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 2013 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 credentials.

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 convened by Chicago State University President Zaldwaynaka 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 succeed in Illinois, the Equity Working Group (EWG) was oriented by two key questions: How can we address systemic racism that shows up in our practices and policies and change those practices and policies to be equitable? How can we collaborate and work jointly to knock down barriers that have prevented our system from serving students and families equitably?

The multi-sector action plan outlined in this report flows from deep examination of these two questions and is oriented by four guiding principles. First, Black students should be treated as experts of their own experience, as well as customers of educational institutions, and should be involved in sustained efforts to evaluate, redesign, and improve the policies, practices, and systems of support. Throughout the report, student voices and perspectives are elevated. Second, data must be collected, analyzed, and shared over time to ensure that equity goals are being met, both within institutions and at the state level. Third, it is not enough for a promising program to exist; investments must be made to allow full access and success for Black Students and programs should be evaluated on their contributions to closing racial equity gaps. Finally, addressing the challenges facing Illinois’ Black students requires an examination of, and perhaps thinking differently about, institutional and philanthropic funding priorities.

Taken together, the framework (see Figure 1) summarizes the solutions identified by the group. At the most foundational level, closing equity gaps for Black students in Illinois requires honest acknowledgment 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 practices 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 impacts of institutional funding on closing existing equity gaps over time. 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 in which Black students’ sense of belonging is prioritized and in which Black students set 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 pursued 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 presents a significant barrier to Black student 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 money to cover costs which might otherwise prevent students from persisting in college.
  - Increase need-based funding and programs flexibility to help low-income Black students overcome cost barriers in their postsecondary education.
  - Make college more affordable by strengthening early connections to college-accessing experiences, including access-based high school counseling and culturally-sensitive 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 college for low-income Black first-generation students is 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 retention, transfer, and completion rates 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 sustained effort to play an active role in supporting Black student 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 can foster Black students’ academic success by doing the following:

- Directives
  - Improve Black students’ access to existing departmental need and dual credit programs, and expand dual credit offerings offered to high schools serving predominantly Black students.
  - 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 admission criteria to eliminate structurally racist practices and increase targeted outreach to Black high school students.

- Indicators of Success
  - Racial equity gaps in dual credit enrollment and completion are eliminated.
  - Dual credit and dual enrollment programs are available in all communities serving Black students in Illinois.
  - 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 recruitment 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 must have dedicated 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 academic advising for 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.
  - Standardized test scores are manageable across the state, ensuring strong, individualized advising for all Black students.

References

1 https://www.ibhe.org/equity.html
All Black students in Illinois should be able to get a good job in their field of choice after graduation, earn the same wages as non-Black peers, and have the same opportunities for advancement in careers and at the next 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 navigate career paths for the first time. To build strong bridges into the workplace for Black students and graduates, Illinois must: 

DIRECTIONS

• Build a stronger bridge between college and careers for Black students by promoting early career exploration and improving career connections throughout their time in college and beyond.

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

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

• Racial equity gaps in labor force participation and unemployment rates are eliminated.

• Black graduates are being employed at the same rate as their peers at each institution.

• Large numbers of paid internships and apprenticeships are being held by Black students across Illinois.

• Racial equity gaps in entry-level salaries are eliminated.

HIGH-LEVEL OVERVIEW OF ACTIONS BY SECTOR

Each of the solution areas identifies actions that should be taken by leaders across sectors to improve equity in access and outcomes for Black students. A high-level summary of action ideas is provided here.

High Schools: Boosting college attendance by providing early college experiences, asset-based advising, and financial literacy that result in greater academic preparedness, a sense of belonging, and greater financial access to a postsecondary education.

Connecting College to Careers: Equipping teachers and counselors to promote Black students’ sense of belonging in college and academic purpose through early and often career exploration conversations.

Early College Exposure & Coursework: Expand Black student access to dual enrollment and dual credit programs, and lower barriers to Black student participation in these opportunities.

Access to Financial Aid: Provide robust financial literacy and financial planning counseling for Black students and families.

Colleges & Universities: Promoting culturally competent supports and equitable access to programs of study aligned to careers, holistic advising, and a culturally responsive and safe campus climate.

Increasing Equitable Access: Implement test-blind or test-optional policies to address structural racism in admissions practices.

