



One Click College Admit in Illinois



November 2024

Admissions Redesign
Summary and
Logic Model

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Recent shifts in the postsecondary landscape, including the impact of COVID, changes to the FAFSA, admissions testing requirements, and rulings by the Supreme Court have caused significant disruptions, as well as an opportunity to rethink college admissions. Lumina Foundation is working to support the reshaping and simplifying of the admissions process to transform how potential students apply, enroll, and access institutions through [The Great Admissions Redesign](#). In partnership with the Foundation, Research for Action (RFA) is conducting an evaluation of the three implementation grantees to foster learning and continuous improvement. As an initial step in the process, RFA conducted interviews with leaders in Illinois to gather foundational background on the state's efforts to expand and connect two enacted programs (*the Public University Uniform Admission Pilot Program and the state's participation with the Common App*) by developing a logic model to capture the planned resources, strategies, outcomes and impact of the initiative.

VISION AND IMPETUS IN ILLINOIS

In 2020, the Illinois legislature passed the **Public University Uniform Admission Pilot Program**, providing guaranteed admissions to participating public universities in the state for students who completed the minimum college preparatory material for the institution, satisfied the ACT or SAT assessment requirements, and either 1) graduated in the top 10% of their high school class, or 2) if the graduating class was small, had a grade point average of at least a 3.5 on a 4.0 scale.ⁱ As of 2022, the law was expanded to guarantee admissions to the state's community college transfer students who: earned a minimum of 36 graded, transferable hours from the general education curriculum; attained a 3.0 GPA on all transferable coursework; and satisfied the university's English language proficiency requirement.ⁱⁱ The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) also adopted a new strategic plan in 2021, *A Thriving Illinois*, with three goals that focus on addressing equity gaps, sustainability, and growth, including fostering innovation to drive Illinois' economy. Additionally, Illinois implemented the **Common App for all public universities**. These innovations were supported by Dr. Jennifer Delaney, a leading researcher on direct admissions, who previously was on the faculty at the University of Illinois and served on the IBHE from 2019-2023.ⁱⁱⁱ

CONTEXT FOR THE WORK

The IBHE is a statewide coordinating board for public postsecondary education that coordinates efforts with, among other entities, the **Illinois Community College Board (ICCB)**, which serves as a coordinating board for public two-year institutions, each of which have their own governing boards, and the **Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC)**, which administers student financial aid.^{iv} Illinois' public universities include 12 campuses and there are 48 community colleges, many of which have their own independent boards; the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of Illinois at Chicago have not been involved in this initiative.^v

ONE CLICK COLLEGE ADMIT: A LOGIC MODEL

Figure 1 below presents the logic model displaying the proposed shift in Illinois admissions with a discussion that follows. A logic model is a visual tool that helps clarify and communicate a program's goals, activities, and intended results, and can be used to create a framework for an evaluation.



RESOURCES

Partners in leading the redesign, including the **IBHE, ICCB, and the ISAC**

Support from the **Illinois Governor's Office**

Community colleges will provide **staff, funding for Common App adoption**, and participate in **learning communities** in the early adoption phase

Existing use of **Common App by all public universities** in Illinois, including state funding to reimburse related costs for institutions

Existing **state legislation** that facilitates limited **guaranteed admissions**



STRATEGIES

Transition to **Common App Direct Admissions** that offers admission to qualified students before they apply based on **self-reported high school GPA**

Recruit early adopter community colleges to **join Common App** for direct admissions

Conduct an **outreach and awareness campaign** to high school students on the expanded direct admissions program

Pass legislation authorizing school districts to provide IBHE with individual high school student data to **facilitate direct admission**, including community colleges

Adopt and implement a **transfer application tool** to facilitate the process for community college students



BENEFICIARIES

Underrepresented high school and community college students, especially students of color, low income, and first-generation students

Regional public universities and community colleges looking to increase enrollment and transfer rates



SHORT TERM OUTCOME

Increase in student knowledge of direct admissions opportunities

Expansion of **Common App** and adoption and implementation of a **transfer application tool in community colleges**

Transition to **Common App Direct Admissions** process to help students identify postsecondary institutions for admission

Passage of legislation to facilitate data matching for direct admissions

Increase in enrollment and transfer rates in Illinois public universities and community colleges, especially among students of color



OVERALL IMPACT

Simplify the college application and admissions processes and help more students see themselves as **college ready**

Increase in **overall postsecondary persistence and completion rates**

Close equity gaps among underrepresented and minoritized populations

RESOURCES

Any initiative requires resources to support the work, including state partners. In Illinois, the **IBHE is leading the work, in collaboration with the ICCB and ISAC**. Support from the **Illinois Governor's Office** has been key throughout, although legislative hurdles continue to slow progress.

