



The Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success

A renewed look at higher education in Illinois



Created by resolution of the General Assembly in 2007, the Public Agenda process has developed four specific goals to enhance the quality of education in the state.

The Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success

By *Mrinalini C. Rao and Charles V. Evans*

The Need for a Public Agenda in Illinois in 2008 and Beyond

Illinois and its citizens have traditionally benefitted from a progressive, diverse, and well-funded system of higher education – its public and independent universities recognized as being among the best, its community college system comprising one of the nation’s largest and most comprehensive, while its monetary award program fulfilled the promise of access to all regardless of economic status.

Beginning in 2001, budget shortfalls challenged continued growth and quality in the public sector. The existing higher education community, including independent colleges and universities, has been forced to address the growing role of national, for-profit institutions. At the same time, the proportion of Illinois’ population with college or university credentials remains fairly static. Another, perhaps greater, concern is the increasing disparity in college completion among Illinois residents based on qualities of race, ethnicity, prosperity, or geographic region. Most troubling is that many of the causes of the gap appear to be systemic and spread throughout the P-16 (pre-kindergarten through college) spectrum. With the budgetary profile showing little growth in this first decade of the 21st century and with changing demographics, a re-examination of the challenges facing higher education is prudent and timely. Like all such studies, the value of the undertaking can only be assessed by how well the findings inform policy, reverse the disparities, and convert them into opportunities for the health and viability of the state of Illinois.

The Public Agenda for College and Career Success in Illinois presents an opportunity for Illinois to look closely at these challenges. Created by resolution of the General Assembly in 2007, the Public Agenda process has developed four specific goals to enhance the quality of education in the state. This chapter provides a history of the process that led to these goals, plans for their implementation, and accompanying issues.

Master Planning for Higher Education in Illinois – A Historical Perspective of the Public Agenda

Illinois has a relatively brief but productive and impressive history of master planning for higher education. Relatively brief because the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) was established in 1961 to “coordinate the state’s diverse system of higher education, including public universities, community colleges, and independent colleges and universities.” The fundamental role for the IBHE, referenced in the 1961 Act, is to advise “the governor about higher education matters and may recommend to the General Assembly the enactment of such legislation needed to insure the quality of higher education.” Productive and impressive because in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, Illinois established a world-renowned system of community colleges, two upper-division and masters-level institutions to serve community college graduates, and a Student Assistance Commission, which provided sufficient funding to allow almost all qualified students the means to attend a public university.

Succeeding “Master Plans” for higher education were adopted in 1964, 1966, 1971,

and 1976 under the aegis of a very active and influential Board of Higher Education. The July 1964 plan is notable because it established the fundamental and defining “system of systems” coordination role of the IBHE and called for the establishment of a statewide system of community colleges (frequently “junior” colleges which served as an extension of a high school or K-12 district). The Phase II Master Plan, adopted in 1966, was particularly ambitious in that it established the regency system, upper-division undergraduate and master’s level institutions such as Sangamon State University (now the University of Illinois Springfield) and Governors State University, plus the Monetary Award Program, which significantly enhanced the state’s role in financial aid and expanded the role of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC).

Master Plan Phase III, adopted in 1971 during a period of significant growth due to the post-war baby boom, set enrollment maxima for public institutions and better defined their mission and scope. Also passed was the Illinois Financial Assistance Act for Non-public Institutions of Higher Learning, which provided a steady revenue stream to independent colleges and universities.

The 1976 Master Plan for Post-secondary Education in Illinois switched planning from one of growth to one of maintaining quality. A program-approval process was instituted, with review and evaluation mechanisms and a call for inter-institutional cooperation in program delivery. From a master-planning perspective, the period between 1976 and 2007 was relatively stable with the IBHE focusing more on policy studies of contemporary interest. These included studies of student, faculty, and staff diversity as well as benchmarks of faculty compensation. Exceptions included the 1990 Committee on Scope, Structure and Productivity of Illinois Higher Education, which was formed by

the Board. This committee formulated the (in)famous “Priorities, Quality, and Productivity” (PQP) initiative which wished to force public universities to reallocate resources by terminating programs. While the PQP initiative fell short of its initial goal to authorize the IBHE to unilaterally terminate programs, the IBHE was able to reach a compromise with the university presidents on financial rescissions.

Based on the foundation laid by the PQP initiative, the IBHE formulated the “Citizen’s Agenda” which aimed to focus higher education on the needs of the “state’s students and employers, and on the well-being of Illinois residents.” This led to the adoption of the “Illinois Commitment: Partnerships, Opportunities and Excellence” in 1999. The Commitment identified specific goals for Illinois’ higher education community, including work force preparation, teaching and learning, affordability, access and diversity, quality and high expectations, and accountability and productivity. While the contributions to fulfilling the commitment were left to the individual institutions, the IBHE played its coordinating role by setting directions, monitoring results and, as possible, providing budgetary support. No accountability measures per se were implemented. The “Illinois Commitment” was succeeded in 2006 by the “Illinois 2011” initiative, which updated and added relevancy to the 1999 goals. The 1990 “PQP” initiative, the 1999 “Illinois Commitment” and the “Illinois 2011” initiative served as precursors to the 2008 Public Agenda.

