



**July 13, 2023 • Tinley Park Convention Center**

## **Conference Agenda**

**8:00 am – Registration Check-In Opens** (South Entry)

**8:00 - 8:30 am – Continental Breakfast** (Exhibit South)

**8:30 - 10:15 am – Welcome & Morning Plenary Session** (Exhibit South)

In conversation with:

- Dr. Susie Wise, Author: *Design for Belonging: How to Build Inclusion and Collaboration in Your Communities*
- Edith Njuguna, Director, Illinois Education and Career Success Network

**10:15 - 10:35 am – Break**

**10:35 - 11:25 am – Interest Sessions**

**11:25 - 11:40 am – Break**

**11:40 am - 12:30 pm – Interest Sessions**

**12:30 - 1:45 pm – Lunch & Program** (Exhibit South)

- CCE Champion Award
- Illinois College Access Network 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

**1:45 - 2 pm – Break**

**2:00 - 2:50 pm – Interest Sessions**

**2:50 - 3:00 pm – Break**

**3:00 - 3:50 pm – Interest Sessions**

## Interest Sessions

**Round 1 – 10:35 - 11:25 am**

- ***The FAFSA: Rolling with the Changes*** (South Pavilion 1)

The 2024-25 FAFSA will experience significant changes this fall, due to the FAFSA Simplification Act. This legislation will decrease the number of questions student and families will answer, change how income information is reported, and increase the number of students who are Pell-eligible. Join us to learn how you can prepare students and families for these changes, receive the most up-to-date information from the Department of Education, and find out how ISAC is leading the way to provide resources and support as these changes take effect.

**Presenters:** *Meghan Chrum, Professional Development Specialist, Illinois Student Assistance Commission; Thomas Semanic, Professional Development Specialist, Illinois Student Assistance Commission*

- ***The Complexity and Opportunities of Student-Centered Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access (DEIA) Work: A New Focus at John A. Logan College*** (South Pavilion 2)

Through an overview of John A. Logan College's institutional and historical profile, we will discuss the process of student-centered strategies to advance DEIA, and the complexities, challenges, and the opportunities it presents today for enrollment, retention, degree completion and student loan repayment. How do faculty and staff, other employees, and the administration engage in inclusive practices to effect progressive change and foster a sense of belonging campus-wide? How do we negotiate institutional priorities and underrepresented students' needs and concerns?

**Presenters:** *Toyin Fox, Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, John A. Logan College; Matt Garrison, Chair of Communications, Humanities and Social Sciences, John A. Logan College; Jordan Mays, Asst. Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness & Research, John A. Logan College; Christy Stewart, Assistant Provost for Student Affairs, John A. Logan College*

- ***The Importance of Early Advising and Postsecondary Pathways for Student Success*** (South Pavilion 4)

This session will cover critical interventions in grades 6-12 to facilitate in-house post-secondary programs through meaningful advising, as well as next steps to hone in on the transition zone and ease postsecondary transition through a comprehensive pathway infrastructure. It will feature information on a developmental and intentional advising framework developed by CPS staff and interventions at the time of transition such as scholarships, disability supports, specialized programming, and early college, all framed by the Chicago Roadmap - a comprehensive, unprecedented partnership between Chicago Public Schools and City Colleges of Chicago to create clear pathways from high school to college and career.

**Presenters:** *Dani Smith, Manager of Accessibility Supports, City Colleges of Chicago; Amanda Wojan, Manager of Special Projects; City Colleges of Chicago; Krystle Mason, College and Career Specialist, Chicago Public Schools; Antonio Pryor, College and Career Specialist, Chicago Public Schools*

- **Expanding College Access and Success for Latino Students and their Families** (South Pavilion 5)

This session provides an overview of research on Latino college access and success in Illinois, followed by an example of successful practices in action. To begin, the Latino Policy Forum and IWERC will share research on the individual, social, and familial factors that influence Latinx student enrollment in college, as well as the critical role that high schools can play in promoting Latinx students' academic, psychological, and navigational readiness for college. Then, NEIU will share their success with "NEIU the Crew," an initiative to engage and support students and their families during the critical outreach and enrollment phases. Participants will learn about NEIU's six-step process and the culturally responsive practices used to create student cohorts.

