



Illinois Public University Enrollment Steady Overall For Students Of All Backgrounds Despite Ongoing Pandemic

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SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Board of Higher Education today released public university enrollment data indicating enrollment numbers holding steady despite nationwide declines in new and returning students due to COVID-19. Overall enrollment in the state was up by 0.2 percent or 417 students compared to fall of 2019

with 182,586 students currently enrolled in public universities. A nationwide snapshot of fall enrollment shows higher education down by 1.8 percent compared to 2019, per the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

“I am extremely proud of the resiliency of our students, our institutions, their leadership and faculty who all worked hard to make this Fall reopening as successful as possible. There was talk over the summer that college enrollments could be down 25 percent across the nation, and Illinois has proven that its students continue to stay the course,” IBHE Chair John Atkinson said. “Enrollment in our public universities remained largely steady which is, a reflection of both Governor Pritzker’s continued commitment to higher education funding and the planning and preparation of the IBHE Reopening Committee working with our public, private and community college leaders to reopen safely to students”

Undergraduate enrollment by headcount was down slightly, with a decrease of 1,345 students (1 percent) for a total of 129,512 students. Graduate enrollment was up 1,762, or 3.4 percent over last fall. Nationally, undergraduate enrollment at public universities was down nearly 2 percent, while graduate enrollment was up 3.6 percent.

Illinois Public University Enrollments from Fall of 2020-2021 to Fall of 2019-2020

The enrollment of Black students was also steady, with a total 20,829 student overall, up 0.6 percent from last year. Notable increases occurred in the number of new freshmen (3.2 percent) and in graduate/professional enrollments (5.2 percent). Nationally, public universities saw a decline of 4.0 percent in Black undergraduate enrollment. In Illinois, Black undergraduate enrollment was down only 0.8 percent.

The enrollment of public university Latinx students continued to rise to 27,868 students, an increase of 6.1 percent, or 1,594 students, over academic year 2019-2020. Growth was notable in both undergraduate enrollment (4.5 percent) and in graduate/professional enrollment (14.6 percent). Nationally, public university Latinx undergraduate enrollment was down 1.8 percent.

“This is the first year we have looked at our early enrollment data through an equity lens. Illinois public universities beat national trends, increasing enrollment for Black and Latinx students. We were very deliberate about investing in supports for our most vulnerable students,” said IBHE Director Ginger Ostro. “With \$30 million in federal funds provided for institutions through Governor JB Pritzker’s Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund, private funding to provide emergency grants to students,

creating a drive-up WiFi hotspot map, and launching a public education campaign, “Stay the Course,” everything we did since March was focused on keeping students on track to their degree.”