Redesigning Remediation at Scale: Discontinue the use of high-stakes placement tests to determine remediation needs and provide all remediation in the context of credit-bearing courses or free of charge to students prior to matriculation.

Connecting College to Careers: Ensure that Black students have access to early and ongoing career exploration and curated, work-based learning opportunities embedded in programs of study.

Improving Campus Climate & Culture: Provide anti-racism training and professional development for all employees grounded in programs of study.

Connecting College to Careers: Recognize that Black students must have access to early and ongoing career exploration and co-curricular, work-based learning opportunities embedded in programs of study.

Supporting Student Persistence: Provide culturally responsive advising and holistic student supports that attend to the academic and non-academic needs of Black students.

Promoting Culturally Responsive Financial Literacy & Planning: Lead partnerships to provide more culturally competent financial literacy and financial planning education for Black students and families across the state beginning when students are in middle school.

Connecting College to Careers: Expand high-quality work-based learning programs for Black students.

Supporting Professional Development of Faculty & Staff: Engage with college faculty and advisors to improve early and ongoing career exploration conversations with Black students.

Supporting Infrastructure for Improvement: Expand employer presence and engagement with career centers at colleges and universities that serve large numbers of Black students.

Philanthropy: Promoting strong outcomes by increasing collaboration that connect college to careers and by ensuring hiring and retention practices are grounded in a commitment to equity.

NOTE
This icon highlights recommendations that are based directly on student input, gathered from the Equity Working Group’s student panel and focus groups.

The challenges facing Illinois’ Black students, perpetuated by systemic racism, can only be addressed through the collaboration of these various sectors working together to remove barriers, address deeply inequitable policies and transform the system. Proposed solutions, promising practices, and a snapshot of the current state and road ahead are presented in this report. The members of the Equity Working Group for Black Student Access and Success in Illinois: Higher Education are committed to the long-term work entailed in achieving equity in access and outcomes for Black students in our state. We invite you to join us in this work.
EQUITY WORKING GROUP ACTION PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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 TO CONSIDER HOW TO ALLOCATE MORE RESOURCES TO ACHIEVING EQUITY GOALS.
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 emergency—a car problem, a tuition 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 Illinois 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.

Barriers: reduction grants—small amounts of money intended to cover costs that prevent 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. 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 completion of their degree but are kept from graduating by small course barriers; emergency funds, which target students at any point in their time in 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. All types of grants are crucial for many Black students experiencing financial hardship.

**CURRENT STATE**

**PROMISING PRACTICES**

- All Chicago Emergency Fund: All Chicago developed a grant that provides a model for the ways in which CBOS, postsecondary institutions, and funders can work together. In 2020, All Chicago had 13 partner organizations that work closely with students who help connect them to disability or completion grants, other than their advisors or by institutional data on tuition payments, financial aid, etc. The retention/completion grants target students who are close to completing their degree but have outstanding financial need.

- 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 courses play too large a role in equity gaps in persistence and college completion for Black students. Delays forgiveness programs should be implemented and made accessible.

- Use broad eligibility criteria to be able to service as many interested 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 spite of balances.

**PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR**

**GOAL:** Provide a wide array of accessible barrier-reduction grants that eliminate financial barriers to Student Access & Success in Illinois Higher Education.

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 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

**LONG TERM**

- Barrier Reduction Fund: Grant Providers, including Philanthropy

- Fund partnerships to direct emergency funds to Black students most in need.

- A current model example is All Chicago’s Emergency Fund, in which funders and corporate partners should provide funds, to be distributed to students identified by education-based CBOS and 2- and 4-year institutions.

- Where possible, CBOS and postsecondary institutions should facilitate the process by applying on behalf of student or expediting release of grant funds to students.

- The COVID emergency grant process can serve as a model here—IBHE distributed funds 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 philanthropy

- 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 graduate.

- Collect data on program effectiveness of grants and publish data through impact reports and accessible data dashboards on a regular basis.