**Presenters:** *Nathalia Cardenas, Assistant Director, Caminos al Éxito, Northeastern Illinois University; Willie Correa, Assistant Director, Caminos al Éxito, Northeastern Illinois University; Ryan Trout, Executive Director of Admissions, Northeastern Illinois University; Mariana Barragan Torres, Research Specialist at IWERC, University of Illinois; Meg Bates, Director of IWERC, University of Illinois; Gudelia Lopez, Lopez Strategic Solutions; Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro, Director of Education Policy & Research, Latino Policy Forum*

- **Equity in Higher Education: Setting Priorities for the Higher Education System** (South Pavilion 6)

A Thriving Illinois Strategic Plan sets forth priorities to achieve a higher education ecosystem that reinforces equity, sustainability, and growth. This presentation will discuss the process, rationale, and implications of embracing equity. IBHE and ICCB will provide participants with an overview of the equity plan development process, highlighting elements of the new framework, which is required by all public institutions. Also, IBHE will discuss how equity is incorporated into the program application and review processes.

**Presenters:** *Jill Gebke, Assistant Director of Academic Affairs, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Nkechi Onwuameze; Senior Associate Director for Academic Affairs; Illinois Board of Higher Education; Ja'Neane Minor, Chief of Staff, Illinois Community College Board; Jennifer Foster, Deputy Executive Director, Illinois Community College Board*

- **Leveraging the High School Therapeutic Setting to Launch Students into Meaningful CTE Tracks** (Samuel Tinley Room)

The iCan Dream Center is a therapeutic school that serves credit deficient high school students. Attend this session and hear their students' stories and participate in a Q&A with founder and executive director, Dr. Elisha Ford. Learn why equitable, meaningful CTE opportunities are critical to the eventual success of high school students who are marginalized by learning disabilities, poverty, race, sexual orientation and more. Prepare to be inspired to get involved with the iCan Dream Center's mission to respond to the urgent societal need to slow the school to prison pipeline in suburban Chicago and beyond.

**Presenter:** *Dr. Elisha Ford, Executive Director, iCan Dream Center*

- **Navigating College** (North Pavilion 1)

Are you looking for ways to better holistically support students and connect them with resources? Are you concerned about struggling students and interested in looking at resources to help them be successful and remain at the college? If so, please join us as we discuss the importance of a Course and Benefits Navigator. Navigators can aid students in meeting their basic needs to ensure both academic and personal success, and they provide holistic, wrap-around services to support the whole student. We will provide examples of ways that Navigators have already supported faculty and influenced

students at Waubensee Community College, especially in the Career and Technical Education programs. We will continue with a discussion presented by Young Invincibles aimed at exploring and making recommendations to ways colleges and universities can continue to expand their navigation services.

**Presenters:** *Dr. Chassie Sherretz, Academic Support Manager, Waubensee Community College; Alesha Blank, Sr. Work-Based Learning Coordinator, Waubensee Community College; Mandy Denny, Academic Support Coach/Navigator, Waubensee Community College; Hannah Keller, Midwest Policy Manager, Young Invincibles*

- **Supporting Student Wellness and Mental Health at Illinois Community Colleges** (North Pavilion 2)

This session will discuss statewide efforts to promote student wellness and emotional and mental health supports for students. The session will review state support for the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act and discuss current initiatives, best practices, and future plans for supporting colleges' efforts to implement mental health programs and initiatives.

**Presenter:** *Marcus Brown, Deputy Director, Academic Affairs & Student Success, Illinois Community College Board*

- **Preparing Gen Z Entering the Workforce** (North Pavilion 3)

The economy has shifted over the past few years, impacting the job market for recent college graduates (Gen Z). During this session, facilitators will share data trends related to the labor market as well as Gen Z's career concerns as they enter the workforce. Facilitators will share best practices and learnings their organization uses to support Gen Z focusing on the skills needed to land a strong first job.