The community colleges involved as early adopters will provide **staff time, funding for Common App adoption, and participate in learning communities** to help provide feedback and gather lessons learned on the process and the transfer application portal. The fact that the **Common App is already being used by all public universities** in Illinois is critical, and the state provides **funding to reimburse related costs** for public universities using the Common App; funding will also be made available to community colleges. Work is ongoing to expand **state law** requiring direct admissions; the fact that existing redesigns are required by law provides political cover for the work.

ILLINOIS TRANSITION TO ONE CLICK COLLEGE ADMIT

By connecting and expanding Illinois' two existing admissions redesigns (implementation of the Common App across public universities and the Public University Uniform Admission Pilot Program), the state is transitioning from guaranteed admissions to proactively notifying high school students about their admission and automatically transferring community college students.



STRATEGIES

The strategies being used in the admissions redesign are planned in multiple phases:

- **Transition to Common App Direct Admissions:** The state is working with [Common App's Direct Admissions](#) process. Through Common App, high school students could self-report their GPA and be matched with a list of institutions, including both public universities and community colleges, where they would be eligible for admission. However, students would still need to create their account first and submit their GPA in Common App.
- **Conduct an outreach and awareness campaign to high school students on the direct admission program:** The state is working with a marketing firm to develop an awareness campaign about the expanded use of Common App. This is an opportunity for students to find out which public universities and community colleges they can be directly admitted to with submission of their GPA into their Common App account.
- **Recruit early adopter community colleges to join Common App for direct admissions:** In order for community colleges to be included in the list of direct admissions institutions that Common App will provide to students, early adopter community colleges will need to agree to be part of the Common App portal; they will then receive student applications through Common App for any student who indicates that they would like to attend a local community college.
- **Pass legislation authorizing school districts to provide ISAC and IBHE with individual high school student data to facilitate direct admission:** Advocates are working with policymakers and other stakeholders to pass new state legislation that would require school districts in Illinois to provide the ISAC and IBHE with individual high school student data that could be used to identify all students who meet eligibility criteria for public university admission^{vi}, and then directly notify them of their admission to those institutions, as well as local community colleges. Privacy concerns among K12 stakeholders have been raised as an issue and hindered passage.
- **Adopt and implement a transfer application tool to facilitate the process for community college students:** The state is also planning to pursue the development of an online portal to facilitate community college student transfer to public universities, so that those who meet the eligibility requirements would more easily transfer with just "one click."

BENEFICIARIES

In response to enrollment decreases in Illinois, the expansion of guaranteed admission and eventual shift to direct admissions could benefit **regional public universities and community colleges** looking to increase enrollment and transfer rates. At the student level, the hope is that the work will improve **access and success for traditionally underserved high school and community college students**, especially **underrepresented and minoritized students**, specifically students of color, students from low income backgrounds, and first-generation students.

SHORT TERM OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Over the life of the grant, the goal is for the work to result in a number of implementation milestones in the short term, as well as improved student outcomes, specifically:

- An increase in **student knowledge of direct admissions opportunities**;
- An expansion of **Common App and adoption and implementation of a transfer application tool** in community colleges;
- Use of Common App Direct Admission process to generate a list of institutions where students are eligible for admission based on GPA criteria alone;
- The **passage of legislation** to facilitate data matching for direct admissions; and
- Increases in **enrollment and transfer rates** in Illinois public universities and community colleges, especially among students of color.

Overall, the work in Illinois should **simplify the college application and admissions processes** and help more students see themselves as college ready; result in an **increase in overall postsecondary persistence and completion rates**, and **close equity gaps** among underrepresented and minoritized populations.

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Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation in Indianapolis committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all. We envision higher learning that is easy to navigate, addresses racial injustice, and meets the nation's talent needs through a broad range of credentials. We are working toward a system that prepares people for informed citizenship and success in a global economy.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/documents/011001180K15.htm>

ⁱⁱ<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=4026&ChapterID=18>

ⁱⁱⁱ<https://bse.berkeley.edu/jennifer-delaney>

^{iv}<https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-postsecondary-governance-structures/>

^v<https://www.ibhe.org/HigherEdOrgChart.html>

^{vi}The Student Assistance Commission already receives individual student data (including GPA) from school districts for approximately 50% of students as part of the Illinois State Scholars program that designates students who meet eligibility criteria.

