



July 16, 2026 | Tinley Park Convention Center

Ongoing Conference Experiences

8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Prefunction South

Art Installation: *Freedom to Learn, Opportunity to Grow*

9:50 a.m. – 3:50 p.m.
South Pavilion 1

Collage Studio: Visualizing Our Work with Students

Conference Agenda

8:00 a.m.
South Entrance

Registration & Check-in Opens

8:00 – 8:30 a.m.
Exhibit South

Continental Breakfast

8:30 – 9:30 a.m.
Exhibit South

Welcome & Morning Plenary Session

Keynote Speaker: *Jacqueline Moreno, Chief Service Officer, ISAC*

9:30 – 9:50 a.m.

Break

9:50 – 10:40 a.m.
Breakout Rooms

Interest Sessions (A)

10:40 – 11:00 a.m.

Break

11:00 – 11:50 a.m.
Breakout Rooms

Interest Sessions (B)

11:50 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
*Exhibit South
Chicago*

Lunch & Program

Keynote Speaker: *Enrique Rodríguez, News Anchor, Univision*

1:30 – 1:50 p.m.

Break

1:50 – 2:40 p.m.
Breakout Rooms

Interest Sessions (C)

2:40 – 3:00 p.m.

Break

3:00 – 3:50 p.m.
Breakout Rooms

Interest Sessions (D)

Ongoing Conference Experiences

8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Art Installation: Freedom to Learn, Opportunity to Grow: Journeys Across Illinois

Prefunction South

Freedom to Learn, Opportunity to Grow is a photographic exploration of Illinois as a place where every student's journey begins and evolves. This collection celebrates the spaces where learning takes root and growth takes flight. Across Illinois – from quiet rural landscapes to vibrant urban corridors – each photograph reflects the diverse environments that inspire students to explore, imagine, and progress toward meaningful futures. Together, they trace the pathways that support every learner's journey and the promise of futures shaped by freedom and opportunity.

9:50 a.m. – 3:50 p.m.

Collage Studio: Visualizing Our Work with Students

South Pavilion 2

A drop-in creative space open after the morning general session, the Collage Studio invites participants to pause, reflect, and visually express the heart of their work with students. In alignment with this year's theme, **Education Matters**, this studio offers a calming environment where you can explore your role, purpose, and intentions within postsecondary education through the art of collage.

Using images, textures, words, and color, participants will craft a poster that illustrates the impact they strive to make — whether supporting student success, shaping equitable pathways, strengthening community, or advocating for access and opportunity. The Collage Studio encourages you to slow down, recharge, and reconnect with the “why” behind your work, sparking meaningful conversations with colleagues along the way.

Participants will also leave the **Collage Studio** with a practice companion designed to help them carry the experience forward. This resource connects the creative work of the session to everyday practice, offering prompts and tools they can use to spark meaningful conversations with colleagues, students, and partners in their own schools or organizations.

As we gather around the importance and value of education, this space reminds us that understanding and expressing our purpose is just as essential as the work itself.

Interest Sessions A (9:50 – 10:40 a.m.)

State Attainment Goal Working Group Engagement Session

South Pavilion 1

This is a stakeholder engagement convening led by the State Attainment Working Group to gather input on the role education is playing or should play to drive economic mobility and strengthen state and regional economies. The resulting goal will be a North Star for how education matters in Illinois and help drive aligned policies and strategic partnerships that ensure education is unlocking meaningful outcomes for students and the state.

Presenter: Madeline Price, Director of State Policy & Strategy, HCM Strategists

The Last Jedi: Embracing Core Values in Changing Times

South Pavilion 3

As the student aid galaxy evolves, our core values help us stay steady. This session highlights the key 2027–28 FAFSA changes including real-time results, enhanced identity verification, and OB3A impacts on federal student aid. Together, we'll navigate these new frontiers like seasoned Jedi, strengthening our ability to support students with clarity, courage, and resilience. You'll leave prepared to lead them through every step of the journey, no matter how the stars shift.

Presenters: Krystal Sanchez, Training and Development Specialist, Illinois Student Assistance Commission; Maureen Amos, Executive Director of Financial Aid, Northeastern Illinois University

PaCE Yourself: Scaling College & Career Success with CIS 360

South Pavilion 4

Illinois school counselors are positioned to utilize the PaCE framework as a statewide resource, yet many may face uncertainty about how to move beyond one-on-one advising conversations toward a more systemic approach. This session will be organized around understanding the PaCE framework, with the practical student facing capabilities of Career Information System (CIS) 360. Special attention will be given to equity considerations, such as how PaCE with CIS 360 can be used to ensure that students regardless of background are receiving consistent high school college and career guidance. Finally, this session will address barriers to implementation of the framework and offer resources to combat them.