**Presenters:** *Jose Torres, Program Manager, Recruitment and Workforce Strategy, Braven; Emily Ashton, Chief External Affairs Officer, America Needs You*

- **Creating Supportive Pathways Through Higher Education for the Early Childhood Workforce** (North Pavilion 5)

The Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) is a comprehensive statewide initiative designed to support the early childhood workforce to access and complete credentials and degrees. As part of ECACE, the Early Childhood Education Online Workforce Program at Illinois State University leverages innovative strategies to support working adults in an undergraduate program. You will gain insight on institutional best practices for working with nontraditional students, as well as key takeaways from statewide collaboration.

**Presenters:** *Jennifer Hernandez, Assistant Project Director, Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Melissa Ramirez-Osorio, Academic Advisor, Illinois State University; Yadira Ramirez, Success Coach and Recruitment Coordinator, Illinois State University*

- **Stronger Than They Know: Supporting Students of Color in Recognizing Common Obstacles and Utilizing Resilience to Succeed in Higher Education** (North Pavilion 6)

As a professor serving in a College of Education, I have consistently witnessed the amount of first generation, students of color increase over the past decade. Throughout this time these students have diligently worked to navigate the unknown and ultimately treacherous waters of the institution of higher education. This session will help to identify common barriers faced by many POC in academia and strategies to overcome these obstacles.

**Presenter:** *Dr. Natalie Young, Assistant Professor, Northern Illinois University*

**Round 2 – 11:40 am - 12:30 pm**

- **A Brisk PaCE** (South Pavilion 1)

2022 brought new and exciting changes and opportunities in the world of the Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) Framework which includes Public Act 102-0917, the first annual PaCE Symposium, the new PaCE Implementation support and continuation our PaCE Framework Development workshop that were offered virtually. As schools prepare to adopt a college and career framework as part of Public Act 102-0917 join us to help you be prepared for the adoption and implementation of a framework through 2023.

**Presenter:** *Ana Moya, Professional Development Specialist, Illinois Student Assistance Commission*

- **Supporting First Generation Students from High School to College Completion** (South Pavilion 2)

ISAC's First Generation Scholars Network (FGSN) is connecting first generation college students with one another so they can support each other through this network, providing additional support from ISAC's First Generation Scholars Network mentors, combating summer melt, and helping make transition to college a whole lot easier—and successful. ISAC is partnering with colleges and universities to help ensure students develop a sense of belonging through the network and get them connected to the campus staff, programs, and services to support them. Effective support for these students must include strategic plans that prioritize a smooth transition into college combined with continued structured support that results in increased retention and college completion rates. Students thrive when they connect with community care options that foster a sense of belonging on campus. Providing support for academic and social success must be a focus for all stakeholders. Learn how to use your current campus-wide resources to promote community care and assist students with accomplishing the goal of college graduation.

**Presenters:** *Dr. Karen P. Walker, Dean of Academic, Center for Learning Strategies, Coordinator, Men of Color Mentorship Program; Abel Montoya, Director of Outreach Operations, Illinois Student Assistance Commission*

- **Supporting ESL Students and Families Through the College Application Process** (South Pavilion 4)

The college process itself is already daunting. Imagine navigating this process as an ESL learner and potentially a first-generation high school graduate in America. Through this workshop attendees will gain knowledge and insight on how to support ESL students, families, and staff as they complete applications for postsecondary plans.

**Presenters:** *Erin Freeman, School Counselor, Rockford Public Schools District 205; Leshanda Ausler, School Counselor, Rockford Public Schools District 205; Hannah Rose Budzynski, ISACorps Regional Coordinator, Illinois Student Assistance Commission*

- **Conceptualizing Adequacy-Based Funding for Illinois** (South Pavilion 5)

Partnership for College Completion (PCC) will present takeaways from our recent report outlining innovative ways to approach adequate funding for public four-year universities. Using Illinois-specific data, we examine the connection between state appropriations, institutional expenditures, and student outcomes and problematize current approaches to postsecondary funding. Our presentation will conclude with recommendations for

developing an adequacy-based funding model and we will engage participants in a discussion on technical challenges emerging in research and practice.

