

# STUDENTS: Higher Education

In order to be competitive in the global workforce, it is essential for American students to be highly skilled, particularly in math and science, able to communicate effectively, and able to adapt to a rapidly changing economy.

However, recent data indicates that Illinois students are inadequately prepared for postsecondary education and are often consigned to remedial coursework. Moreover, Latino and Black students are underrepresented both in terms of higher education enrollment and degrees conferred.

Unequal representation in higher education institutions hurts both students of color and the state's competitiveness as a whole. Racial and ethnic disparities in education begin early, and persist beyond elementary and secondary education to postsecondary schooling. Students unable to earn a degree face significant, long-lasting consequences that go far beyond the classroom, including lower lifetime earning potential. Today's global economy means that postsecondary degrees are more important than ever, making racial and ethnic disparities more alarming.

There are a variety of factors that contribute to the lack of college readiness, including:

- Limited counseling opportunities preparing students to apply to college and to apply for financial aid
- Little coordination between postsecondary and P-12 schools
- Too few mentoring opportunities
- Decreased state funding for higher education coupled with increased tuition at public and private universities

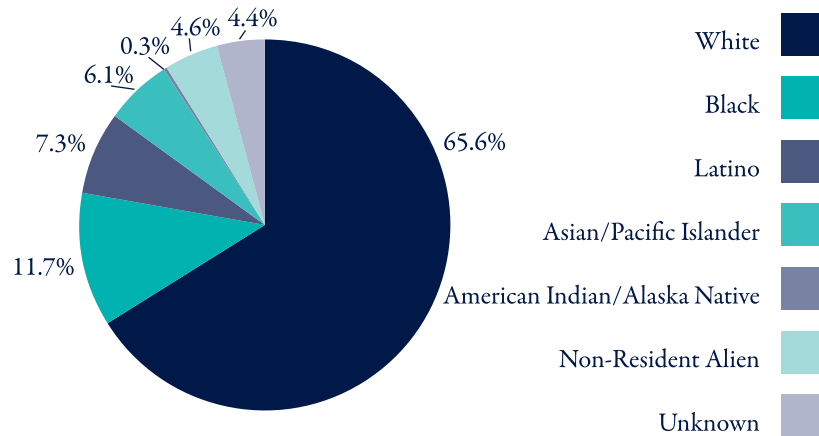


As Illinois continues working to strengthen educational opportunities from preschool to graduate school, it has made significant progress toward harnessing its transfer system to promote degree attainment. The Illinois Articulation Initiative aims to facilitate transfers between the state's higher education institutions in order to encourage degree completion. By 2007, nearly one-third of all 2007 college and university students in Illinois had transferred from a different school; more than half of these transfers were from community colleges to public or private universities.

Illinois' higher education institutions, particularly its community colleges, are challenged with educating high school graduates who are often unprepared for college-level work and lack basic skills. As the state becomes increasingly diverse, and postsecondary degrees gain in importance, educational institutions throughout the state—from elementary and middle schools to community colleges and four-year universities—must work together to improve students' college and job readiness.

# Higher Education

**Percentage of Public Degrees Conferred by Race/Ethnicity, Illinois, 2007 School Year**



Source: Illinois Board of Higher Education

**Public Degrees Conferred by Gender, Illinois, 2007 School Year**

	Male	Female	Total
All schools	42.9%	57.1%	165,382
Public universities	45.8%	54.2%	113,370
Community colleges	42.9%	57.1%	51,322
Independent not-for-profit institutions	40.4%	59.6%	58,297
Independent for-profit institutions	44.3%	55.7%	8,268

Source: Illinois Board of Higher Education

**Percentage of Public Degrees Conferred by Race/Ethnicity and School Type, Illinois, 2007 School Year**

	White	Black	Latino	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native	Non-Resident Alien	Unknown
All schools	65.6%	11.7%	7.3%	6.1%	0.3%	4.6%	4.4%
Public universities	68.3%	9.4%	5.2%	6.7%	0.3%	7.0%	3.2%
Community colleges	69.1%	15.2%	8.9%	5.4%	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%
Independent not-for-profit institutions	62.4%	8.9%	6.9%	6.5%	0.3%	6.8%	8.4%
Independent for-profit institutions	50.8%	22.2%	12.9%	4.9%	0.5%	0.9%	7.8%