Presenters: Salma Uribe, Training and Development Specialist, Illinois Student Assistance Commission; Zoe Hovde, Training and Development Specialist, Illinois Student Assistance Commission

Wellness as a Persistence Strategy: Supporting Mental Health to Improve Post-Secondary Outcomes

South Pavilion 5

Mental health and wellness are critical to students' long-term success. In this session, UtmostU and OpenSeat will share how a collaborative, technology-enabled wellness partnership helps postsecondary students navigate barriers to persistence. Attendees will explore how strategic partnerships and embedded wellness monitoring can strengthen student support systems, particularly for first-generation and low-income students, while empowering students to build ecosystems of support that increase connection, confidence, and persistence toward their goals.

Presenters: Amanda Bates-Kravitz, Director of Programs, UtmostU; Bridget Leduc-Holiday, Senior Director of Operations and Partner Success, OpenSeat; Gabriella Pierre Louis, Manager of Partnerships, UtmostU

Illinois Postsecondary Profiles (IPP) 2026: New Data, New Directions, New Conversations

South Pavilion 6

IPP is the premiere comprehensive postsecondary information portal in Illinois. Join us for a conversation about what we've most recently added (outcome data), where we're headed (statewide postsecondary accountability dashboard reporting), and new opportunities to engage (new stakeholder advisory group)!

Presenters: Alan Clemens, Director, Illinois Interactive Report Cards, Northern Illinois University

Understanding Young People's Perceptions of College

North Pavilion 1

Join us as we share new research from the Illinois Center for Education Equity at Chicago State University exploring what drives, and deters, the next generation of college students. Discover what today's students think about the value and accessibility of higher education, their ambitions for the future, and how institutions can better support those who feel uncertain or disengaged about attending college.

Presenters: Meghan McShan, Research Assistant, Chicago State University; Myron Hester, Chief of Network 17, Chicago Public Schools

Reframing Masculinity: Supporting Boys and Men in a Changing World

North Pavilion 2

Across education, employment, mental health, and family life, many boys and men are feeling left behind, yet these challenges often go unnoticed or remain politically polarized. This workshop explores modern masculinity and outlines the systemic and cultural shifts contributing to its impact on social and academic life. Crucially, the workshop does not advocate for a return to traditional gender roles. Instead, it emphasizes practical, inclusive, and evidence-based strategies to support boys and men, reframing masculinity in a way that is both empowering and modern. Through interactive activities, group discussion, and scenario analysis, participants will leave equipped with concrete tools to apply in schools, organizations, and communities. The session aims to foster nuanced dialogue and develop practitioner-led solutions without falling into ideological traps or cultural war framing.

Presenters: Ethan Richter, Training and Development Specialist, Illinois Student Assistance Commission; Brandon Perez, Youth Outreach Specialist, Illinois Student Assistance Commission

Black Student Success in Illinois: An Exploration of the Data

North Pavilion 3

This session will engage participants in inquiry about Black student experiences in Illinois educational systems. First, researchers from the Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC) and the Institute for Racial Justice at Loyola University Chicago will highlight data from three key points in Black students' trajectories: (1) aligning the early childhood to K-12 transition, (2) supporting Black-serving K12 schools, and (3) ensuring equitable workforce outcomes from similar pathways. Second, participants will discuss and plan actions around each of these inquiry points.

Presenters: Amy Bedford, Research and Evaluation Associate, Institute for Racial Justice, Loyola University Chicago; Meg Bates, Director of IWERC, University of Illinois; Stephanie Werner, IWERC Senior Research Specialist, University of Illinois

From Classroom to Career: How Educators and Industry Partners Can Build Meaningful Work-Based Learning Experiences

North Pavilion 4

As employers across industries continue to face workforce shortages and students seek clearer connections between education and career opportunities, partnerships between educators and industry leaders have become more critical than ever. This panel discussion will explore how schools, colleges, workforce organizations, and employers can collaborate to create meaningful, hands-on work-based learning experiences that prepare students for both college and careers. Facilitated by Melinda McIntire, Director of Workforce Development for the Illinois Hotel & Lodging Association, the session will feature educators who have successfully partnered with

industry to provide students with meaningful work-based learning opportunities. Panelists will share practical examples of successful partnerships, lessons learned, barriers encountered, and strategies for building sustainable employer-engagement models that directly benefit students. The discussion will focus on how education and industry can move beyond one-time career fairs toward deeper collaborations that create real career pathways and equitable access to opportunity.

