



WEI | WORKFORCE
EQUITY
INITIATIVE
SYMPOSIUM

INNOVATIVE PRACTICES TO
ADVANCE WORKFORCE EQUITY

LUNCHTIME ADDRESS

Lunchtime Address

Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth, IL 92nd District
Jennifer K. Foster, IL Community College Board



Impact and Success Outcomes

Jennifer K. Foster
Deputy Executive Director
ICCB



Closing the Equity Gap

Important Role of Illinois Community Colleges



WORKFORCE EQUITY INITIATIVE

ICCB BOARD GOALS

ACCESS & EQUITY

- ❖ GOAL 1: Support minority, first generation, and low-income students across urban, rural, and suburban communities, through the promotion of evidence-based best practices that results in system wide improvement of equity metrics that reduce equity gaps.

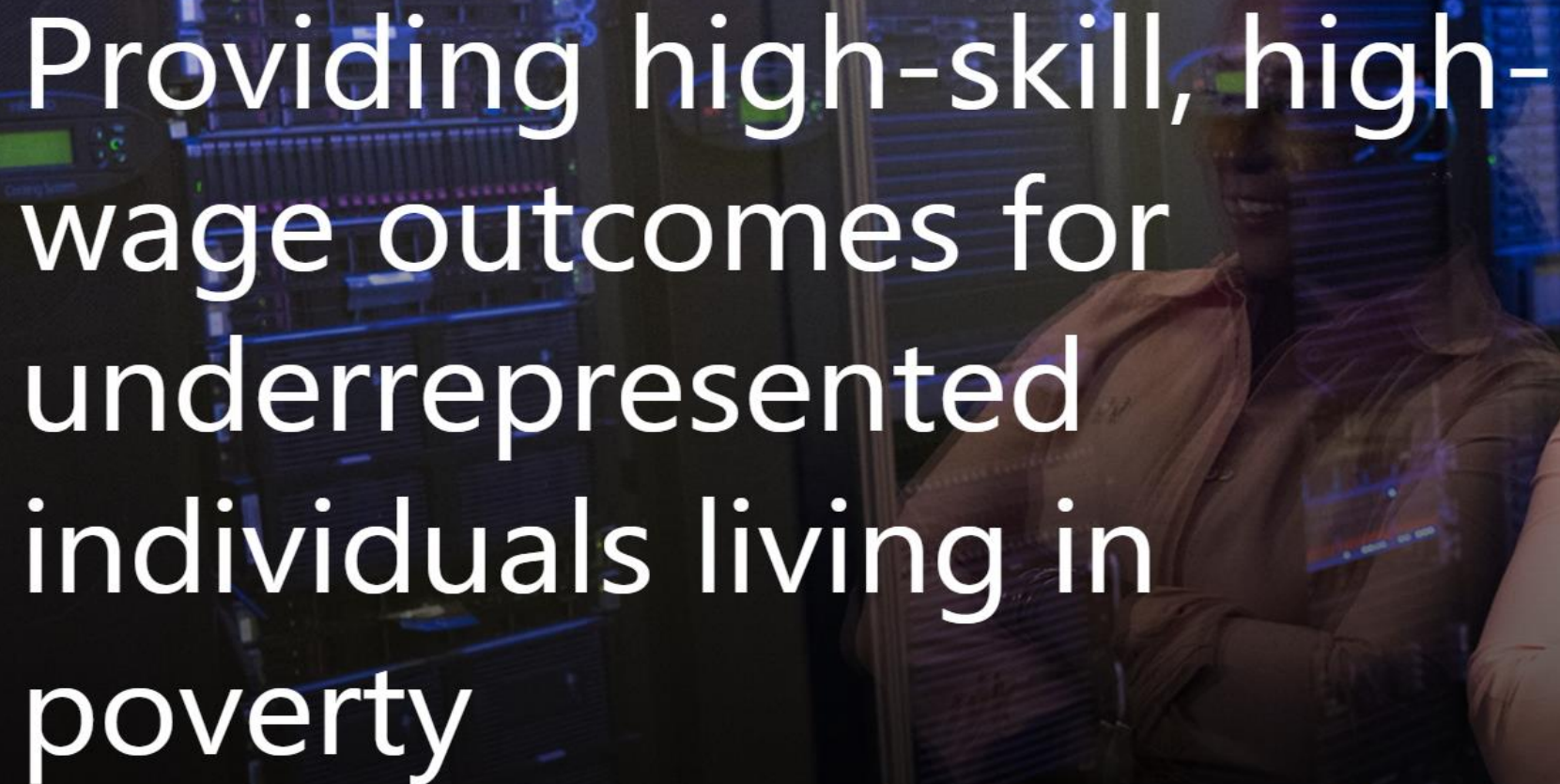
SEAMLESS TRANSITION

- ❖ GOAL 2: Support a seamless transition for students into and through postsecondary education and the workforce by fostering system engagement and equitable access and outcomes for these students.