

Illinois Community Colleges See Second Largest Fall-To-Fall Enrollment Increase In 30 Years

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SPRINGFIELD - Enrollment at Illinois community colleges continues to climb for the second straight year according to the annual fall enrollment report, released today by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). Overall, the Illinois Community College System's opening Fall 2023 enrollments had an increase in both headcount (+5.7 percent) and Full-time Equivalent (FTE) (+5.2 percent) from the previous year. The Fall 2022 to Fall 2023 increase of 5.7 percent is the second largest Fall-to-Fall enrollment

growth in the last 30 years. Only the Fall 2008 to Fall 2009 increase of 7.4 percent during the Great Recession was higher.

“Illinois has the best community college system in the nation—and look no further than our fall enrollment numbers for proof,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “With a more than 5 percent increase in enrollment since last year, our community colleges are bouncing back better than ever—showing the rest of the nation what it looks like to support our higher education institutions and the students they serve. On behalf of the State of Illinois, congratulations to administrators, faculty, and students alike on this major milestone.”

Funding for education at Illinois Community Colleges is a budget priority of Governor Pritzker and the Illinois General Assembly. The fiscal year 2024 budget includes a seven (7) percent increase in operating funds or \$19.4 million more for community colleges than the previous year—the highest increase in two decades. It also includes a \$100 million increase in the Monetary Award Program (MAP) that when combined with the federal Pell grant, provides working class families with an opportunity for a free community college education.

Community colleges across the state continue to aggressively recruit and retain students by offering a variety of newly funded initiatives focused on high-demand career fields including the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE), designed to help address the shortage of qualified early childhood educators, and the Pipeline for the Advancement of the Healthcare Workforce (PATH), to create, support and expand opportunities in the nursing field.

“Since the global pandemic, community colleges have effectively adapted to a changed environment, by offering more targeted programming, better instructional delivery options, and broader, more comprehensive student supports. The increase in enrollment is a testament to the success of these efforts and embodies not only the value of our community college system as a whole but the commitment of our staff, faculty and students,” said ICCB executive director Brian Durham.

Statewide enrollment data shows 36 community colleges experienced an increase in headcount enrollment from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023, while just 12 community colleges had a decrease.

“Illinois community colleges continue to fuel the state’s need for a trained workforce that fills good paying jobs in so many industries. Community college students and graduates are the backbone that keeps Illinois’ economy growing year after year which is a testament to our system as a whole,” said David Sam, chair of the Illinois Council of Community College Presidents.

“Seeing more and more students return to the classroom each year is an amazing sight after the challenges of the pandemic, but equally amazing are the online opportunities we have created for those students who need to be elsewhere but still want to better their future through a community college education,” said James Reed, Jr., executive director of the Illinois Community College Trustees Association.

The report shows more students continue to return to the classroom in 2023, but also confirms that online or e-learning is now an integral part of the educational delivery at community colleges. While the number of distance education students decreased in Fall 2023 as compared to the previous year, it remains a prevalent and flexible form of course delivery with 42.3 percent of students enrolling in at least one online course in the current Fall as compared to Fall 2019 (pre-pandemic) at 24.3 percent.

The 5.7 percent increase in overall Fall Enrollment throughout the Illinois Community College System is well above enrollment growth nationally which increased 4.4 percent from the previous year.

The full report is accessible online at https://www.iccb.org/data/?page_id=47.

About the Illinois Community College Board

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) is the state coordinating organization for the Illinois Community College System - the third largest in the country and the leading public workforce development trainer in the state. The ICCB has statutory responsibility for administering state and federal grants to community college districts and adult education providers and managing high school equivalency testing for Illinois. Illinois community colleges serve over 600,000 residents each year in credit, noncredit, and continuing education courses. Illinois is home to 48 colleges in 39 community college districts which provide high quality, accessible, cost-effective educational opportunities to the entire state.