Presenters: Ericka Kouba, Career Coordinator, Des Plaines Valley Region (DVR); Sahrish Russell, Sr. Director, Corporate Work Study Program (CWSP), Cristo Rey Jesuit High School; Deborah Bosco, Career Development Manager, Kendall College at National Louis University; Linda Bloomfield, Career Resource Specialist, Adlai E. Stevenson High School

Whose Work? Our Work! Redefining the Journey for Brothers and Hermanos

North Pavilion 5

Moving beyond compliance, this session introduces a liberatory framework to dismantle systemic barriers facing Black and Latine male students. Through the COBALT model and themes, participants will explore the "Mirror and Window" self-audit and student-led data. Attendees will leave with actionable, asset-based strategies to foster authentic belonging, honor students' radical dreams, and transform institutional practices from the ground up to ensure postsecondary persistence and success.

Presenters: Jamie Enge, College and Career Equity Specialist, Chicago Public Schools; Miguel Saucedo, Director, Postsecondary Scholarships and Interventions, Chicago Public Schools

Interest Sessions B (11:00 – 11:50 a.m.)

State Attainment Goal Working Group Engagement Session

South Pavilion 1

This is a stakeholder engagement convening led by the State Attainment Working Group to gather input on the role education is playing or should play to drive economic mobility and strengthen state and regional economies. The resulting goal will be a North Star for how education matters in Illinois and help drive aligned policies and strategic partnerships that ensure education is unlocking meaningful outcomes for students and the state.

Presenter: Madeline Price, Director of State Policy & Strategy, HCM Strategists

Supporting Foster, Homeless, and Undocumented Students in Postsecondary Planning

South Pavilion 3

Students in Foster Care, unaccompanied homeless youth, and undocumented students face unique barriers when it comes to obtaining a postsecondary education. Join us for a scenario-based approach to better understand the specific needs of these student populations and to learn about effective strategies and resources available to help support students in their postsecondary planning journey. Attendees will also receive information about programs and support services offered at ISAC and Illinois 2-year and 4-year institutions. Additionally, attendees will learn about the programs available through Illinois DCFS and how to access them.

Presenters: Nicole Boyd, Training and Development Specialist, ISAC; Laura Gutierrez, Post Secondary Education Specialist, IL Dept of Children and Family Services

Fixing the Formula: Targeting Wealth in State Financial Aid Policy

South Pavilion 4

State financial aid formulas mostly do not consider students' wealth, and PCC will present its new research showing how this leaves low-income, low-wealth students underfunded, in debt, and far less likely to graduate. For example, 20% of students from low-income, low-wealth households are predicted to go on to complete a bachelor's degree, compared to 59% of students from low-income, higher-wealth households. In this interactive session we'll co-create real policy solutions to target aid for greatest impact.

Presenters: Mike Abrahamson, Director of Policy and Research, The Partnership for College Completion; Giselle Palacios, Research and Data Associate, The Partnership for College Completion

Beyond Orientation: Building a First Year Experience That Actually Works

South Pavilion 5

Many institutions rely on orientation and disconnected programs, but one-time efforts are not enough for first-year students. This session shares how National Louis University built a connected first-year [academic] experience through the Student Success Summit, our Student Success Seminar course, academic intervention workshops and early major exploration. Attendees will learn how to embed consistent, relationship-centered support across the student journey and leave with strategies to move from scattered programs to a scalable system.