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- ❖ GOAL 3: Contribute to economic development by supporting the Illinois community college system's effort to provide robust workforce training, to expand apprenticeships, to increase credential attainment, to build quality career pathways, and to address the future needs of the Illinois workforce.

Background on WEI

A photograph of two women standing in a server room. The woman on the left is wearing a dark purple long-sleeved shirt and has her arms crossed. The woman on the right is wearing a light pink long-sleeved button-down shirt and also has her arms crossed. They are both smiling slightly. The background shows rows of server racks with blue and green lights.

Providing high-skill, high-wage outcomes for underrepresented individuals living in poverty

WORKFORCE EQUITY INITIATIVE

WEI Desired Outcomes

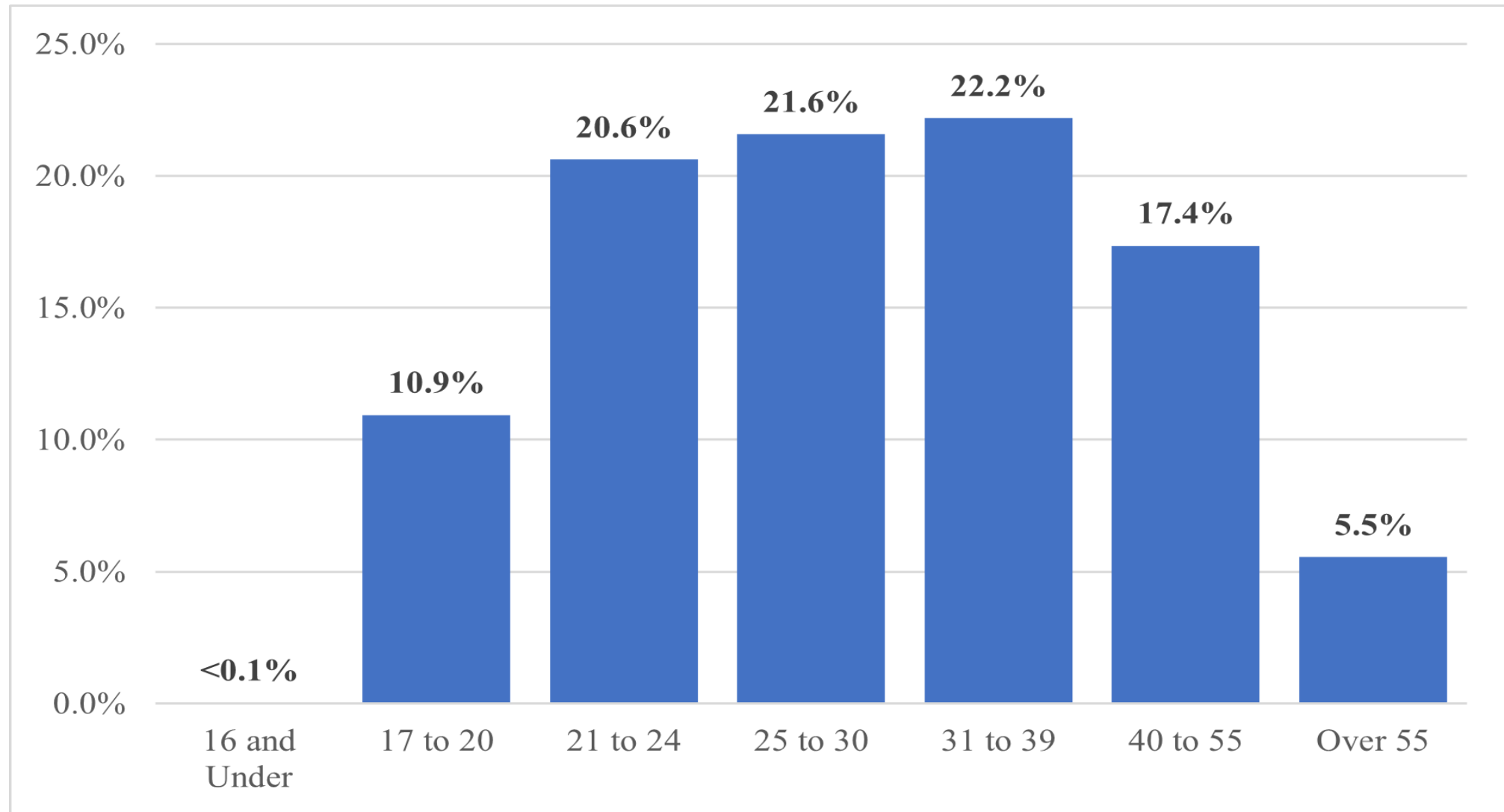
- **Accelerate the time to completion**
 - to enter and succeed in post-secondary education/training programs
- **Employment after completion**
 - lead to jobs with wages 30% above the regional living wage or on an educational pathway to the wage.
 - in high skilled, high wage, and in-demand occupations.



