

ACI Among Three Organizations Awarded Grant Aimed at Improving Four-Year Degree Completion Rates for Community College Transfer Students

ACI to collaborate with Illinois Community College Board and Illinois Board of Higher Education

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ACI, the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) were awarded a \$25,000 planning grant to conduct research and develop an implementation plan to help more community college transfer students earn bachelor's degrees at ACI-affiliated colleges and universities.

[The Teagle Foundation](#), New York City, and the [Arthur Vining Davis Foundations](#), Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, awarded the planning grant, called "Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts." Collaborative research and planning work is expected to begin July 1 and be completed at the end of the 2021 calendar year.

"We're excited about the grant award and this initial phase to build enrollment and financial support for community college transfer students," said Mick Weltman, ACI executive director. "We're also pleased to collaborate with statewide partners such as ICCB and IBHE in this planning effort."



The grant proposal quotes research that states that 65 percent of jobs in today's economy require at least some postsecondary education, and yet, significant numbers of Illinois residents have no post-secondary degrees or credentials. Illinois established a goal of increasing the proportion of residents who hold high-quality degrees or credentials to 60 percent by 2025. In addition, more than 7 of 10 students who earned associate's degrees, then transferred to four-year institutions, earned four-year degrees in two years, according to the National Student Clearinghouse.

To meet the terms of the planning grant, ACI, the ICCB and the IBHE will form the Illinois Project Leadership Team. Team members will conduct academic and financial research, aimed at improving academic transferability and development of a campaign and fundraising plan to assist community college transfer students and Illinois higher-education institutions, according to the grant proposal.

The academic component, led by a project investigator, will involve collaborative research to help the project leadership team determine "effective strategies that can streamline and strengthen existing pathways," the grant proposal said. The team will

also study a statewide community college transfer agreement among ACI-affiliated colleges and universities.

The financial component will include resource development opportunities to fund community college students transferring to ACI-member institutions, and how best to obtain financial support.

A project investigator and ACI will use the research results to develop a case for supporting more scholarships for community college transfer students and the expected effect on transfer degree-completion rates. The team will also develop a fundraising plan.

The project team will include ACI Executive Director [Mick Weltman](#), ACI staff, faculty and provost from ACI-member [Judson University](#), provost from Lincoln Land Community College, IBHE, ICCB leaders and an independent financial consultant.