The current master planning effort was initiated July 26, 2007, by House Joint Resolution 69 of the 95th Illinois General Assembly, “to study the challenges and opportunities facing higher education, the State’s work force needs, demographic trends, and higher education funding and student financial aid.”¹ It is important to note that one of the drivers for HJR 69 was a change Governor Rod Blagojevich’s administration made to the

¹ <http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/masterPlanning/default.htm>

Another, perhaps greater, concern is the increasing disparity in college completion among Illinois residents based on qualities of race, ethnicity, prosperity, or geographic region.



² <http://cpe.ky.gov/planning/2020/projections/>

³ <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=858D2E7C-F5C8-97E9-0CDEB3037C1C2CA3>.

While formulation of a generally acceptable plan presents its own challenges, the biggest challenges lie in the implementation and consistent adherence to the plan's goals.

IBHE budget development process. Before 2003, the Board worked with institutions to develop an independent budget that was presented to the governor's office in anticipation of the state budget address. With the beginning of the Blagojevich administration and the appointment of a new IBHE chair, that process changed to one where the IBHE worked with the institutions to arrive at the budget figure for higher education set by the Office of the Governor.

To formulate the Public Agenda, a broad-based task force, including representatives of higher education, business and civic leaders, faculty and students, and government was appointed but never fully approved by the governor. Included in the master plan were to be the following:

- Goals for academic preparation, participating in post-secondary education, affordability, degree completion, research and economic development, and learning
- Responsibilities for education sectors and financial implications
- Accountability measures
- Coordination
- Timelines and responsibilities.

The Public Agenda in Other States

According to Dennis Jones, president of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, there are at least 12 states, other than Illinois, that have "clearly articulated a statewide strategic plan for higher education." These include Hawaii, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, Tennessee, Washington, and West Virginia. Of these, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, and Texas have made it a Public Agenda. Most of these states, like Illinois, based their plans on extensive analyses of the "strengths and weaknesses of the states." Illinois has set itself apart by involving a wide spectrum of its population – leaders of all sectors of education (secondary and

post-secondary), of the community, business, labor, and government. Thus, the Public Agenda approved by the IBHE has been widely presented and vetted.

The Public Agenda process in other states is also relatively recent, spanning the past decade. Therefore, a finite conclusion of the impact of such initiatives will have to await the test of time. Kentucky has been charting its progress since 2005 with key indicators showing general improvement in preparation, affordability, attainment, readiness for work and life in the state, and economic development. Evident on several measures is the impact of the deteriorating economy in 2008.² A similar story emerges in Texas where their "Closing the Gaps by 2015" initiative, organized in 2000, has made general progress. In the first eight years, the proportion of Texans enrolled in higher education increased from 5 percent to 5.4 percent with the increase made by African Americans from 4.6 percent to 5.6 percent. The proportion of Latino/Latina participation increased only from 3.7 percent to 4.0 percent. Student success, measured by the number of degrees awarded, has increased by 33 percent over the same period.³

While formulation of a generally acceptable plan presents its own challenges, the biggest challenges lie in the implementation and consistent adherence to the plan's goals. The success, or lack thereof, of previous Master Plans rested in part on the ability to achieve reliable observance of the goals. According to Dennis Jones,

"Acting in accordance with the plan is always more difficult than the formulation; choices required for adherence to the plan don't always coincide with parochial interests. And shortage of investment capital requires decision making that demands reallocation, never an easy political step. Continued fidelity is harder still, but the progress needed cannot be made without persistent consistency of both purpose and action."

Without a doubt, the unprecedented economic times over the past two years will greatly compound efforts and successes of such strategic planning, as is already evident in Kentucky.

The Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success

In the summer and fall of 2007, after HJR69 was passed, the Illinois Board of Higher Education staff aggressively charted a course of action and consultation designed to bring a recommendation for a master plan to the October 2008 meeting of the IBHE. Included were the following facets:

- Nominating a 25-member task force, specified in HJR69: Although the membership of this task force was never fully approved by Governor Blagojevich, it is to the credit of the IBHE leadership, and the nominees, that this did not deter their pursuit of the initiative. An additional group of approximately 100 leaders, representing various sectors of the citizenry, academy, and community organizations served on organized advisory committees.
- Hiring the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) to provide research and direction for the initiative: NCHEMS is a private, (501)(c)(3) nonprofit organization, well-recognized for its research role in strategic planning for higher education. Here again, although verbally supportive of this initiative, the governor's office failed to provide the necessary financial resources. With the help of the presidents and chancellors of the public universities, the IBHE garnered the resources to fund this critical element.
- Scheduling and conducting statewide hearings to include the following project phases:
 - Definition of public needs
 - Higher education policy audit