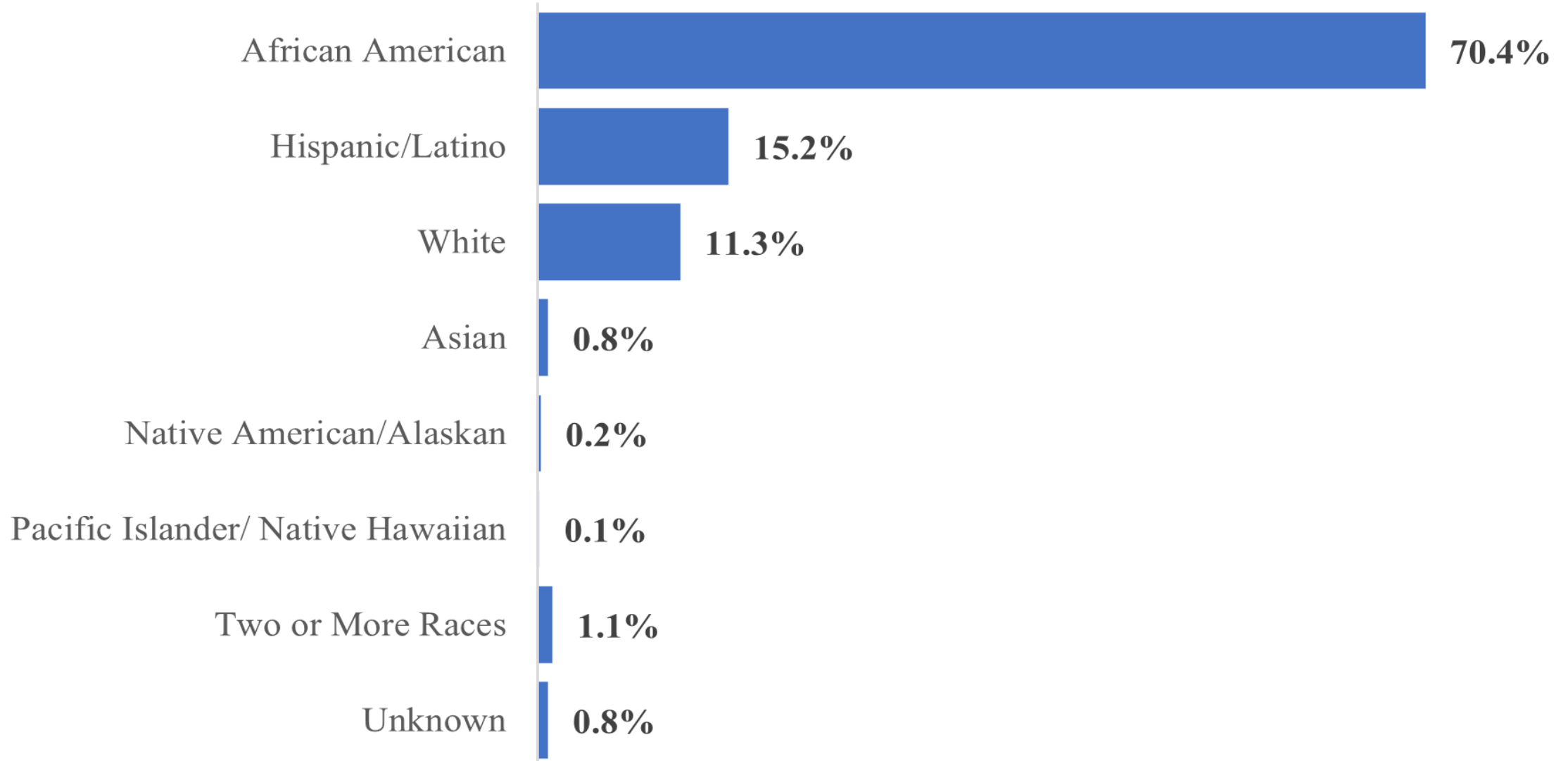
WEI's Four-Year Success Outcomes for Illinois