Presenter: Tatiana L. Roberts, Director & Assistant Professor, First Year Academic Experience, National Louis University

An Introduction to the Illinois PaCE Curriculum for 6th-8th Grade

South Pavilion 6

This session will present the newly designed Illinois PaCE curriculum tailored for students in grades 6 through 8. Participants will explore how the curriculum supports student progress toward key PaCE framework benchmarks through engaging, age-appropriate activities. Highlighting effective implementation strategies and showcase selected lessons to illustrate the curriculum's structure and content. Additionally, attendees will learn about opportunities to access the full curriculum by joining a comprehensive training session facilitated by ISAC staff

Presenters: Kelly Koeppel, Rural Outreach Specialist, Illinois Student Assistance Commission; Paul Oliver III, Adult Outreach Specialist, Illinois Student Assistance Commission

The Three E's: Undecided Student Success at Joliet Junior College

North Pavilion 1

Learn about the three "E's" used to engage undecided students during their transition into college: Early, Expert, and Experiential. Data reveals how 1:1 meetings, events, and initiatives, designed to lead students through common challenges and barriers, impact student persistence. Hear directly from Career Services staff on the ground as participants are guided through how to support undecided students navigating the career decision-making process, regardless of the resources available.

Presenters: Hannah Preston-Miles, Career Coach, Joliet Junior College; Christopher Clendenen, Manager, Career Services, Joliet Junior College; Abigail Camacho, Student Employee, Joliet Junior College

Centering their Stories: Post-secondary Recommendations from Immigrant Families and Students

North Pavilion 2

We will be highlighting stories of Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) parents and alumni on the immigration spectrum as they pursue their college dreams. Centering the supports, challenges and lessons learned along the way. We will highlight both student and parent recommendations on how institutions and practitioners can better support them to achieve their college goals. Also offering resources on how you can bring Student & Family Stories into your classroom to help spark conversations around post-secondary planning.

Presenters: Priscilla Monsivais, Crown MSW Fellows, the To&Through Project; Yessica Guadalupe Vargas, Qualitative Data Strategist, the To&Through Project

Economic Impact Study Findings

North Pavilion 3

The Illinois Community College Board published an Economic Impact Study in April 2026. Join this session to learn about community colleges' impact on the state economy and the return on investment community colleges provide to students, taxpayers, and society.

Presenter: Cecilia Elhaddad, Senior Director for Data Analytics and Visualization, Illinois Community College Board

Beyond the Mandate: Practical Strategies for Bias-Aware Student Support and Postsecondary Readiness

North Pavilion 4

This interactive session explores how implicit bias can quietly shape student belonging, opportunity, confidence, and postsecondary readiness. Participants will experience practical reflection protocols, collaborative discussion structures, and facilitation strategies designed to help educators examine perspectives, strengthen relationships, and create more inclusive learning environments. Through real school-based examples and interactive activities, attendees will leave with practical reflection protocols, discussion structures, facilitation strategies, and student-centered conversation tools they can immediately implement within classrooms, staff teams, and student support settings.

Presenter: Vickie Trotter, Assistant Regional Superintendent, DuPage Regional Office of Education

From Policy to Practice: State Guidance for Institutional Success

North Pavilion 5

With the development and implementation of the Student Success Strategy Division, IBHE is reexamining how to best support institutions in implementing legislation. Utilizing the Communities of Practice model, the team aims to foster collaboration, increase communication, and further facilitate an environment of guidance. This presentation will examine the benefits of an online shared space, research-driven practices surrounding best practices, and the future goals of the Student Success Strategy Division for supporting institutions.

Presenters: Hannah Church-Caldwell, Student Success Specialist, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Lauryn Lucas, Student Success Specialist, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Jill Gebke, Director of Student Success Strategy, Illinois Board of Higher Education

Interest Sessions C (1:50 – 2:40 p.m.)

First and Foremost: Using Storytelling to Go Beyond the Numbers

South Pavilion 1

This session features a 35-minute documentary highlighting first-generation students and professionals across Illinois. The film explores how storytelling can illuminate data and research by revealing the lived experiences behind statewide college-access trends. After the screening, attendees will reflect on how these narratives can strengthen counseling, admission, and outreach practices, with an emphasis on reducing bias, elevating student voice, and supporting equitable postsecondary pathways.

Presenter: Matthew Montez, Assistant Director, Student & Community Engagement, Illinois Student Assistance Commission

Beyond the Reminder Email: Advising Strategies That Actually Move Students to Registration

South Pavilion 3

Roosevelt University reimaged registration support by moving beyond reminder emails and passive advising into intentional, student-centered outreach. This session will explore how proactive advising campaigns, one-stop registration events, and strategic campus collaboration helped remove barriers and move students to enrollment earlier. Attendees will leave with practical outreach ideas, event concepts, and student support strategies that can be adapted to strengthen registration completion and persistence.

