



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COLLEGE CHANGES EVERYTHING™ CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS CRITICAL ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND GROWTH

CHICAGO –Almost 450 professionals, including education, government, private and non-profit leaders, came together on July 21st at the sixth annual [College Changes Everything™ \(CCE\) Conference](#) in Tinley Park, to learn from each other and collectively help advance efforts to improve college access and attainment in Illinois.

“Particularly during such a challenging fiscal period for Illinois, we need increasingly innovative solutions to build the skilled workforce that will be critical to the economic future of the state,” said Eric Zarnikow, executive director of the [Illinois Student Assistance Commission](#) (ISAC), the agency that sponsors the conference in collaboration with other statewide partners. “Education is at the core of those efforts, and by concentrating on effective practices and showcasing the resources available to help students achieve college readiness, our partners are better equipped to help Illinois students to and through college.”

Keynote speakers John M. Burnett, President and CEO of the [Community Education Coalition](#), and Jack Hess, executive director of the [Institute for Coalition Building](#), highlighted the collaborative efforts in Columbus, Indiana—where public, private and social sectors successfully used the power of community to transform the learning system through collaboration and coalition building. Attendees also heard from members of the [Higher Education Commission on the Future of the Workforce](#), who discussed their recent work to build on existing efforts to improve the link between educational programming and regional workforce needs.

Highlights from some of the day’s workshops included the standing room only presentation from first and second year college students who are former Chicago Public School students and members of the [CPS Student Advisory Council of the Mikva Challenge](#). The students presented anecdotal information from current high school and college students, as well as their own unique perspective and very personal experience regarding the most valuable and necessary resources to improve support and college persistence --particularly for first generation college students.

Jeff Mays, Director of the [Illinois Department of Employment Security](#), received this year’s College Changes Everything™ Champion Award, an annual honor presented to a person or organization that has made significant contributions to help the state improve college access and completion efforts for all Illinois students. Sam Nelson, director of outreach development at ISAC and one of the founders of the CCE Conference, praised Mays for his “unwavering dedication to improving college access and better aligning education to workforce needs.”

For more information on the conference and College Changes Everything™, visit

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<http://www.collegechangeseverything.org/events/2016-cce-conference-information.html>

PHOTOS and CAPTIONS ATTACHED in separate document.

About College Changes Everything

Sponsored by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission and its partners, College Changes Everything™ (CCE) is a college access movement that recognizes that college can be a life changing experience not only for students, but also for families and communities. In Illinois and across the nation, those who obtain education beyond high school not only see a significant impact on their potential career prospects and future salary, but also change levels of poverty, life expectancy, crime and obesity rates in their communities. The CCE movement supports the Illinois goal of increasing the proportion of adults in Illinois with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60% by the year 2025.

Find out more at www.collegechangeseverything.org.

About ISAC

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

www.isac.org

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