Illinois General Assembly passed HB2170, also known as the Education Omnibus Bill. Article 320 of the bill amends the Higher Education Student Assistance Act to add additional provisions around the Minority Teacher Scholarship. One of the changes is to create a set-aside of at least 35% of the funds appropriated for scholarships for qualified Black male applicants, beginning in fiscal year 2023.

### PROMISING PRACTICES

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

### REFERENCES

35 DFI website, https://www.ibhe.org/dfi.html
38 Climate-Matters.pdf

New Full-Time Students Fall 2017-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retained after first year</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressed to sophomore status</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(accumulated 30+ credits)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

oledge education is a key driver of social mobility and economic stability for individuals and families. However, for many Black students who graduate from higher education in Illinois, the return on their investment is lower than for their White peers. According to a study by Georgetown’s Center on Education and the Workforce, the percent of Black workers holding “good jobs” (those that pay at least $55K per year, or $45K for workers age 45 and older) after receiving a bachelor’s degree or higher is only 68%, compared with 75% of White workers. In Illinois, equity gaps in labor force participation and unemployment rates persist—in the second quarter of 2020, White Illinoisans experienced 13% unemployment, while the rate of unemployment among Black Illinoisans was 22%. In order to increase the return on investment for Illinois Black students and ensure that higher education remains a driver of economic opportunity for all, Illinois must build stronger connections between the classroom and the workplace throughout and beyond students’ time in college. Postsecondary institutions and policymakers must place more emphasis on labor-market outcomes for students and invest resources in improving these outcomes through increased support for career exploration and development embedded throughout the student learning journey. In addition to increasing support for career centers, Illinois institutions must embed high-quality, work-based learning experiences within program curriculum. Additionally, Illinois should build cross-sector partnerships between postsecondary institutions, philanthropy, CBOs, and employers to connect Black students to high-paying career pathways.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>% of Black Workers</th>
<th>% of White Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma or Less</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree or Higher</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* “Good jobs” are defined by Georgetown’s Center on Education and the Workforce as: “those that pay at least $55K per year, or $45K for workers age 45 and older.”


REFERENCES

CONNECTION TO CAREER

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

CONNECTION TO CAREER

CURRENT STATE

PROMISING PRACTICES

• Beavers is a non-profit organization whose goal is to prepare underserved young people—high school and college students, students from low-income backgrounds, and students of color—for their transition into the workforce. Beavers partners with universities (including National Louis University in Illinois) and corporate partners such as Salesforce, Prudential, Charles Schwab, and more to provide robust career mentoring and still-building tools to students.

• Career Launch Chicago is a partnership between Chicago Public Schools, City Colleges of Chicago, and various employers in the city region to provide apprenticeship opportunities to students. The goal of the program is to provide students with paid-on-the-job training and mentorship to advance their careers.

• The just-launched 1945 Project at The CAFE will leverage a donor collaborative to invest in initiatives that will increase the number of Black educators and leaders throughout the education landscape, create more effective and culturally affirming teaching and learning models, and strengthen pathways from education to career in order to drive economic mobility in the Black community.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

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

This can be done by:

• Increasing collaboration between faculty and workforce/industry partners.

• Increasing access for Black students to interact with employers on campus.

• Ensuring that Black students have access to early and ongoing career exploration and co-curricular, work-based learning opportunities embedded in programs of study.

• Increasing additional support and career centers to help them increase their impact.

• Ensuring that Black students and graduates have equal access to opportunities, jobs, salaries, and career development.

• Building cross-sector partnerships to connect Black students to career pathways.

• Connecting Black students with mentors who will help guide them through their path in college and transition into the workforce.

SHORT TERM

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

• Allocate resources to high-impact practices and partnerships that drive career success

• Ensure that career centers have the staff, resources, and training that they need to be able to prep Black students for: - Job interviews, - Writing resumes and cover letters, - Career mapping,

• Employers and philanthropy should incentivize pathways that are high-need (teaching, nursing, etc.) which lead to family-sustaining wages/income.

• Identifying networking opportunities.

• Negotiating salaries/offers.

• Attend to career advancement across Black students’ learning journeys by embedding early career exploration and work-based learning opportunities in programs of study, and by continuing to support alumni through career development after they graduate.

• Provide opportunities for employers to contribute funding and volunteer time to career centers.

• Invest resources in other high-impact institutional practices that drive career success.

• 2- and 4-year institutions and employers

• Increase collaboration between university faculty and workforce/industry partners

• Have faculty collaborate with workforce/industry partners to develop curriculum guides that reflect current needs and opportunities in the workforce, to be incorporated into curricula and communicated to students.

• Support faculty professional development to embed high-impact practices such as active, experiential, and collaborative learning opportunities connected to careers.

• Build partnerships to give Black students more opportunities to interact with employers on campus

• Bring employers to campus for informational sessions and career readiness sessions aimed at preparing and recruiting Black students

• Where possible, form strategic partnerships with employers that allow students to interact with a specific company or sector as part of a class that prepares them for jobs in that field.

• Where relevant, provide students with opportunities to participate in paid apprenticeship opportunities with employers they interact with on campus.

LONG TERM

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

• Build cross-sector partnerships to connect Black students to careers

• Following existing cross-sector models of workforce development initiatives, CBOs and 2- and 4-year institutions can help connect students to post-secondary employment, helping to bridge the gap between colleges and employers.

• Employers should commit to hiring and developing students from their partnerships.

• Cross-sector partnerships should be built in specific cities, towns, or regions to connect Black high school and college students to paid internship or apprenticeship opportunities in the region to advance their careers.

• Philanthropy should invest in large-scale efforts to create bridge programs for Black students from college to career.

• Connect Black students with mentors who will help guide them through their path in college and into the workforce.

• Recruit committed volunteer mentors from current and recently retired professionals, as well as representatives from faith organizations and community organizations, prioritizing Black professionals and Black-led organizations where possible.

• Leverage and use as a model the existing mentorship program structures of CBOs focused on educational and workforce mentorship.

• Provide general support and mentorship to help students persist through college and find gainful employment by: - Directing student mentors to resources such as advising, additional financial aid, etc. when needed.

• Answering students’ questions about the workforce and advising them in pursuit of their career development goals.

• Connecting students to individuals in their chosen career field for informational chats.

30 | Equity Working Group Report

Black Student Access & Success in IL Higher Education | 31
**CONNECTION TO CAREER**

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

---

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

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

---

BLACK WHITE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1 after graduation</th>
<th>White graduates are paid 10% more than Black graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By Year 2, Black graduates are paid what their White peers are paid...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... and after three years, the gap has widened to White students making an extra $6k per year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**CURRENT STATE**

**PROMISING PRACTICES**

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

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**PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR**

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

**This can be done by:**

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

**SHORT TERM**

Employees, IBHE, and State

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

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**CURRENT STATE**

**PROMISING PRACTICES**

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

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**PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR**

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

**This can be done by:**

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

**SHORT TERM**

Employees, IBHE, and State

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

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**REFERENCES**

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

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