– Development of a preliminary Public Agenda

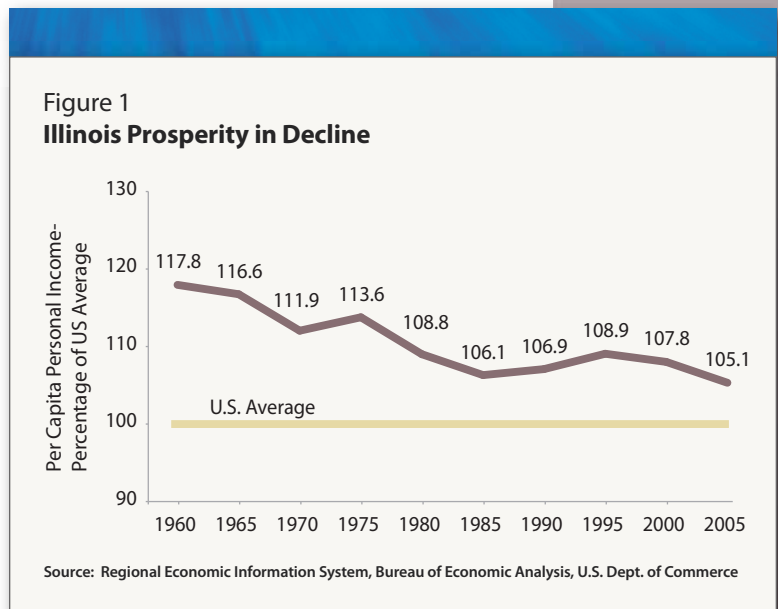
- Planning for college and career success implementation.

The IBHE and NCHEMS should be commended for their gargantuan effort, even when attendance was underwhelming in some locales.

Major findings of the NCHEMS research included the following:

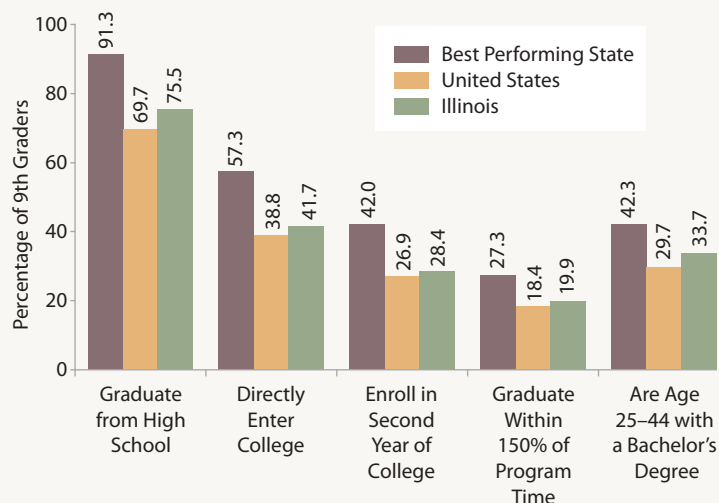
- Illinois' personal income exceeds the national average but the trend shows a steady downward trend from 117 percent of the average to 106 percent over the last quarter century (Figure 1).

Without a doubt, the unprecedented economic times over the past two years will greatly compound efforts and successes of such strategic planning



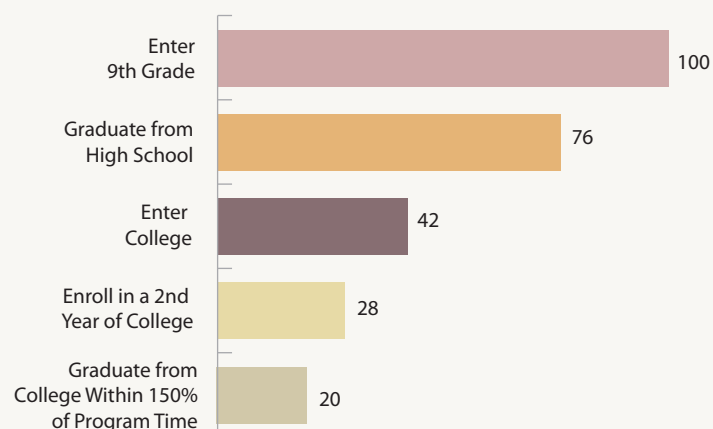
- While Illinois is better than the national average on measures of high school graduation, college enrollment, graduation, and percentage of population with a baccalaureate degree, it now trails the nation's best performing states (Figure 2 on page 52).
- In Illinois, of 100 students entering 9th grade, only 76 will graduate from high school, of which 42 will enter college

Figure 2
Comparative Performance of Post-9th Graders:
Of One Hundred Ninth Graders, How Many...



Source: NCES Common Core Data 2004; Tom Mortenson, Postsecondary Education Opportunity; NCES, IPEDS Fall 2004 Retention Rate; File and Fall 2003 Enrollments, 2004 Graduation Rates; U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 ACS

Figure 3
A Leaky Student Pipeline
Of One Hundred Ninth Graders, How Many...