**Presenters:** *Mike Abrahamson, Senior Manager of Research and Policy, Partnership for College Completion; Caitlin Power, Policy Analyst, Partnership for College Completion*

- ***A Statewide View of Career and Technical Education*** (South Pavilion 6)

This session will discuss the opportunities students have in Career and Technical Education in Illinois in high school. Learn more about college and career pathway endorsements, industry credential, work-based learning, career exploration and how high school and colleges can work together to support career and technical education.

**Presenter:** *Marci Johnson, Director CTE and Innovation, Illinois State Board of Education*

- ***Focus on Equity: Guidance for Supporting Students with Disabilities and Their Higher Education Transition*** (North Pavilion 1)

This session will provide information and guidance for moving forward to assist students with disabilities transitioning from high school into college and on to work. A goal of Vocational Rehabilitation is to maximize outreach to students seeking a post-secondary education. The goal includes outreach to educational leaders, counselors, case managers, prospective families and students to educate them with in-depth information on the process for students with disabilities. This session will address questions such as: What is a disability? Who is eligible for sponsorship? What to expect in the counselor/client relationship? How to make a referral? The takeaway will be the improvement of the experience through the education of our consumers of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. We will then highlight the roles and responsibilities that students with disabilities will have in obtaining disability accommodations services at the higher education level. Information regarding the college application process, applying for disability services, explanation of reasonable accommodations, and how to seek support will be covered. Information on the innovative programs and services that exceed federal requirements for students with disabilities enrolled at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign will be shared.

**Presenters:** *Susann Sears, Director, Beckwith Residential Support Services (BRSS) Disability Resources & Educational Services (DRES) - University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign; Pamela Geddes, Public Service Administrator, DHS/Division of Rehabilitation Illinois; Nicole McNeal McGee, Public Service Administrator, DHS/Division of Rehabilitation Illinois*

- ***Dual Credit and the PWR Act: Best Practices for Increasing Dual Credit Offerings in Schools*** (North Pavilion 2)

This session will be facilitated by the Illinois P-20 Network and the Illinois Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (ILACEP). Together, Illinois P-20 Network and ILACEP have facilitated a diverse group of secondary and postsecondary educators working to identify solutions to the most complex issues affecting student access to dual credit courses. Attendees will learn about local and regional practices that are helping to increase the number of dual credit instructors via the implementation of professional development plans, the use of equivalent experience, and how to leverage these opportunities to meet the needs of the PWR Act.

**Presenters:** *Michael Kennedy, Director of AVID, Grants, and College/Career Readiness, Huntley Community Unit District 158; Lisa Haegele, Manager of Dual Credit/Dual Enrollment, College of DuPage; Rodrigo Lopez, Director of P-20 Initiatives, Illinois P-20 Network (NIU)*

- **Overcoming the Effects of Trauma in Postsecondary Programming** (North Pavilion 3)

In this session, we examine how trauma experiences (ACES) result in the development of both risk factors and protective factors in teens and young adults, specifically those in the foster care system. With a specific eye toward post-secondary attainment, we discuss asset-based programming that can bolster students' strengths and mitigate risk

**Presenters:** *Kate Danielson, Executive Director, Foster Progress; Gabe Schendler, Mentoring & Scholarship Program Manager, Foster Progress*

- **One Million Degrees - City Colleges of Chicago Expanded Partnership, One Year In: Lessons for Practitioners** (North Pavilion 5)

In the fall of 2022, One Million Degrees (OMD) and City Colleges of Chicago initiated a new partnership to extend OMD's wraparound supports as an embedded services for nearly all new and re-enrolling students at Olive-Harvey College (OHC). OHC was the pilot campus before the partnership expands to Malcolm X in 2023 and additional colleges in the future. In this session, program leaders from both OMD and OHC, as well as evaluation partners from University of Chicago, will share how they went about integrating their student practices, what they learned along the way, and what's next for the partnership.