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- Collect data on program effectiveness of grants and publish data through impact reports and accessible data dashboards on a regular basis.
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 10,056 and the average award size by $260. 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of public university students who receive a MAP grant to help pay for college, by race.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Undergraduates</td>
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<tr>
<td>39%</td>
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<td>76%</td>
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</tbody>
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PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

SHORT TERM

State, 2- and 4-year institutions, ISAC, and high schools

- Collect, share, and utilize robust data on MAP both for the applicants who receive MAP and for those who do not
- Mandate the collection and sharing of data between state bodies and institutions regarding the demographics of students who do or do not receive MAP, including whether they enroll in post-secondary education and whether they complete
- Create a reporter and data dashboards that tracks this data and makes it available to legislators, policy advocates, institutions, and others in order to drive further equity-based reforms to MAP

State and ISAC

- Improve access to MAP funding for community college students
- First-come-first-serve will no longer be necessary when MAP is fully funded, until then, create a new slot within the MAP budget for community college students to ensure that they are not disproportionately harmed by the first-come-first-serve disbursement model

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 level. MAP’s current budget is $451.3 million.

PROSPECTIVE PRACTICES

- Summer Pell. In 2017, the U.S. Department of Education eliminated the annual 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 (i.e., $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.

REFERENCES


10 Basic ISAC Program Data

11 Data provided by ISAC.

E ffsorts need to be made across sectors to provide Black students with access to a much wider array of college-affirming experiences. Asset-based high school counseling that promotes Black students’ sense of self-efficacy is a critical piece of the access puzzle, but there are also important roles to be played by faith leaders and other community-based organizations in helping Black students see themselves as college-goers. In addition, to increase the likelihood that Black students can fully utilize financial aid Illinois must expand and improve financial literacy programs, increase awareness of existing financial aid offerings, foster deeper conversations with students and parents about 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 schools to include a financial literacy test as part of the FAFSA application.
- 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.

**PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR**

**SHORT TERM**

- Two- and four-year institutions, high schools, and ISAC
  - Increase culturally relevant financial aid outreach, targeting Black schools and families
  - Embed culturally relevant financial aid information into all outreach, from high school visits to college fairs and more
  - Make sure that financial literacy and college planning conversations are more robust and accessible to the specific challenges facing many Black communities, including lack of trust in FAFSA and avoiding predatory loans that often target people of color
  - Provide professional development to those leading financial literacy efforts to equip them to better engage Black parents and deeper conversations about financial planning for postsecondary education
  - Ensure equitable access to culturally competent financial literacy training for Black students and their families by scaling up the ISACorps model, which brings graduates back to the high schools that they attended to counsel students on financial aid and navigate the admissions process, and implement similar local programs where applicable

**LONG TERM**

- State and high schools
  - Ensure robust, culturally competent financial aid counseling for Black students in Illinois
  - To support the implementation of Illinois’s FAFSA requirement for high school graduation, provide state guidelines for the optimal high school financial aid counselor-student ratio and access to counselor materials and tools, as well as predatory practices. Identify responsible lending practices as well as predatory practices.
  - Mandate cultural competency and implicit bias training for all financial aid counselors.

- State and ISAC
  - Strengthen state policies to support responsible lending.
  - Conduct an audit of lending practices to identify responsible lending practices as well as predatory practices.
  - Evaluate state program on implementing provisions of the Student Loan Bill of Rights passed in December 2019.
  - Strengthen Student Investment Account practices to provide more low-income loans for Black students and families who cannot access credit.
  - Refinance student loans to help graduates with outstanding debt.
  - Provide other evidence-based financing options to low-income Black students and families who struggle to pay for college.

- Allocate additional resources to the Attorney General’s office to aggressively combat predatory lending practices and to ensure the robust implementation of Illinois’ Student Loan Bill of Rights.

- Track racial data on FAFSA completion.

- As part of the FAFSA completion initiative, track FAFSA completion by race and track incidences of additional barriers to Black student FAFSA completion, such as income verification processes.

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**INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND SUPPORT**

**DIRECTIVE** | Improve Black students’ access to existing dual enrollment and credit programs, and expand dual programming offerings to high schools serving predominantly Black students

Dual credit programs that allow students to earn college credit while still in high school 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 college credits towards a degree and gain confidence in their academic abilities; parents and students can benefit from reduced college costs; 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 programs had over 58 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. Largely 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 programs.

**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 request them;
  - Prohibits school districts from offering dual credit courses for one or more programs without first asking Illinois colleges 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 reach 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.”

**INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND SUPPORT**

**SHORT TERM**

- Two- and four-year institutions and high schools
  - Build new partnerships between colleges, universities, and local high schools that ensure equity.
  - 2 and 4-year colleges and universities in regions that currently lack dual credit and enrollment programs—especially in districts that serve higher numbers of Black students—should make expanding dual credit and enrollment programs a priority.
  - ICCB data indicates that the Chicago region presents a significant opportunity for growth and increased access—Chicago schools serve higher numbers of Black and Latinx students than the majority of other districts in Illinois and have significantly lower numbers of dual credits and dual enrollments compared to other regions of the state.
  - New partnerships should follow the new Model Partnership Agreement laid out in the Dual Credit Quality Act to make dual credit accessible to all.
  - The MPA lowers costs for students by encouraging best practices for low-cost dual credit.
  - Establishes the responsible party for course costs, textbooks, etc.
  - Requires multiple measures for placement in dual credit.
  - Prioritizes courses that are most likely to transfer or that are embedded in career pathway course sequences.
  - Lays out clear guidelines for districts and colleges to follow when deciding which instructors are qualified to teach dual credit courses.
  - Make existing dual enrollment and credit programs more inclusive by eliminating common barriers to access.
  - Reform eligibility criteria to eliminate the use of high-stakes placement tests and instead use GPA to determine eligibility for dual enrollment opportunities.
  - Leverage digital infrastructure from the COVID-19 pandemic to give students opportunities to access dual enrollments and credit, even if their high school does not offer a course on-site.
  - The pandemic has proven that schools have the digital infrastructure to be able to offer in-person classes at a distance.

- State, IBHE, ISBE, 2- and 4-year institutions, and high schools
  - Set improvement targets for achieving racial equity in dual credit and dual enrollment programs and track progress.
  - These goals should aim to make dual credit enrollments more reflective of overall high school enrollment in the state. Black students currently make up 9.5% of dual credit enrollments, despite representing 17% of the overall high school population.
  - ISBE and IBHE should create action plans for closing equity gaps among dual credit courses to help the state reach the equity goals described above.
  - Require reporting on racial representation, student eligibility requirements, and student success metrics from all dual credit and dual enrollment partnerships.
  - This data will help the state to identify tactics that are increasing Black representation, as well as those that are keeping students out of dual credit programs.

- State, IBHE, ISBE, 2- and 4-year institutions, and high schools
  - Explore ways to increase the number of teachers qualified to teach dual credit courses, especially in Black communities that currently lack dual credit programs.
  - Increase support for existing educational pathways for teacher certification.
  - Consider new, additional paths to teacher certification.
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 Underrepresented 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.19

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 currently 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-year and four-year institutions to improve seamless transitions and equitable outcomes for Black transfer students;
- Collect and share data on outcomes for Black transfer students.

Benchmark data using the National Student Clearinghouse “Tracking Transfer” metrics and share data on transfer outcomes for Black students by program.

LONG TERM

- Strengthen partnerships between community colleges and four-year institutions to improve transfer outcomes and equitable outcomes for Black transfer students.
- Within these partnerships, lay out a clear process for transfer and applicability of credits, and collaborate to improve the transfer-affirming culture at the community college and an equity-oriented transfer-receptive culture at the four-year institution.
- Provide proactive support, tailored advising, and culturally competent outreach that focuses on supporting Black students in navigating the transition process and creating a full financial plan for completion.
- Assess systems currently in place, such as Transfer, and ensure advising staff is trained to support students to use such systems.
- Launch a sustained effort to engage Black students and alumni to identify additional barriers in the transition to higher education and focus on repairing them.
- Engage Black students and alumni through focus groups, student panels, or other collaborative efforts to understand the lived experience of Black students as they navigate systems and institutions.

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 then White students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TRANSLERED WITH 12 OR FEWER CREDITS</th>
<th>TRANSLERED WITH AN ASSOCIATES</th>
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<tr>
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Black Student Access & Success in IL Higher Education | 17
INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND SUPPORT

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

Equitable 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 benchmarks in Reading/Writing, compared with 66% of Black students nationwide.20 By revising admissions practices to become test-optional and 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.

INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND SUPPORT

CURRENT STATE

PROPOSING PRACTICES

- As of August 2020, 35-4-year institutions in Illinois (public and private) have switched to some form of test-optional 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;
- Strengthening the bridge to college enrollment for students who don’t have models of college-going behavior in their families or communities.

