

Finish Up Illinois:

Strategic Plan and Guiding Principles for Next Steps

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AT ILLINOIS



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- Illinois Board of Higher Education
- Illinois Community College Board
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Finish Up Illinois Advisory Council

- Carl Sandburg College
- City Colleges of Chicago
- DePaul University
- Governors State University
- Heartland Community College
- Illinois MyCreditsTransfer
- Illinois State University
- Illinois Student Assistance Commission
- Kankakee Community College
- Lake Land College
- Northeastern Illinois University
- South Metro Higher Ed Consortium
- University of Illinois
- University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign



Highlights from the NCHEMS report

- At the postsecondary level, Illinois is losing ground with the greatest loss being among adults with an AA degree.
- At the high school diploma level, Illinois is closing the gap between whites and minorities, but at a rate lower than the US. At the postsecondary level the gap continues to widen.
- Illinois has improved at every step of the educational pipeline, but remains far behind best performing states at each step.
- Participation rates for low income students have improved in all states. The gain in Illinois is less than the U.S. average.
- Enrollments of adults have increased, but at rates well below most states and the US average.
- Earnings of college graduates have increased at rates greater than the US average. The exception is the wage rates of AA holders.

4 Target Student Populations

- Categories were created to help facilitate thinking about what would be beneficial to different types of students, but it is just a crude typology.
- Categories are not intended to be mutually exclusive nor comprehensive.
- Overlaps indicates the likelihood that any given student may fit in multiple categories.

4 Target Student Populations

- **Students who transfer early to a four-year institution in Illinois without having earned enough of or the correct credits to be awarded a transfer associate's degree**

Early Transfers

- 36.5% of first-time Illinois community college students transfer to a four-year university within four years of beginning their postsecondary studies, although fewer than half of these students receive a transfer or two-year credential prior to transferring
- 23,239 received a transfer credential in FY 2014, while about 50,000 transferred
- Nationwide, 78% of CC students who transfer move without an associate's degree or other credential.
- CWID: 42% of students who transferred without an associate's degree in twelve participating states had 60 credits or more at the time of transfer.

4 Target Student Populations

- **Students who are within a semester of completing the degree requirements for the associate's or baccalaureate degree, but who left the community college or four year college.**

Very close to completion

- The number in Illinois is unknown.
- Estimates from *Project Win-Win* suggest that degree attainment rates nationally could be raised by as much as 15% if the existing but unrecognized degree completers and near-completers could be awarded degrees or reengaged.

4 Target Student Populations

- **Students who leave the community college or four-year colleges with enough credits to earn a degree, but without the degree awarded.**

Potentially Completed

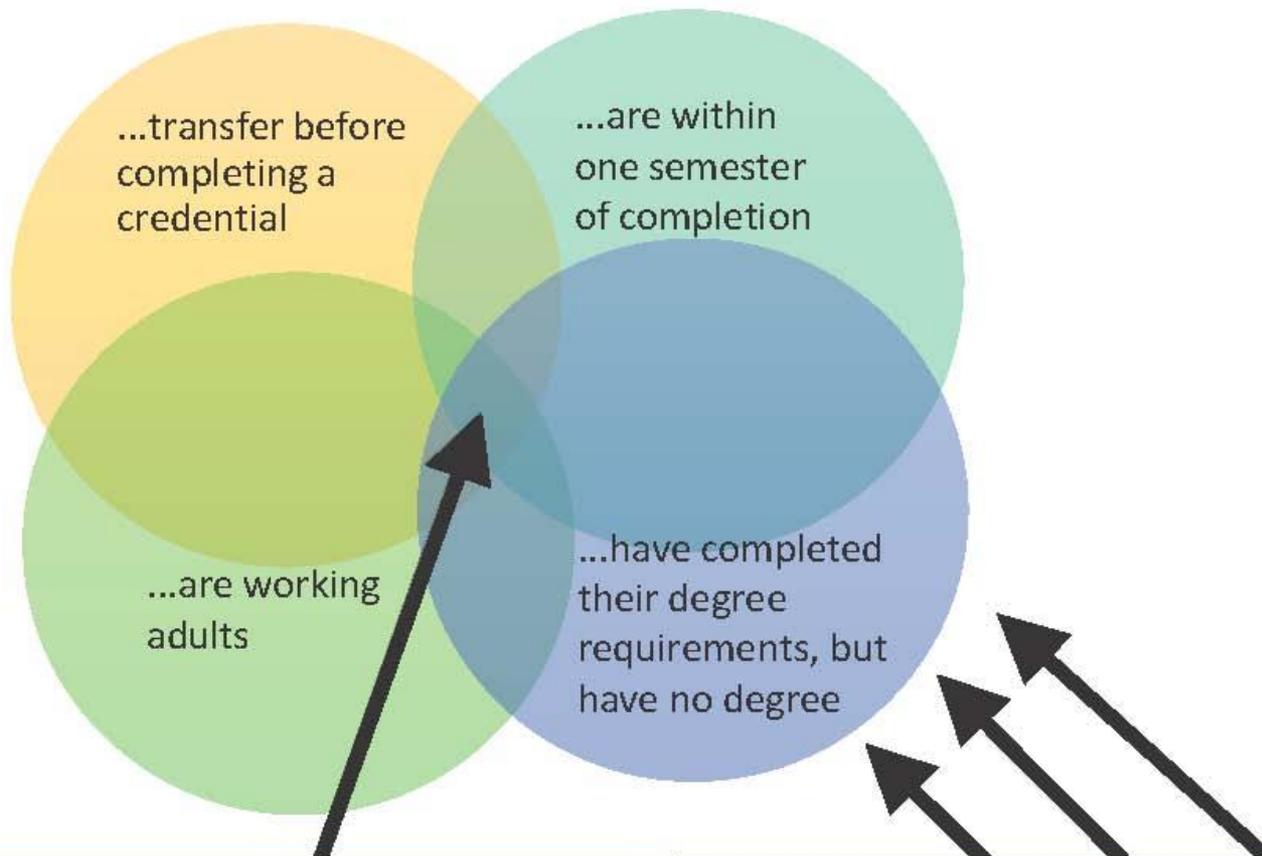
- Reasons: financial holds, failure to apply for graduation, advising errors, etc.
- Completed all academic requirements, but have not yet been awarded the degree.
- The number in Illinois is unknown, but approximately 20,000 first-time, full-time Illinois students leave community and four year colleges without a credential within 150% of their estimated time-to-degree.
- Anecdotal evidence from individual institutions suggest that the number of students who leave having earned but not applied for or received a credential may be substantial.