Presenter: Linda Davis, Director of Undergraduate Academic Advising, Roosevelt University

High Impact: Creating a Multimodal, Interdisciplinary Global Learning Program for Historically Underrepresented College Students

South Pavilion 4

In this presentation, we will share the National Louis University honors program model for global learning, designed to reduce barriers to travel and cultural engagement for our Pell-eligible, first generation, and historically underrepresented college students. Attendees leave with concrete examples of how to fund global learning initiatives, including faculty-led study away as well as strategies to leverage global partnerships and scaffold learning experiences in a way that meets student needs.

Presenter: Natasha Kohl, Director of Undergraduate Honors, National Louis University

Addressing the Financial Capability Needs of College Students

South Pavilion 5

Addressing the financial capability needs of college students involves developing practical skills in budgeting, saving, credit use, and financial decision-making. In this session, you will learn how the Economic Awareness Council improved financial literacy during its third year of collaboration with the City Colleges of Chicago. You will discover the initiatives implemented and some of the results achieved from our third year of hosting financial literacy events to improve college students' overall financial capability.

Presenters: Moises Sanchez, Bank On Chicago Manager, Economic Awareness Council; Tracy Frizzell, Executive Director, Economic Awareness Council

Beyond Readiness: The Politics Behind Postsecondary Access

South Pavilion 6

This session explores college readiness as a political process shaped by power, priorities, and decision-making across educational and organizational contexts. Participants will engage in guided reflection to map stakeholders, assess partnerships, and examine how resources and decisions shape their current approach. Attendees will leave with a clearer understanding of their own college readiness strategy and practical ways to more intentionally navigate and strengthen it.

Presenter: Chastinee McNeil, Postsecondary Success Coach, Embarc

From Metrics to Meaning: Rethinking Postsecondary Readiness Measurement

North Pavilion 1

Educational teams strengthening college and career readiness (CCR) often rely on narrow indicators that offer snapshots but not explanations. Without insight into underlying conditions, improvement efforts can be reactive. This workshop introduces a more comprehensive approach to CCR measurement by examining “enabling conditions” for postsecondary success. Participants will learn practical strategies and tools to capture student voice and apply adaptable methods to better understand and improve outcomes across diverse settings.

Presenters: Renee Vai, Postsecondary Leadership Coach, OneGoal; Vanessa Lee, Director of Secondary Success, OneGoal

Coaching Emerging Professionals: Building Leadership from the Ground Up

North Pavilion 2

Emerging professionals often step into roles where they are expected to lead, manage, and support others without structured leadership development opportunities. This session highlights a six-session, monthly coaching pilot for ISACorps Regional Coordinators supporting ISACorps members across Illinois. Through this model, coordinators strengthened skills in communication, coaching, delegation, and leadership confidence, especially for first gen professionals. Participants will hear directly from coordinators and engage in a practical self-reflection activity they can apply in their own work.

Presenters: Tiffany Sharp, Alumni Coordinator, Illinois Student Assistance Commission; Jenna Inman, Regional Coordinator, Illinois Student Assistance Commission; Viviana Flores, Regional Coordinator, Illinois Student Assistance Commission; Elizabeth Bird, Regional Coordinator, Illinois Student Assistance Commission

Establishing Illinois Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) Policy

North Pavilion 3

Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) have had federal resources stripped away for programs that support Black, Latinx, and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander students. We propose that Illinois needs to establish its own MSI definitions and recognition processes as a first step to securing state resources for future programming. This session invites your input on shaping those definitions and developing advocacy plans to put them in place.

Presenter: Meghan McShan, Research Assistant, Chicago State University

From Access to Opportunity: How Embedding Career Readiness Inside the Degree Changes What's Possible

North Pavilion 4

A college degree opens the door. For first-generation and low-income students, walking through it into a strong first job is a different challenge entirely. This session looks at what happens when career readiness is built into the university itself, as a credit-bearing course co-owned by faculty and a national nonprofit. Drawing on the Braven and National Louis University partnership, presenters will share what the outcomes data shows and what it takes to sustain this work.

Presenters: Uzoma Obidike, PhD, Director and Assistant Professor of Undergraduate Career Development, National Louis University; LaShawn Holloway, Senior Director, National Louis University, Braven

Supporting Undocumented Student Communities - Practices at City Colleges of Chicago

North Pavilion 5

Supporting undocumented students has been an important part of the work of educators in the state of Illinois, now more than ever before. In this session we will address the work of the undocumented student liaison at a community college and share best practices to provide meaningful and intentional supports while forming a system of support and meaningful community in a bilingual setting. An overview of supporting bilingual student populations will also be provided.