12-month college enrollment rates for IL high school graduates, 2018

| Overall undergraduate enrollment trends for Black and White students in IL, 2013-2018 |
|---|---|---|
| Black undergraduate enrollment | White undergraduate enrollment |
| 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
| Black HS graduates | 54% | 53% | 54% | 55% | 54% | 55% |
| White HS graduates | 70% | 69% | 70% | 71% | 70% | 71% |

Nearly half of all Black high school graduates do not enroll in post-secondary in the 12 months following graduation. While overall undergraduate enrollment in IL has declined disproportionately for Black students (29%).

REFERENCES

PROGRAM CHOICE

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 placement tests that national research suggests lack validity and reliability.22 As a result and placement tests that national research suggests 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 instead use cooperative 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 about developmental education reform in June 2020. The report laid out a list of reform recommendations, as well as a plan and a timeline for the implementation of these reforms as institutions across the state. In June 2021, IBHE and ICCB 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 HB170, 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 college adopt multiple measures for placement in developmental education, including a 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 2022, IBHE and ICCB will be required to share and collect data to report back to the General Assembly on the status of these reforms.

PROMOTING PRACTICES
• Evidence from around the country suggests that default placement in college-level math and English 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
• 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 more effective models of developmental education
• Placement tests should be eliminated as a single measure of student readiness and should be used only as a mechanism for students who want to test out of a course
• All remediation should be provided in the context of credit-bearing courses
• For students at the lowest levels of preparation, provide free corequisite remediation
• Multiple math pathways aligned to fields of study should be provided to all students and those courses should be accredited and applied in transfer.

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

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 passed self-placement; 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 perquisite course sequences.
• Providing multiple math 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.
• 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

ENROLLMENT AND PROGRAM CHOICE

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

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<th>Latinx</th>
<th>Asian</th>
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Students placed into Dev Ed by race
All community colleges, Fall Semester 2018-2019

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<td>39.8%</td>
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A
dvising is one of the most powerful tools an institution has to support its students. Student advising should be intentional, sustained, and proactive. Advisors not only help students choose a program of study and build an academic plan. They also ensure that students are progressing towards the completion of their degrees, and intervene when they are experiencing academic or financial hardship. The important role that advisors play in students’ experiences was highlighted during the Working Group’s November 12 Student Panel. One student commented that his advisor is a crucial part of the support system that keeps him progressing towards his degree because his advisor always checks in to see how he is progressing academically and otherwise. Another student explained that one of his friends had to leave school because of a family emergency, and never ended up returning because he didn’t have sufficient support from the institution. “He started to register for classes, but he didn’t have anyone to follow up with him. Nobody was checking in when he needed them most.”

Institutions must provide personalized advising to all Black students, providing advisors with the appropriate tools and cultural competency training so that they are well-equipped to address concerns specific to the Black student experience at that institution. To guarantee that every student receives quality advising, institutions must provide advisors with the appropriate tools and wellness plans with Black student optimizations. Advisors should also have the support they need additional support. For example, if an advisor serves predominantly Black, first-generation students they serve should be lower to advise potential transfer students and ensure that their students are aware of their credit transfer options.

LONG TERM
Two- and four-year institutions
Build our system of predictive analytics using institutional student data to create early alert systems
Track student success over a variety of metrics and program certain alerts to occur when students need additional support (e.g., alerts could be linked to low grades, withdrawals from classes, late tuition payments, etc.).
As a first step, conduct an institutional review of data collection policies to determine what data is currently being collected, what data needs to be collected, and how data can be leveraged.
Commit to collecting data on racial equity where it is not already being collected.
Collect, what data needs to be collected, and how data can be leveraged.
Commit to collecting data on racial equity where it is not already being collected.
Form more transfer agreements between 2- and 4-year institutions
Track the number of new partnerships where it is not already being collected.
Commit to collecting data on racial equity where it is not already being collected.