Consortium Metrics	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Enrolled Participants	3,209	3,323	3,222	2,957
Credentials	2,526	3,613	3,152	3,362
Percentage African American	76%	71%	72%	72%
Percentage of Completers (at closeout)	60%	62%	71%	74%
Percentage Employed (at closeout)	65%	70%	69%	71%
Outcomes Rate (employed or pursuing additional education)	n/a	90%	87%	88%
Average Hourly Wage	\$17.69	\$20.39	\$21.01	\$21.99
Average Cost Per Student	\$5,565	\$5,227	\$5,475	\$5,714

WEI Demographics – by age – FY23

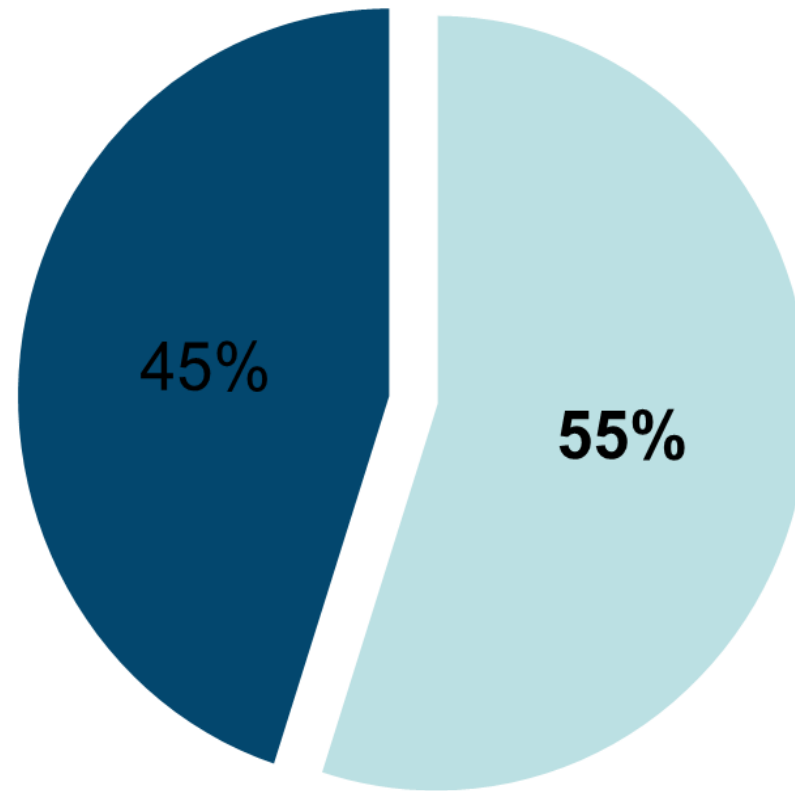


WEI Demographics – by race/ethnicity



WEI Demographics – female/male

WEI Students - Female 55% and Male 45%



■ Female ■ Male

Key Success Factors / Lessons Learned



- Involves college leadership
- Fosters equity-focused decision making at all levels
- Enhances student services (navigators, specialists)
- Builds capacity for training programs
- **Embeds comprehensive wraparound services**
- Includes referrals for additional community support
- Embraces innovative outreach & marketing
- Targets high demand workforce gap positions
- Eliminates barriers at the institutional level
- Develops employer partnerships
- Requires essential skills training