Source: Illinois Board of Higher Education

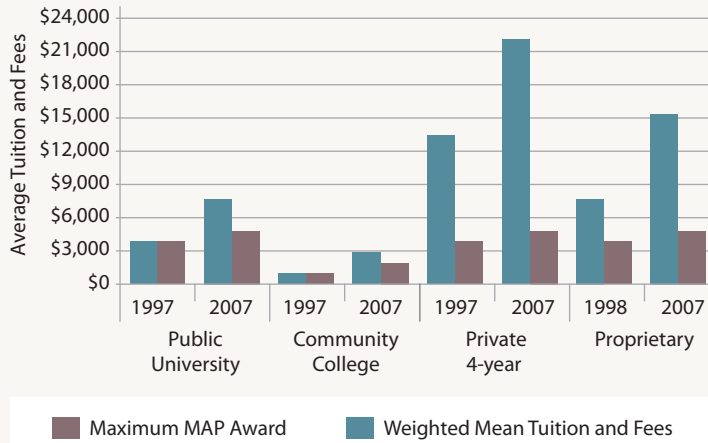
and 20 will graduate within 150 percent of program time (Figure 3).

- Increases in student costs for tuition and fees have far surpassed increases in the maximum Monetary Award Program award in the past decade (Figure 4) and most universities have picked up this burden (Figure 5).
- Gaps among individuals in college attainment when considering race, ethnicity and region continue to grow rather than decrease (Figure 6). In 2006, Illinois ranks 43rd in the difference in college attainment between whites and minorities.
- Illinois ranks below the national average in its economic growth in the past decade and in the amount of venture capital disbursed. Yet, Illinois ranks seventh in total federal research and development expenditures by universities, including in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields (Figure 7).

Public Agenda Goals and Recommendations

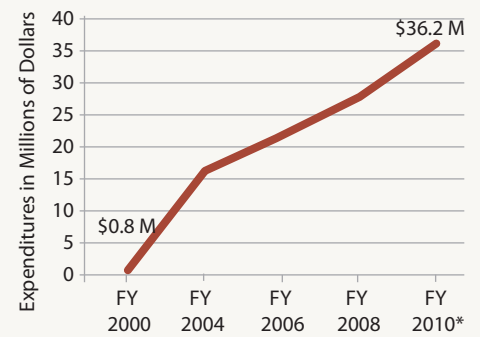
The product of this extensive research and consultation was the Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success, unanimously endorsed by the IBHE on December 9, 2008, with the overarching goal that it will serve, according to IBHE Chairwoman Carrie J. Hightman, as “the blueprint to guide education policy – from preschool to graduate school – in Illinois for the next decade.” An undergirding finding was that the Illinois Public Agenda is a tale of two states – a well-educated, well-endowed populace with many opportunities, and a populace that is under-served in terms of education, economic status, and opportunities (Figures 8 and 9 on page 54). The following four specific goals and recommendations were adopted:

Figure 4
Average Tuition and Fees Compared to Maximum Monetary Award Program (MAP) Awards, 1997-2007



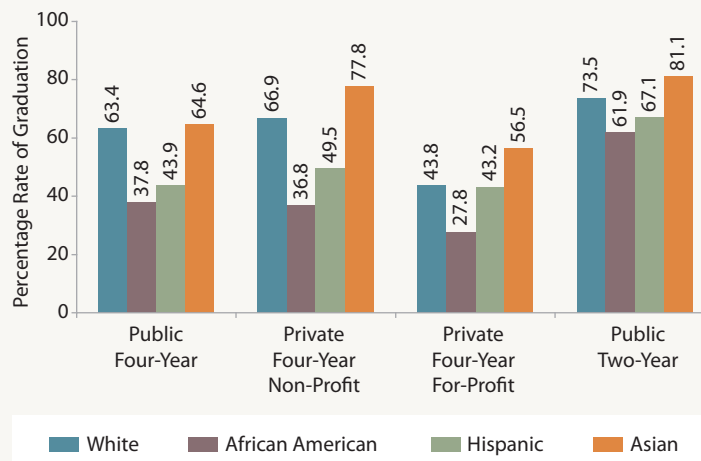
Source: 2007 ISAC Data Book; proprietary institutions first eligible for MAP in FY98.

Figure 5
University of Illinois Supplemental Financial Aid Expenditures FY 2000 – FY 2010



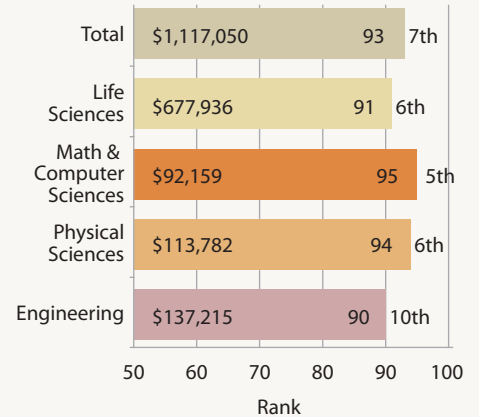
FY 2005 - 2010 all sources including fees. *FY 2010 Budgeted.
 Source: U of I Office of Planning and Budgeting

Figure 6
Graduation Rates Within Six Years (or Three Years for Community Colleges) by Race/Ethnicity and Higher Education Sector, 2006



Four-Year Source: NCES, IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey; Two-Year Source: ICCB Fall Enrollment (E1), Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1), Illinois Shared Enrollment and Graduation Data and National Student Clearinghouse. *Public 2-yr percentages represent number of first-time, full-time students transferred, graduated, or still enrolled at 150 percent of catalog time.