**Presenters:** *Marvin Slaughter, Portfolio Manager, College & Career Success, UChicago Inclusive Economy Lab; PuraCarina Gonzalez, Senior Director, Program Innovation, One Million Degrees; Kimberley Hollingsworth, President, Olive-Harvey College (CCC); Caress Brown-Miller, Associate Dean of Advising, Olive-Harvey College (CCC)*

- **Workforce Equity Initiative: Supporting and Credentialing Thousands of Black Learners in High Demand Training Programs** (North Pavilion 6)

The Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI), with 18 participating colleges, will share successful strategies for removing barriers to educational attainment and employment. Learn about the grant's two-year results and collaborations implemented to support African Americans in Illinois. The program has served over 6,500 learners producing over 6,100 credentials in high-demand employment sectors. By providing critical support services, WEI has archived an average 61% completion rate and a 67% employment rate over the first two years.

**Presenters:** *Jennifer K. Foster, Deputy Executive Director, Illinois Community College Board; Dawn Koeltzow, Workforce Equity Project Director, Illinois Central College*

<b>Round 3 – 2:00 - 2:50 pm</b>
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- **The FAFSA Is Not an Extracurricular Activity** (South Pavilion 1)

To ensure equity and access to financial aid and postsecondary education, we must create and adopt a system where all students are ensured access to support and assistance with the FAFSA and financial aid application completion. We emphasize the importance of these yet often leave them as something to do afterschool or in spare times that are not an option for all students. Incorporating FAFSA into the school day is imperative not only for access and equity but to create a college-going culture and increase accountability within school staff.

**Presenter:** *Sara Espinosa, Manager of Training and Development, Illinois Student Assistance Commission*

- ***How Academic Match, Social Fit, and Affordability Impact Enrollment, Persistence, and Transfer Choices*** (South Pavilion 2)

As students weigh whether and where to attend college, three factors are often considered: Academic match, social fit, and affordability. This presentation draws on a mix-method study to understand how these factors structure students' college choices and whether they enroll and persist in college. We'll also discuss how to support college professionals when counseling students about the transfer process.

**Presenters:** *Shantá Robinson, Assistant Professor, Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy and Practice; Nhu Nguyen, Research Associate, The University of Chicago Inclusive Economy Lab; Felipe Hernandez, Project Manager, The University of Chicago Inclusive Economy Lab; Tyanna McCann Weaver, Director, Transfer Center, Olive-Harvey College, City Colleges of Chicago*

- ***Unlocking Access: The Power and Promise of Higher Education for Justice-Involved Individuals in Illinois*** (South Pavilion 4)

Higher education opportunities for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals play a critical role in closing racial equity gaps and restoring educational equity for marginalized communities. Drawing from personal experience with higher education in prison programs, recent research, and emerging partnerships, this expert panel will discuss the current landscape of higher education in prison and amplify opportunities to unlock access to higher ed for justice-involved individuals.

**Presenters:** *Maria Cynthia (MC) Anderson, Illini Science Policy Program Scholar, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Michael Brawn, Prison to Gown Pathway Manager, Education Justice Project at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; Angel Pantoja, Project Coordinator, Illinois Coalition for Higher Education in Prison; Ashton Hoselton, Policy & Research Director, Education Justice Project at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign*

- ***CIS360 - College and Career Readiness for All*** (South Pavilion 5)

The vision to create and cultivate unique opportunities of post-secondary success for our students has been realized in the newly designed CIS360 college and career portal. Through self-awareness, career exploration, and the development of career management and planning skills, CIS360 endeavors to approach college and career readiness in a DEIA-centered and student-focused way. This gives students the career exploration tools and labor market information necessary to succeed in life. Attend this session and learn how CIS360 can help!

**Presenters:** *Troy McMillan, Labor Market & Career Resources Specialist, Illinois Department of Employment Security; Toni Genova, Special Education Teacher, Buffalo Grove High School*

- ***Two Steps Ahead: Gamifying First Year College Success*** (South Pavilion 6)

In this workshop, we will present an innovative approach to preparing high school students for their first year of college. This project, designed and tested by Waukegan to College interns, is a simulation card game that walks participants through real-life scenarios commonly experienced by first-generation college students and challenges them to make decisions in complex situations. Based on our learnings through our College Persistence Program, the session will demonstrate how our students' unique experiences as first-generation college students underscore the importance of preparing high school students for the pivotal transition after graduation with skills such as critical thinking, decision-making, prioritization, and learning where to look for resources and guidance.