REFERENCES
29. Georgia State University, GPS Advising.
PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOAL: Improve safety and inclusion for Black students by strengthening campus policies directly affecting 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 codes 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 culture and climate to identify institution-specific issues and opportunities for growth.
  - Use micro-surveys throughout the year to check 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 this assessment to direct institutional reforms and policy changes.
  - Micro-surveys should be given to students, faculty, and staff to gain a holistic view of campus climate.
  - Use micro-surveys throughout the year to check on finances, mental health, capacity, and outcomes.
- Use climate assessments and micro-surveys to better understand campus climate and to guide policy changes.
- 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, re-examine these standards for their effectiveness in promoting inclusive and anti-racist policies.
- 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.
  - Follow best practices to assess campus climate and culture through the use of regular campus climate and culture assessments and even more frequent micro-surveys.
  - Use the results of this assessment to direct institutional reforms, budget processes, 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 community-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.

Philanthropy 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.

LONG TERM

2- and 4-year institutions and Philanthropy
- Collect data and track on retention, persistence, and completion rates for Black students who are supported by their institution to participate in a Black student community.
- Track how institution and philanthropic support for on-campus communities affects equity gaps for Black students.

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

B
ack youth—especially those who grow 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.30 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 had a therapist since middle school, and was able to continue seeing her therapist remotely upon going to middle school, and was able to continue mental health supports on campus.

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 on college campuses, training faculty and staff to identify and address 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, decrease stigma surrounding mental health issues among Black students, and connect students with high-quality, culturally competent supports and services on or near campus.

**References**


32 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-colleges-has-no-funding-7b2a6d-f59f9-9f9d-b66d-d4a3a9c7dbbe

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-colleges-has-no-funding-7b2a6d-f59f9-9f9d-b66d-d4a3a9c7dbbe

“[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

**Current State**

**Legislation**

- Illinois 110 ILCS $80 Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act passed in July 2020, requires public universities and colleges to raise awareness of mental health resources on campus, provide mental health training for faculty and staff, and form local partnerships with mental health providers to be able to connect students with resources. However, more funding is required for institutions to be able to fully implement the bill.

**Short Term**

- **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 funds 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.
    - Require all staff to complete basic mental health trainings that incorporate cultural competency elements.

**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 trained in cultural competency and implicit bias.
- Ensuring that mental health supports continue beyond college, into the workplace.

**Directives**

- Provide holistic student supports including trauma informed, antiracist mental health services for Black students on campus and in the workplace that attend to the lived experiences of Black students and their families.

**References**

T o 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 on college campuses, training faculty and staff to identify and address 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. 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. Equity gaps exist for Black students at every step of the path to and through higher education. While cost and academic support issues, which are addressed elsewhere in this plan, contribute significantly to lower enrollment, retention, and completion rates for Black students, marginalization and discrimination on campus also have an impact on Black students’ success in higher education. According to a 2015 study conducted by Rankin & Associates, 30% of student respondents seriously considered leaving their institution due to a challenging or unwelcoming climate.15 Along with other structural changes to policies and academic supports, we must also consider policies that contribute to Black student safety and inclusion on campus, such as financial support of Black on-campus communities, implicit bias training for all on-campus staff, and a more inclusive curriculum that includes Black authors and perspectives. Another way to do this is to consider the diversity of faculty. A diverse faculty is important both for creating a climate of belonging (signaling to a Black student that they belong when they see someone in a position of power that looks like them) and also for creating career opportunities for Black academics. According to IPEDS data, in 2018, only 6% of faculty at Illinois public institutions were Black, while 71% of faculty was White.16

CURRENT STATE
LEGISLATION
• In 2004 the Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois Program (DFI) was established by Public Act 093-0862 of the Illinois General Assembly. The goal of the program is to “increase the number of minority full-time tenure track faculty and staff at Illinois’ two- and four-year, public and private colleges and universities.” The program provides up to $12,000 for new students and $15,000 for continuing students to use for their graduate studies over a four-year period. Furthermore, 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 1598, which created the Black History Curricular Task Force to conduct an audit of high school district’s history curriculum 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 220 of the bill authorizes 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 climates. 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.36

REFERENCES
35 IPEDS “All full-time instructional staff, by race,” 2018.
College 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 $35k 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 pre-date COVID, but have been further exacerbated by the pandemic. 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 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.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY SECTOR

GOALS: 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 high-quality, work-based learning experiences embedded in 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 |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
|                               | Black        | White        |
| High school diploma or less    | 39%          | 62%          |
| Middle skills                  | 49%          | 69%          |
| Bachelor’s degree or higher    | 36%          | 68%          |

Unemployment rates, 2020 Q2

- Black: 8%  - White: 6%

* Good jobs are defined as Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce's definition as those that pay at least $35k per year, or at least $45k for workers age 45 and older, and full-time or full-year earnings in 2016.