Student Stories from Across the State Capture the Impact of the Grant



WEI 2024 Compilation Video

The new 2024 Compilation Video can be accessed with the QR code on the right or by clicking this link:

<https://bit.ly/WEI2024video>



Advocacy & Support for WEI

Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth
Speaker Pro-Tempore
Chief Budgeteer
State House District 92



Community Colleges as Community Changers

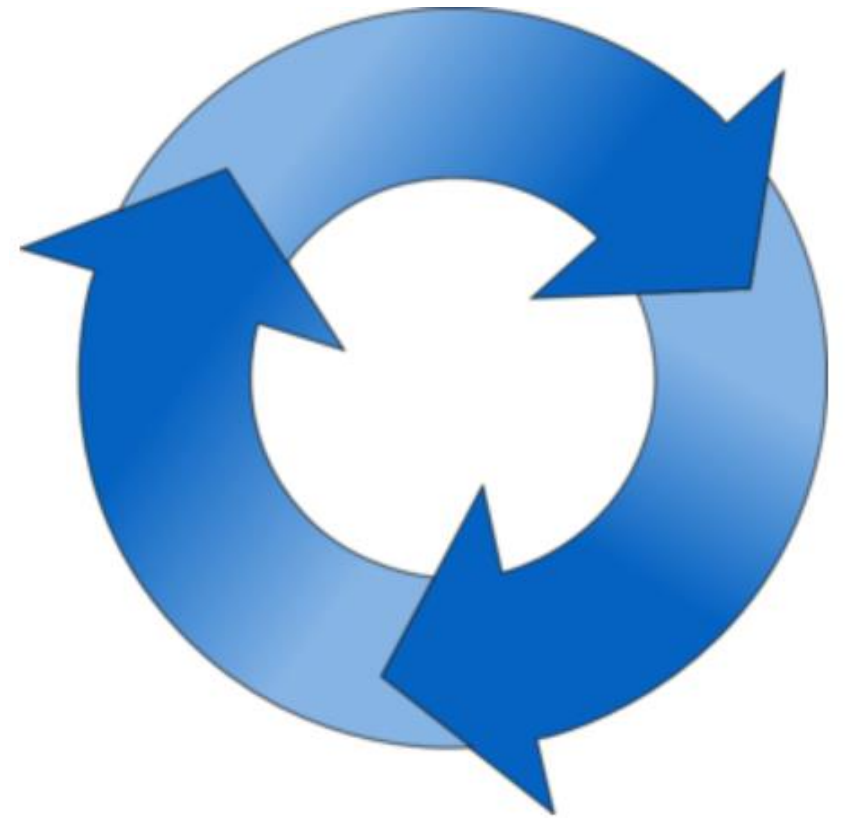
- Thank you to the WEI colleges
- Over 12,000 students served since WEI started
- Tremendous equity impact
- Community Colleges are the workforce development and equity equalizers in the state of Illinois
- Will continue to be your advocate



Addressing the Poverty Cycle

- 49% of Illinois adults no post-secondary credential
- Multiple part-time jobs w/ no benefits
- No family-sustaining wages
- No pathway out of poverty
- Family and economic turmoil

**All While Experiencing Record
Workforce Gaps**



Importance of Pursuing High Demand Occupations



The Workforce Equity Initiative provides individuals with the opportunity to attain a college credential in a high demand sector/industry to access jobs that pay 30% above the regional living wage or on an educational pathway leading to 30% above the regional living wage.

Addressing the Equity Gap Future Plans for Illinois

- Legislative Successes
- WEI as National Model





In Closing...

If we all row in the same direction, we will not only change the trajectory of individual lives, but also that of their families, while growing the workforce, businesses and increasing economic vitality.

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