**Presenters:** *Aaron Arnold, Executive Director, Waukegan to College; Krystina Briones, College Persistence Manager, Waukegan to College*

- ***Collaborating for Student Success; Strategic Partnerships Between Financial Aid and University Support Services*** (North Pavilion 1)

Forging strong working relationships and streamlined processes to support students is key to on-going student success. Through strategic partnership between the Office of Financial Aid and additional university support services like advising, outreach, and career development, Western Illinois University is focused on aligning services and support for student success. Presenters will discuss leveraging financial aid to support student success through advising and academic support services, collaborating on review and update of institutional policies, and focused collaboration on outreach efforts. The audience will leave with insight on implementing collaborative processes for retention efforts as well as approaches to student outreach.

**Presenters:** *Justin Schuch, Executive Director of Retention Initiatives, Western Illinois University; Roberta Smith, Director of Financial Aid, Western Illinois University*

- ***Working with, for, and about Adult Education Students: A Coaching Experience*** (North Pavilion 2)

The pandemic demonstrated an increase in socio-emotional and academic needs across student communities—none so much as Adult Education. Within the last two years, Waubensee Community College’s Academic Support and Adult Education divisions collaborated on the creation of an Academic Support Coach position to work with, for, and about Adult Education students. This session will focus on the experiences of coaching Adult Education students at Waubensee Community College, lessons learned, and considerations.

**Presenter:** *Sandy González, Academic Support Coach and Navigator, Waubensee Community College*

- ***IPP in 2023: Growing to Meet Your Needs - Now with Illinois State Profile Data and More!*** (North Pavilion 3)

Illinois Postsecondary Profiles continues to grow to meet the needs of our stakeholders: students, families, researchers, and postsecondary institutions across Illinois. Come see what we’ve already added in 2023 (state sector-based data and more) and get a sneak preview of what’s coming later this year (you won’t want to miss it!).

**Presenter:** *Alan Clemens, Director, Illinois Interactive Report Cards, Northern Illinois University*

- ***College and Career Pathway Endorsement (CCPE) Overview*** (North Pavilion 5)

This session will provide an overview of the College and Career Pathway Endorsement (CCPE) framework which is outlined in HB3296. Participants will learn about the CCPE requirements, including the individualized learning plan, career-focused instruction, career exploration activities, 60 hours of internships or similar experiences, and early college credit. This presentation will also share best practices and resources for educators to use in their development of CCPEs.

**Presenter:** *Heather Lueken, Principal Consultant–School Counseling/Arts and Communications, Illinois State Board of Education*

- ***Diagnosis Professional Judgment*** (North Pavilion 6)

An aid administrator may use professional judgment, on a case-by-case basis - only after a careful evaluation of a student’s unique circumstances. This session will cover institutional consistency of applying PJ for similar cases involving changes in financial situation, special circumstances, dependency override, and standards of academic progress.

**Presenter:** *Maureen Amos, Executive Director of Financial Aid, Northeastern Illinois University*

**Round 4 – 3:00 - 3:50 pm**

- ***Unifying Educational Equity: Illinois' Undocumented Students*** (South Pavilion 1)

Undocumented students face continuous barriers to higher education. In Illinois, there are resources to ease the challenges of being ineligible for federal aid as well as understanding the college-going process, perhaps as a first-generation student. In this session, we will examine how to best support undocumented students, look at the current state of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, and emphasize how Illinois provides opportunities when it comes to equitable education for undocumented students.

**Presenters:** *Elizabeth Groves, Professional Development Specialist, Illinois Student Assistance Commission; Manuel Talavera, Professional Development Specialist, Illinois Student Assistance Commission*

- ***Invest in Biliteracy–The Seal of Biliteracy Earns College Credit*** (South Pavilion 4)

The Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy is an award earned by graduating high school seniors who have shown working proficiency in English and at least one other language. Public colleges and universities in the state must award college credit for the Seal of Biliteracy. Learn about the program, how to implement it, and how much money your students and families can save by attaining biliteracy in high school.