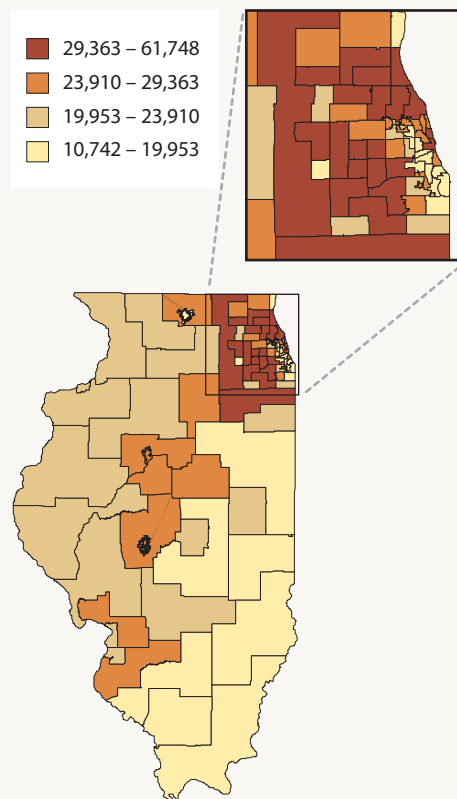
Figure 7
Illinois' Rank in Federal Academic Research and Development Expenditures, 2006, in Millions



Source: National Science Foundation, 2008

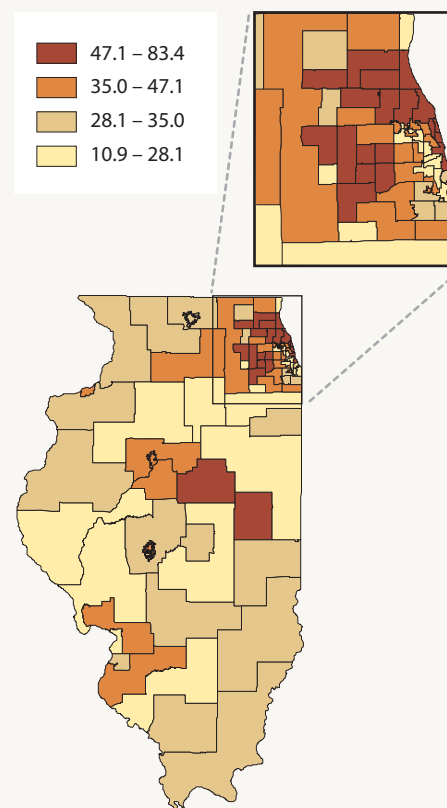
The Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success, unanimously endorsed by the IBHE on December 9, 2008, with the overarching goal that it will serve, according to IBHE Chairwoman Carrie J. Hightman, as “the blueprint to guide education policy – from preschool to graduate school – in Illinois for the next decade.”

Figure 8
Personal Income Per Capita, 2006
(Public Use Microdata Areas)



Source: 2006 ACS (PUMS)

Figure 9
Percent of Population Age 25-64 With an Associate’s Degree or Higher, 2006
(Public Use Microdata Areas)



Source: 2006 ACS (PUMS)

Goal 1

Increase educational attainment to match best-performing U.S. states and world countries.

Recommendations:

1. Increase success of students at each stage of the P-20 education pipeline to eliminate achievement gaps by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and disability.
2. Increase the number of adults, including GED recipients, re-entering education and completing a post-secondary credential.
3. Reduce geographic disparities in educational attainment.

Goal 2

Ensure college affordability for students, families, and taxpayers.

Recommendation: Make Illinois one of the five most affordable states in the country measured in terms of a) the percentage of family income required to pay net cost of attendance for low- and middle-income families, and b) the average amount of debt per undergraduate student.

Goal 3

Increase number of quality post-secondary credentials to meet demands of the economy.

Recommendations:

1. Increase the number of people with quality post-secondary credentials to

- ensure the state has an educated work force and an engaged citizenry.
2. Improve transitions all along the education pipeline, from adult education to post-secondary education, from remedial classes to degree-bearing coursework, and from associate to baccalaureate degree levels.
 3. Increase the number of post-secondary degrees in fields of critical skills shortages, such as nursing, allied health, and information technology.

Goal 4

Better integrate Illinois' educational, research, and innovation assets to meet the economic needs of the state and its regions.