Source: Illinois Board of Higher Education

## One-Year Retention Rates, Illinois, Fall 2007

	2006 Cohort	Returned Cohort	Retention Rate
All schools	81,780	58,495	71.5%
Public universities	25,729	20,811	80.9%
Community colleges	26,256	15,256	58.1%
Independent not-for-profit institutions	25,145	19,699	78.3%
Independent for-profit institutions	4,650	2,729	58.7%

Source: Illinois Board of Higher Education

## Illinois is home to:

- 9 public universities on 12 campuses
- 48 community colleges
- 94 independent not-for-profit colleges and universities
- 30 independent for-profit institutions

## Student Enrollment Transfers, Illinois, Fall 2007

Transfers to:	Public University	Community College	Non-Public University
Transfers from:			
Public university	1,128	3,331	1,345
Community college	10,603	4,663	8,517
Non-public university	983	2,147	1,745
<b>Total transfers</b>			<b>34,462</b>

Source: Illinois Board of Higher Education

# Rewriting Education Destiny: P-20 Partnerships Key to Closing Achievement Gap

By Judy Erwin

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For too many Illinois children, education destiny is written before they even enter school. There is a stubborn and pervasive achievement gap for minority and low-income students, particularly Latino and African-American students, at every stage of the educational pipeline. All too often, zip code is the determinant of education attainment. Closing that gap is a moral imperative that is fast becoming an economic one.

The days of finger pointing between education sectors and levels must end. Colleges and universities, specifically their faculty and administrators, bear a significant responsibility to ensure that elementary and high school students are taught by competent teachers with a rigorous and relevant curriculum in a school with an exceptional educational leader. We all—families, communities, business, labor and educators—must insist that a preschool to graduate school (P-20) learning continuum becomes Illinois’ plan for student success.

Just such a plan has been developed over the last year with experts and interested community members from all over the state concerned about the economic health of their own communities. Aimed at removing barriers for students of all

ages and circumstances, the Public Agenda for College and Career Success, which can be downloaded at [www.ibhe.org](http://www.ibhe.org), attempts to bring a laser focus on the needs of Illinois children, families and communities.

The question for all of us is, “Will Illinois continue to split into two states?” One is well educated, healthy and prosperous, while the other continues to be vastly underserved educationally and struggling economically. Between these two states of Illinois is a “prosperity gap” that relates directly to large and widening disparities in education attainment by race/ethnicity, by income and by region.

The Public Agenda establishes a vision for Illinois that:

1. **Increases educational attainment** to match best-performing U.S. states and world countries.
2. **Ensures college affordability** for students, families and taxpayers.
3. **Increases numbers of quality postsecondary credentials** to meet demands of the economy and an increasingly global society.

4. **Better integrates Illinois’ educational, research and innovation assets** to meet economic needs of the state and its regions.

With the state of Illinois, its children, families and communities, as the units of analysis, the Public Agenda, developed at the behest of the Illinois General Assembly, calls for critical national and international benchmarks to measure progress. It is clear from the progress made in other states that measuring what counts, championing best practices and celebrating student success, Illinois can close the prosperity gap that threatens the health and welfare of children, families and the entire state economy.

There is already good news and progress to report to create the vision of the Public Agenda. Consider that:

- Illinois has joined the American Diploma Project (ADP) in which high school and college faculty work to align content curricula, standards, rigor and expectations for high school graduation with college and career success. The ADP work will be realized when all Illinois high school diplomas mean that students are college and career ready.

- A “High School to College Success Report” is in development to provide critical feedback and collaboration between secondary and postsecondary educators, students, teachers, and communities regarding student success after high school.
- Illinois’ universal use of the ACT college entrance exam can be used as a diagnostic tool to reduce postsecondary remediation and incentivize dual enrollment for high school students capable of college level work.
- Work is progressing on the necessary comprehensive P-20 data system to drive policy reforms and accountability.
- School leadership reforms are underway to ensure that all children have the benefit of a high-quality instructional leader at the helm of each public school.

For the first time in American history, the next generation will be less well educated than their parents unless every Illinois community invests in a Public Agenda for College and Career Success.

Which state of Illinois do you want your children to inherit?