**Presenters:** *Karen Skinner, Principal Consultant, Illinois State Board of Education; Christine Anderson, Instructional Supervisor for English Learners, Glenbrook High School District 225*

- ***Rural Illinois: Nurturing Rural Roots, Fostering College Futures*** (South Pavilion 5)

This session will explore the unique challenges faced by rural high school and college students and the strides the Rural Area Student Initiative (RASI), a student organization at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, is taking to address those challenges. Attendees will leave with a deeper understanding of the experiences of rural high school and college students, the importance of creating a supportive environment for rural students, and actionable strategies they can implement at their institutions to support these rural student populations.

**Presenter:** *Liz Soellner, Student Organization Founder & President, Rural Area Student Initiative*

- ***Textbook Affordability: Why It Matters and How to Take Action*** (North Pavilion 1)

Textbook affordability is a long-standing barrier to college access and successful student outcomes. More than 84% of first-generation college students reported not buying a required textbook for class due to cost (Jenkins, JJ, et al. 2020). Join us for an in-depth look at how one College has focused on affordability efforts campus-wide, including engaging faculty, planning for future models like Equitable Access, finding and implementing OER titles, and roadblocks encountered along the way.

**Presenters:** *Jessica Berek, Dean, Health Sciences, Kishwaukee College; Jessica Anderson, Director, Bookstore, Printing, and Mail Services, Kishwaukee College*

- **Illinois workNet - Helps You Overcome Challenges that Impact DEIA** (North Pavilion 2)

Access to all tools for Illinois residents is crucial to success on the job. We will demonstrate the tools and resources available to help anyone establishing their career pathway available on Illinois workNet. We built a number of tools specific to being prepared for the work world and partner with other organizations to provide the complete package.

**Presenter:** *Dee Reinhardt, Project Manager, Illinois workNet*

- **How We ALL Succeed: A Proven Equity Strategy for Schools** (North Pavilion 3)

The community school strategy, rooted in equity, puts the whole student and their needs at the center. Community schools prepare students for college and career success by exposing them to career options in afterschool, supporting basic needs to encourage learning, and increasing attendance and graduation rates. Attendees will learn the four pillars of this model, how this strategy promotes equitable practices, and walk away with action items to move their school toward this model.

**Presenters:** *Lesley Rivers, Program Coordinator, ACT Now; Mia Xia, Policy & Communications Intern, ACT Now; Michael Guilmette, Policy & Communications Intern, ACT Now; Amy Ji, Policy & Communications Intern, ACT Now; Emma Spencer, Policy and Communications Manager, ACT Now*

- **Public Housing Approaches to Working with the Non-Traditional Student** (North Pavilion 5)

The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) seeks to increase the academic achievement of all its residents through local programs and scholarships. CHA's Youth Opportunities team will highlight our approach to serving non-traditional students and discuss changes made to reduce barriers for residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. In our presentation, you will learn about CHA's programs that support non-traditional students, including: Partners in Education (PiE), a partnership with City Colleges of Chicago, CHA/S2S Scholarship Program, and the goal-focused Family Self-Sufficiency Program.

**Presenters:** *Emily Damsen, Education Program Specialist, Chicago Housing Authority; Grant Vitale, Education Program Specialist, Chicago Housing Authority; Gionna Branch, Director of Family Self-Sufficiency, Chicago Housing Authority*

- **Climate and Equitable Jobs Act: A Model for Equitable Workforce Training** (North Pavilion 6)

This session will provide an overview of DCEO's launch of the Illinois Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) workforce programs and how they will be utilizing best practices to reach underrepresented students, provide career and technical education, ensure robust wraparound supports, and involve community stakeholders. Community colleges throughout Illinois will be participating in the CEJA workforce hubs to grow the clean energy workforce in underinvested communities.

**Presenter:** *Brian Richard, Assistant Director-Team Leader: Workforce Development and Economic Analysis, Center for Governmental Studies, Northern Illinois University*