Recommendation: Boost Illinois into the ranks of the five states with the fastest growing economies through cutting-edge research, technology transfer, work force training, innovation education, and a culture of entrepreneurship.

Implementation Plans

The Public Agenda blueprint aims to guide policy and resources for higher education based on the needs of the state. It does not purport to be a plan, per se, for individual institutions of higher education. However, with the recognition that it is vital to keep the Public Agenda discussion front and center, the IBHE has used the opportunity provided by its adoption to revamp the format and content of its own meetings.

In January 2009, a detailed implementation plan for the Public Agenda was outlined by the IBHE and anchored by the Illinois State Assistance Commission (ISAC), Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), Illinois State Board of Education and the public universities. A matrix of goals and their strategies and action steps was developed with a 5-phase implementation time line, beginning in January 2009 and ending in June 2013 with a performance review.

The IBHE realigned its own board procedures and operations (including the structure of board committees, the role of advisory committees and board reporting) with the Public Agenda. This change was implemented in April 2009 and has had mixed results.

At every meeting there is a presentation of the Public Agenda Dashboard with updates on the status of the various goals and recommendations. Equally important, the public universities have been asked to formulate their own budget requests, in alignment with the goals of the Public Agenda. Likewise, the IBHE aligned its own FY 2010 budget recommendations with the Public Agenda. In a welcome deviation from previous years, rather than present a fixed percentage recommendation, they presented a range from -2.5 percent to + 5.5 percent with the consequences clearly articulated.

The IBHE is to be commended for its brisk rollout of the implementation plans for the goals and recommendations of the Public Agenda and the progress made thus far in Phase I and II. However, as outlined below, the efficacy of implementation will depend on the financial well-being of the state. Instead of a tale of two states, we need to grapple with the state of two tales – one is the public agenda with its accurate but lofty goals for higher education and the other the abysmally bleak economic picture.

How Can Public Universities Effectively Implement the Public Agenda?

Many of the goals and recommendations of the Public Agenda are already embedded, albeit in different formats, within the strategic plans of most of the public universities. For instance, Governor's State University, due to fortuitous timing (the arrival of a new president) and careful planning, was able to formulate its own strategic plan, involving its full



The Public Agenda blueprint aims to guide policy and resources for higher education based on the needs of the state.

The challenge of the public universities is to balance their resources in the implementation of their own strategic plans, accountable to their stakeholders, with the recommendations of the Public Agenda.

constituency, with the public agenda in mind. *“The GSU Board of Trustees passed ‘Strategy 2015’ in October 2008. The simultaneous development of the Public Agenda provided a touchstone for the evolution and implementation of our plan”* – Elaine Maimon, President, Governor’s State University.

The Public Agenda is a plan based on the needs of the state and hopes to guide policy and resources for higher education. In the many discussions that led to the articulation of the goals of the Public Agenda, participants were encouraged to not use “increase resources” as the panacea for deficiencies. However, a cautionary note on interpretation needs to be injected here. The challenge of the public universities is to balance their resources in the implementation of their own strategic plans, accountable to their stakeholders, with the recommendations of the Public Agenda. With no new infusion of resources, and in fact a decline of the same (Figure 10), and with increasing state and federal regula-

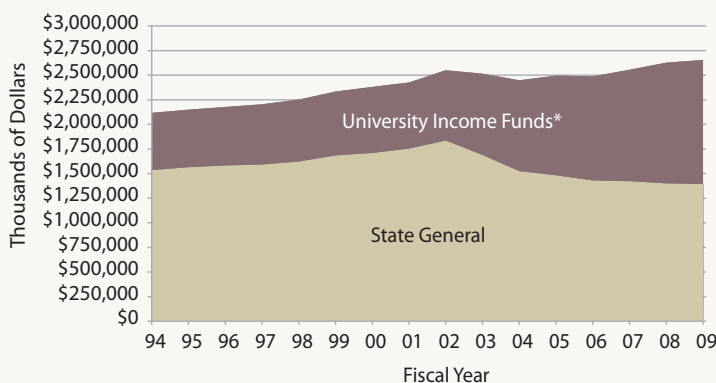
tory burdens for public universities, precisely how the Public Agenda will guide resources is viewed with caution.

A specific example is the third recommendation of Goal 3 – to fill the critical skill shortages, such as in nursing and allied health sciences. This is unarguably important. However, little mention is made of an equally critical mission of public research institutions in the graduate training of future faculty of the academy, educators of the above-mentioned specialized professions, and in the training of physicians and dentists. These graduate and professional programs are expensive. For example, the prohibitive cost of educating a dentist (approximately \$80,000/year) has led all but two institutions of higher education in Illinois to close their dental schools in the last part of the 20th century. Just two public institutions, the University of Illinois at Chicago and Southern Illinois University, are left to carry this responsibility. These fields are also mission critical, although the numbers of individuals required to be educated are necessarily fewer than in the areas outlined in Goal 3. A separate appropriation to support public higher education of physicians, dentists, nursing specialists, and other educators of the health care fields, such as that spearheaded by the University of Illinois in its “Healthy Returns – The Illinois Bill of Health” campaign is crucial for the state.