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 students, high schools and 2- and 4-year 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.

REFERENCES


CONNECTION TO CAREER

CONNECTION TO CAREER

LONG TERM

2- and 4-year institutions, philanthropy, CBOs, 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-graduation employment, helping to bridge the gap between colleges and employers.
- Employers should commit to hiring and developing students from these partnerships.
- Cross-sector partnerships should be built in specific cities, towns, or regions to connect Black high school and college students to paid internships 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 workplace and advising them in pursuit of their career development goals.
- Building partnerships to give Black students more opportunities to interact with employers on campus.
- Beuing employers to campus for informational sessions and career readiness sessions aimed at preparing and recruiting Black students.
- When 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.

SHORT TERM

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

- 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 support Black students:
  - 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.
- Assist 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.
- 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 pathways that are contextualized to success.
- Build partnerships to give Black students more opportunities to interact with employers on campus.
- Employers should commit to hiring and developing students from these partnerships.
- Cross-sector partnerships should be built in specific cities, towns, or regions to connect Black high school and college students to paid internships 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 workplace and advising them in pursuit of their career development goals.
- Building partnerships to give Black students more opportunities to interact with employers on campus.
- Beuing employers to campus for informational sessions and career readiness sessions aimed at preparing and recruiting Black students.
- When 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.
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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.

Employees 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.

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

White graduates are paid 10% more than Black graduates in year 1 after graduation... By Year 2, Black graduates are paid what that year’s new White grads are paid... ... and after three years, the gap has widened to White students making an extra ~$6k per year.

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

**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 employees 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 students;
- 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.
- Revise hiring practices to center equity.
- Widens the hiring pool to include a wide range of universities and colleges, not just elite universities.
- Employ blind hiring practices, taking names and addresses off of applications.
- Company CEOs should hold recruitment and hiring officers accountable for upholding the company’s equity goals.
- Ensure that equitable hiring practices are put in place for all positions, including management-track positions.
- Provide large numbers of paid internships and apprenticeships for Black students.
- The Illinois State legislature should set ambitious goals for companies of various sizes to provide high numbers of paid internships and apprenticeships.
- Evaluate current internship programs for equity & implement policy to ensure equity moving forward.
- Target paid internships and apprenticeships towards Black students and towards institutions that serve predominantly Black students.
- IBHE should highlight exemplary employer practices that provide large numbers of paid internships and apprenticeships that are highly accessible for Black students.
- Create matching programs between philanthropy and corporations to facilitate additional hiring opportunities for Black students, following the model of similar programs that exist for Black law students.

2- and 4-year institutions and Employers

- Provide career-field-specific scholarships for Black students, in order to provide additional incentive and accountability for employers.
- Provide tax incentives for employers who provide large numbers of paid internships and apprenticeships for Black students.
- IBHE should highlight exemplary employer practices who provide large numbers of paid internships and apprenticeships that are highly accessible for Black students.
- Provide a tax incentive for employers who hire and develop large numbers of Black graduates.
- Provide an additional tax incentive for companies who retain Black employees over time.

**LONG TERM**

**Employers and Philanthropy**

- Publicly track progress on equity goals and highlight state- or region-wide successes by companies that provide high numbers of paid internships and hiring opportunities for Black graduates.
- Companies should internally track the internship and hiring opportunities that they provide to recent graduates, by race.
- Partners in philanthropy, media companies, Chambers of Commerce, state departments, or other sectors (such as Crain’s Business Chicago, World Business Chicago, the Workforce Funders Alliance, the Illinois Chamber of Commerce, or others) should compile and share data, highlighting exemplary companies at varying levels of business size.

- A compiled list should be published annually of the top companies providing opportunities for Black students, in order to provide additional incentive and accountability for employers.

“As a student, if I’m choosing between money and advancing my career [with an internship], I often have to choose the money.”

—UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO STUDENT PANELIST

**REFERENCES**

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

41 For an example of existing programs, see the Summer Work Experience in Law (SWEL) program in Ohio.
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