Presenters: Pedro Nungaray, Dean of Student Services, Harold Washington College; Luis Narvaez, Vice Chancellor, City Colleges of Chicago

Interest Sessions D (3:00 – 3:50 p.m.)

The Not So Invisible Barriers Facing Diverse Learners and How to Navigate Through Them

South Pavilion 1

This session explores systemic and individual barriers diverse learners face in transitioning to college. It examines rigid institutional expectations, the misbelief that admission equals readiness, and disparities in campus mental health support. Participants will unpack students' visible and invisible challenges—including executive functioning, self-advocacy, and stigma, how these intersect with structural inequities and how to navigate through these challenges. The session equips educators and parents with practical strategies to build flexible, culturally responsive supports and shift responsibility from students alone to institutions.

Presenter: Ama Appenteng-Milam, President, Center for Companies That Care

Solving for the Right Problem: Targeted Approaches to Increasing College Persistence

South Pavilion 3

Despite nearly 4 in 5 students coming from low-income families, Chicago Public Schools has been able to develop a culture in which more than 70% of graduates enroll and nearly 80% of students persist in college. The key to our widespread success has not been a widespread approach, but rather hyperfocusing on the specific obstacles different groups of students face in reaching their postsecondary aspirations. Join us to learn about some of the approaches that have been successful for specific groups of students, and add your own knowledge to our collective understanding of what approaches have proven to be successful in supporting specific groups of students.

Presenter: Brian Harris, Director of Postsecondary Pathways, Chicago Public Schools

Education Matters for All: Removing Barriers and Building Pathways in Early Childhood Education (ECE)

South Pavilion 4

In this session, attendees will learn how Illinois Action for Children's Higher Education and Workforce Development Navigators help remove barriers, strengthen and elevate the ECE field, and create accessible educational pathways for the early childhood education workforce. Through shared experiences, proven practices, and real-life examples, Navigators will share how they support workforce members in navigating higher education systems, completing FAFSA and scholarship applications, obtaining Gateways credentials and Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials, exploring degree pathways, and connecting to individualized resources and support services. Participants will gain practical strategies and ideas for building partnerships with community agencies, reducing barriers, increasing educational access and persistence, and strengthening career advancement opportunities for the early childhood workforce within their communities and organizations.

Presenters: Stephanie Higareda, Navigator, Higher Education & Workforce Development, Illinois Action for Children; Quiana Reed, Navigator, Higher Education & Workforce Development, Illinois Action for Children

100% Club: Because 99 and a Half Won't Do

South Pavilion 5

This session shares the story and mechanics of what happened when we decided that one-hundred percent of our students would acquire post-secondary education, training, or gainful employment. This session takes you on the journey of how we built the plan, how we executed it, and the way that it exceeds the previous year's results each year.

Presenter: Matthew Adkins, Student Success & Belonging Specialist, iCan Dream Center

It Takes A Community: How Relationships Are at the Core of College Success

South Pavilion 6

Using the framework from Dr. Shawn Ginwright's book *The Four Pivots*, our team will explore how moving from transactional to transformative relationships will promote belonging, increase collaboration, and ultimately lead to greater post-secondary success. Relationship is one of our core values, and we try to live it out in all we do. We will share several examples of how we have built relationships with the school district, developed partnerships with other community-based organizations, and strengthened a sense of belonging amongst staff, students, and families.

Presenters: Aaron Arnold, Executive Director, Waukegan to College; Laura Rios, Program Director, Waukegan to College; Joseph Young, College Persistence Manager, Waukegan to College; Jackie Lopez, Team Lead Middle School College Readiness, Waukegan to College

The Summer Advantage: Preparing Students for College Success

North Pavilion 1

This interactive session explores how higher education and college access professionals can use the summer months to better prepare students for transfer and postsecondary success before the academic year begins. Participants will learn practical, student-centered strategies that support transfer readiness, scholarship planning, engagement, and confidence-building for first-generation and community college students. Attendees will leave with realistic programming ideas, scalable tools, and actionable approaches to reduce student stress and improve transfer outcomes year-round.

Presenters: Tyanna McCann Weaver, Director, Transfer Center, Olive-Harvey College; Gabriel Bradley, Transfer Specialist, Olive-Harvey College