Approach of the University of Illinois

At the May 2009 meeting of the University of Illinois’ Board of Trustees, IBHE Chairwoman Carrie Hightman challenged the university to provide leadership for the goals of the Public Agenda and to assume special responsibility for fulfilling Goals 1 and 4. Because of the parallels between some aspects of the university’s Strategic Plan and those outlined in the Public Agenda, the university had, in December 2008, summarized its efforts to support implementation of the Public Agenda goals.

Figure 10
Trends In Educational and Related Revenue at Illinois Public Universities, Fiscal Years 1994 to 2009 (Dollars Adjusted for Inflation)



*University Income Funds for fiscal years 2008 and 2009 are estimated.
 Source: IBHE Records

Reviewing the Goals of the Public Agenda

Goal 1

Increase educational attainment

Goal 2

Ensure college affordability

Goal 3

Increase the number of quality post-secondary students

Goal 4

Better integrate education and research to meet the state's economic needs

Following are some examples.

- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign — Gateway to Greatness:** An investment in a known quantity that focuses on quality in teaching and research faculty, this program is aligned with all goals but particularly Goals 1 and 4. For Goal 1, the traditional emphasis of this campus on a quality educational experience, plus a renewed emphasis on qualified transfer students, promises to confirm its leadership position in student success. Also, this campus' extensive efforts to create knowledge through its substantial research engine and to then transfer much of that knowledge through its Research Park is a clear example of its commitment to Goal 4.
- University of Illinois at Chicago – Gateway to Urban Innovation:** A focus on Goal 1 exists as the land grant institution with an urban setting and urban mission on opening new doors to people of color. Using the motto of providing "access to excellence" this campus is aligned to Goal 2, by making affordable education in numerous disciplines, including STEM, through a variety of opportunities, a high priority. This cam-

pus – with its six research-intensive health science colleges, the largest medical school in the state, and its hospital – is a major educator of health science professionals for the state of Illinois and is committed to addressing Goal 4. Some form of universal health care is coming and UIC has a reservoir of ready knowledge and talent to support.

- University of Illinois Springfield— Gateway to Success:** As a teaching institution well-positioned in an intimate learning environment, this campus focuses on Goals 1, 2, and 3. With a growing core of traditional residential students, UIS strives to serve today's students in various formats of classroom, hybrid, and online education settings. In continuing its mission to the state of Illinois through its various public affairs institutes, UIS articulates the goals through its contributions to the state's public service, research, and information needs.
- University of Illinois System:** For all four goals – educational attainment, affordability, greater degree production, and integration of education, research, and innovation assets – the University of Illinois has committed itself to a leadership position as the largest public institution in Illinois. Particularly in the alignment of Illinois' P-20 education system and the effective integration of teaching and research toward greater economic development, the university will partner with the IBHE and Illinois' higher education community to address the goals of the Public Agenda in parallel with those of the university's strategic plan.

The university has assumed a special leadership role in the establishment of Illinois' Longitudinal Data System to research the performance and achievement of Illinois students. Another example of collaboration toward successful implementation of the Public Agenda is with the American Diploma Project where the Longitudinal



The university has assumed a special leadership role in the establishment of Illinois' Longitudinal Data System to research the performance and achievement of Illinois students.



Equally important is establishing a clear communication to the public to repeatedly underscore the value of higher education and the need for continued support from the state rather than tuition increases.

Data System will aid alignment of standards and expectations between K-12 and community colleges and universities. Efforts such as these help set the Public Agenda into motion.

The Role of Other Institutions of Higher Education: Community Colleges, Independents, Proprietary Institutions

Illinois' community colleges serve as the front door to the new and broad sector of our population that the Public Agenda proposes to serve. They believe their model is the correct one and so are limited only by their capacity and nature of service. To this latter point, they have recently embarked on an initiative, funded by a \$750,000 appropriation, to expand college and career readiness programs. This initiative will "encourage stronger post-secondary/high school partnerships for discussion and improvements to curricular alignment, knowledge/skills gaps, and remediation." In essence, the community colleges are attempting to sharpen and improve the effectiveness of their "front door" to better serve a different population. Regretfully, these fine efforts are threatened by budget challenges to their operating funds, exacerbated by the underfunding of ISAC's critical Monetary Award Program.

Illinois' independent colleges and universities have a proud and deserved reputation for serving as the open door for many first- and second-generation students. They fulfill an irreplaceable role in educating a substantial number of our state's citizens. They also are dependent on funding for the ISAC Monetary Award Program (MAP) to support a significant proportion of their Illinois students. Also dependent on the MAP award, but to a lesser extent, is the growing sector of proprietary institutions serving Illinois students. The proprietary institutions have the potential to serve a larger number and broader sector of students but affordability and loan indebtedness remain issues.