4 Target Student Populations

- **Working adult students**

Employment

- Most students with some college credit, but no awarded degree, are likely working adults.
- Managing employment and other adult responsibilities while studying creates additional student pressures.

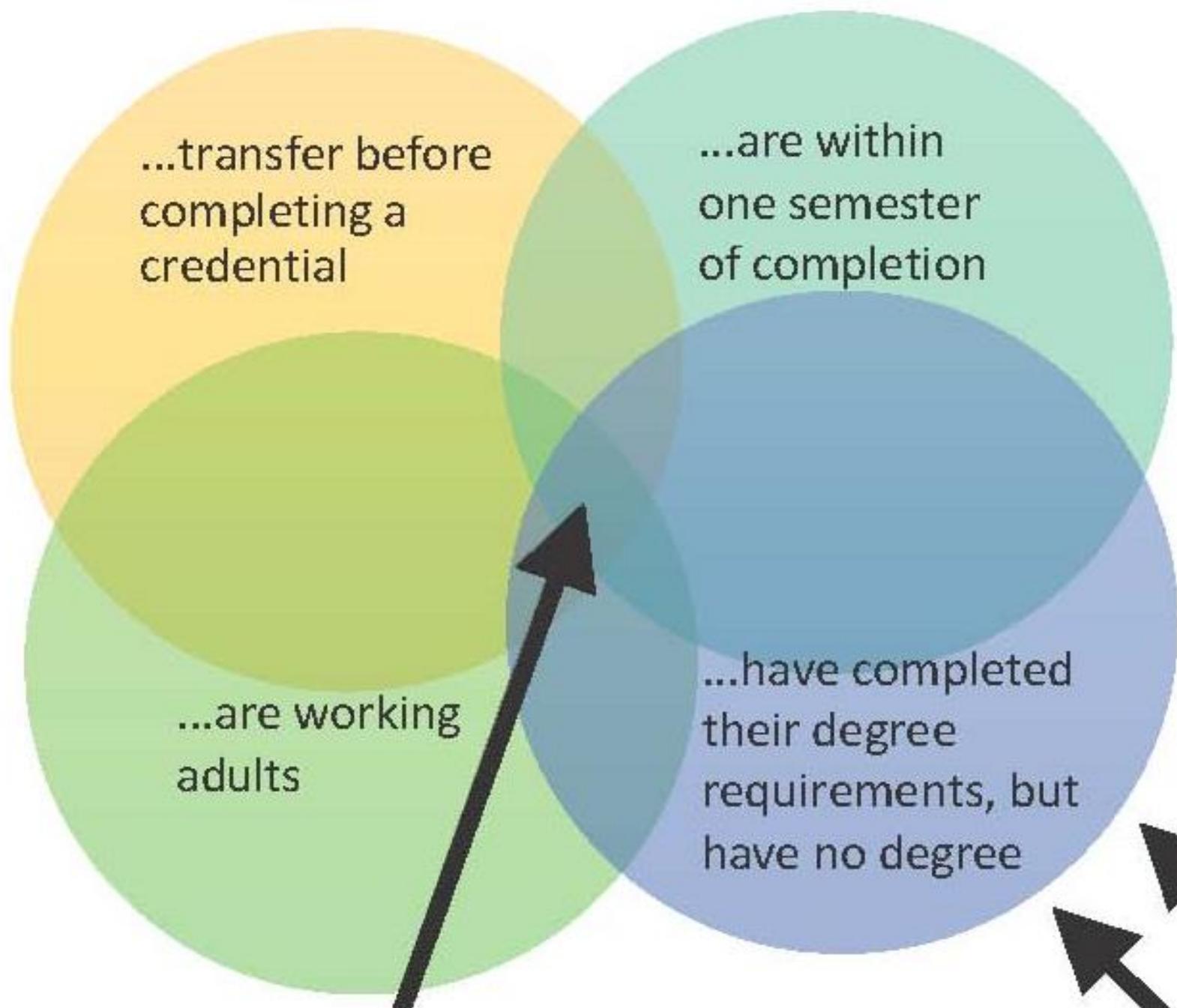


Examples of strategies that will help all populations include:

- Access to an accurate student data clearinghouse
- Transferology-based advising consortium or other advising program
- Developmental education reform
- Math pathways and alternatives
- Multi-institutional transcript delivery (electronic, automated)

Strategies that help some, but not all, populations:

- Reengagement practices for students who have left higher education
- Reverse transfer processes
- Amnesty, grade forgiveness, or other policy reform
- Prior learning assessment and/or expanded course equivalencies



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Potential Models

- Higher Education Policy (IHEP) led Project Win-Win
- Reverse Transfer Optimization: *Credit When It's Due* (CWID)

Win-Win Strategies

- Right team
- National Student Clearinghouse
- Feedback from students
- Reconcile data across systems
- Comply with FERPA
- Set aside unlikely completers
- Set more inclusive course requirements
- Automatically award earned degrees
- Remove non-academic barriers
- Rethink residency and recency

CWID

- Optimization is not about awarding credentials to students without careful scrutiny, but awarding credentials based on credits that students have rightfully earned.
- The number of associate's degrees has risen precipitously once most CWID states implemented new policies and processes to support reverse transfer.
- Change from about 3,000 degrees through reverse transfer in March 2014 to 7,400 June 2015.
- Upward trend continued to 2016.

CWID Strategies

- Creation of a viable pool of eligible students
- Use of integrated and scalable student consent methods
- Investment in electronic transcript exchange
- Automation of degree audit processes
- Expansion of course articulation and equivalencies
- Proactive advisement of near-degree completers
- Notification of degree recipients
- Conferral of degrees without added cost to students

CWID Strategies

- OCCRL researchers for CWID identified five critical processes to bring about systemic change to support reverse transfer:
 - student identification
 - student consent
 - transcript exchange
 - degree audit
 - degree conferral and advising

Education Commission of the States Strategies

- Critical role of a primary coordinating agency(ies):
 - state-specific policy implementation and oversight,
 - funding,
 - track methods of addressing FERPA regulations,
 - sustainability and coordination.
- Coordinating messaging at the state level:
 - the value of completion programs,
 - raise the level of conversation about the place of the associate's degree on the path to a bachelor's degree

Benefits

- Deepening permanent and meaningful connections across institutions
- Transform data use to facilitate student success across the post-traditional student pathway
- Shared criteria and meaning for awarding earned credentials
- Greater awareness of the value of an associate's degree
- Investigate and alleviate common “snags” or “choke points”

Actions

- Engage with the transfer coordinator group and to gain a deeper operational understanding of existing on-the-ground capacities and processes related to Finish Up Illinois strategies.
- Develop strategic goals for a diverse set of local, regional, and national funders, including coordinated campaigns to engage Chicago-based and other regional funders.
- Engage Department of Commerce and other entities.
- Identify potential employer partners.
- Encourage and support regional collaboratives such as the South Metropolitan Higher Education Consortium (SMHEC) to pursue funding to move their current college completion agendas forward.
- Develop a communications strategy to document and disseminate exemplars of Finish Up Illinois' key strategies to the field.

Actions

- Prepare “ask” statements that address a range of needs to continue the state’s campaign to improve college completion
 - small funds to help host convenings of key stakeholders
 - large grants targeting statewide infrastructure, policy, evaluation, and dissemination needs
- Continue to follow the national conversation on Project Win-Win, CWID, and Pathways to ensure that Illinois is well positioned to be funding competitive
- Continue to follow the evolving national grant activity
- Pursue an employer campaign targeting major corporate foundations

Ideas?

- Questions
- Discussion

Contact

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