The Role of the IBHE

Obviously, the Illinois Board of Higher Education will be critical to the successful implantation of the Public Agenda for College and Career Success. At the same time and as a coordinating body, that role will be limited – particularly in an environment of dwindling resources. The IBHE has established a monitoring and reporting process that looks at progress toward meeting the respective goals and recommendations of the Public Agenda. The challenge will be the IBHE's ability to convey progress in ways that are meaningful to policymakers and institutional leaders to ensure movement – what happens when goals are not met or only minimally addressed? Equally important is establishing a clear communication to the public to repeatedly underscore the value of higher education and the need for continued support from the state rather than tuition increases (Figure 10 on page 56).

Additionally, and as mentioned earlier, the IBHE has reshaped several of its processes, including its meeting format, to guide institutional action toward goal fulfillment. For instance, all program approval requests must now address how they respond to the goals of the Public Agenda. And the guiding theme of this year's FY 2011 budget discussions has been responding to the needs of the Public Agenda. All the aforementioned are steps in the correct direction and have the potential to support real change but, without adequate funding, could be blunted.

Looking Forward – What Will It Take to Make the Public Agenda a Success?

The leadership of Illinois has taken a bold step in forging the Public Agenda. The fundamental goal of greater numbers and a broader spectrum of high-quality offerings of affordable higher education for Illinois residents will convert the tale of two states with a yawning prosperity gap



Dr. Mrinalini (Meena) C. Rao was appointed University of Illinois Vice President for Academic Affairs in July 2007. Previously, she served as Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs at the University of Illinois at Chicago and, from 1999-2002, as Associate Dean and Executive Associate Dean of the Graduate College. Rao is a Professor of Physiology and Biophysics and Professor of Medicine, College of Medicine at Chicago. Her research focuses on elucidating the molecular mechanisms underlying hormonal and neurotransmitter mediated regulation of physiological processes. Rao is interested in diversity issues and serves on the Diversifying Faculty of Illinois Board. She received her PhD in Cell and Molecular Biology from the University of Michigan.



Charles V. Evans is Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs and serves as Director of University Outreach and Public Service. His research interests include the learning support needs of older, adult college students and effective collaboration among post-secondary institutions. Evans has had a longstanding interest in online education and has been deeply involved in University of Illinois Online, the Illinois Online Network and the Illinois Virtual Campus. Evans also is responsible for University Academic Programs and Services, a unit which links with the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Illinois State Board of Education, supporting the Illinois P-16 Collaborative. He holds a PhD from the University of Illinois.

into the tale of “one state that is ready to face the future” (Carrie Hightman, 2008). The IBHE and its leadership has to be congratulated that the report has not sat on a shelf but with the cooperation of sister organizations, such as the ICCB, ISAC, and the public universities, Phases I and II are under way. The Public Agenda has given renewed impetus to develop a longitudinal data base, foster the America Diploma Project and encourage dialogue, partnership and even institutional agreements on student transfer between two-year and four-year institutions. Therefore, the IBHE and its partners seem to have the steadfast will to take the steps necessary to fulfill the agenda’s promise.

Unfortunately, despite this resolve, the litmus test is whether the efforts will be undermined by the unprecedented challenges of the present economic climate. Large infusions of new resources were never expected. During the formulation of the Public Agenda, participants were encouraged to view its implementation more as a realignment of resources to address the goals. However, what was not predicted was the near paralysis of the state economy, underscored by the recent reduction in the bond ratings of the state.

All four of the goals of the public agenda are inexorably linked to the availability of a steady revenue stream. Even realignments

All four of the goals of the public agenda are inexorably linked to the availability of a steady revenue stream.



Ideally, the political leadership of Illinois will use the Public Agenda as a guide to policymaking and will support it through their actions.

are not possible if the source of revenue is uncertain. For the first time in the recollection of many state financial experts, six months into Fiscal Year 2010, public universities had received less than 10 percent of their appropriated allocations. The challenge to the IBHE and the public universities is how to avoid the looming reality of this becoming two tales of a sorry state – one of lofty goals and the other of increased unfunded mandates and no reliable revenue stream for implementation of the goals.

In December 2009, faced with statements by public university presidents that they worried they could not make payroll through the end of the fiscal year, the IBHE unanimously passed the following resolution:

“The IBHE instructs staff to organize a campaign (utilizing the resources developed

during the recent campaign supporting MAP) to support full funding of the State’s financial obligations to its post-secondary institutions, including whatever revenue sources and cost-saving measures are necessary to accomplish that goal.”

This cooperation between the IBHE and higher education leaders is heartening and needs to be fostered for the Public Agenda to succeed.

Ideally, the political leadership of Illinois will use the Public Agenda as a guide to policymaking and will support it through their actions. These actions should include a streamlining of the ever-increasing unfunded, and at times misplaced (for the mission of higher education) regulatory burden, and creating a reliable revenue stream that will allow for post-secondary institutions to provide accessible and affordable high quality education.