



**ECACE**  
EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCESS  
CONSORTIUM FOR EQUITY

Welcome!

Add to chat box:

- What's one thing you are looking forward to this academic year?



Illinois  
State Board of  
Education



Governor's Office of  
Early Childhood Development



# Agenda

- Welcome
- Introduce ECACE Teams from ICCB and IBHE
- ECACE Overview
- Institutional Teams
- Roles: Mentors and Navigators
- ECACE Scholarship

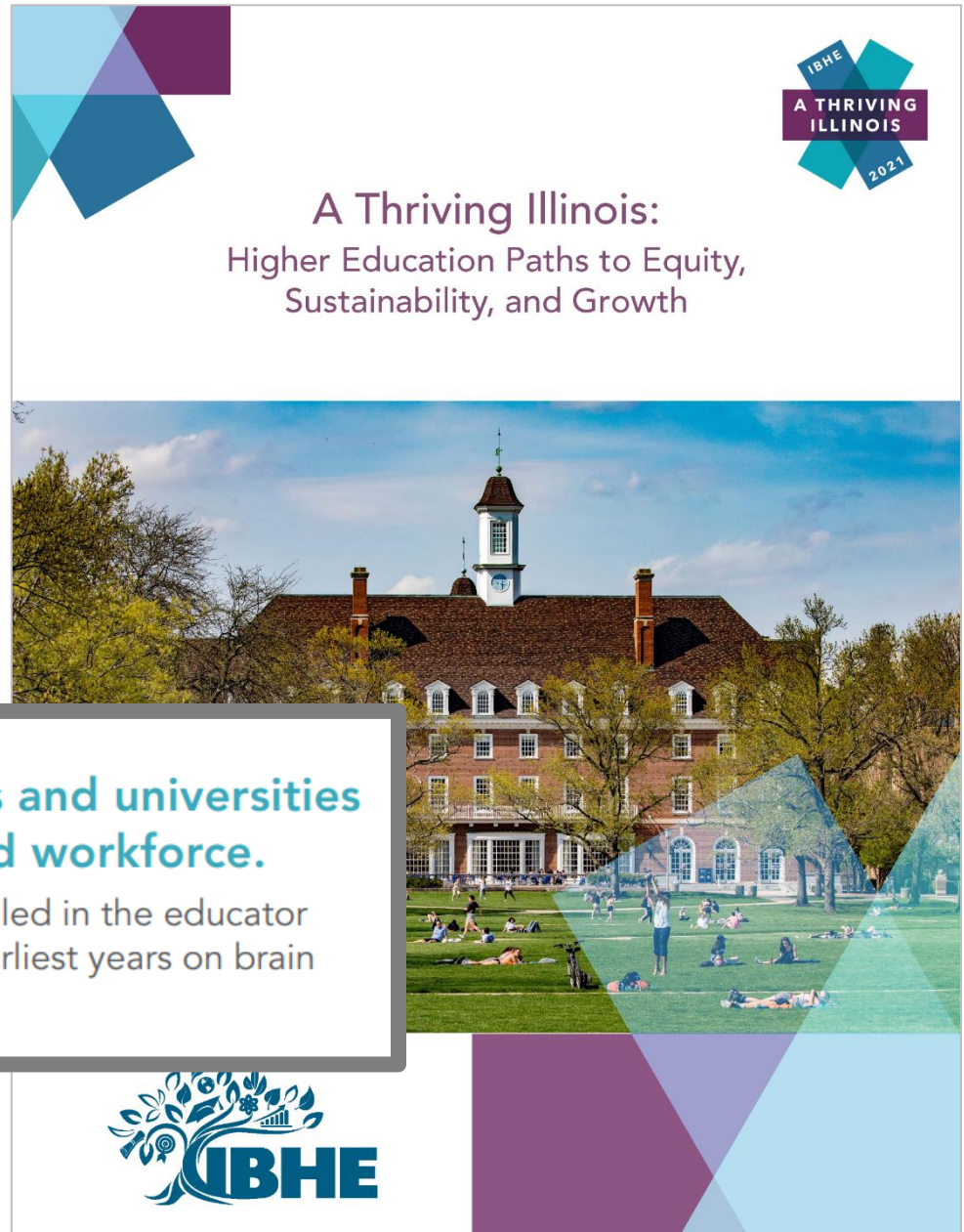


# The 2021 Illinois Higher Education Strategic Plan

The plan includes strategies to close equity gaps, support working adults, and advance the education and credentialing of the early childhood workforce.

## 5 Establish a consortium of community colleges and universities to better serve the incumbent early childhood workforce.

Often the educators of our youngest children are the least credentialed in the educator workforce, despite the research that shows the importance of the earliest years on brain development.



# Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity Act

Established the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) to:

- Support the needs of the EC incumbent Workforce and allow them to upskill.
- Advance equity.
- Streamline, coordinate, and improve accessibility of degree and credential pathways.
- Provide programs of study with flexibility in the times, locations, and format courses are offered.



## Gov. Pritzker: \$200M investment to strengthen early childhood workforce

An additional \$30 million will provide coaches, mentors, and navigators the tools needed to help child care workers pursue their degrees.

[P.A. 102-0174](#); signed into law 7/28/21


# Better Together

Center Student Success  
is the #1 Guiding Principle

**Cross Sector Advisory**



IBHE  
ICCB  
Illinois State Board of Education  
IDHS  
Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development



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**1 Consortium**

**62 Institutions**



**Benefits**

- EC Workforce
- Employers
- Children & Families
- Higher Ed
- Broader Workforce

## Workforce Supports

Scholarships  
& COA  ISAC  
Illinois Student Assistance Commission

Navigators,  
Mentors

Financial Holds



# Institutional Teams



# Institutions

Colleges and universities are deeply engaged in Consortium work

- Mentors for the warm handoff from navigators and to support students to enroll, persist, complete
- Programs to meet the needs to adult learners (time, format, location, modality)
- Supports for student success (e.g., tutoring, content test support)
- Funding for the release of financial holds
- Internal, cross-departmental teams made up of academic leadership, financial aid, admissions, mentors/coaches, faculty, grant officers, advisors, transfer specialists, and others get the work done



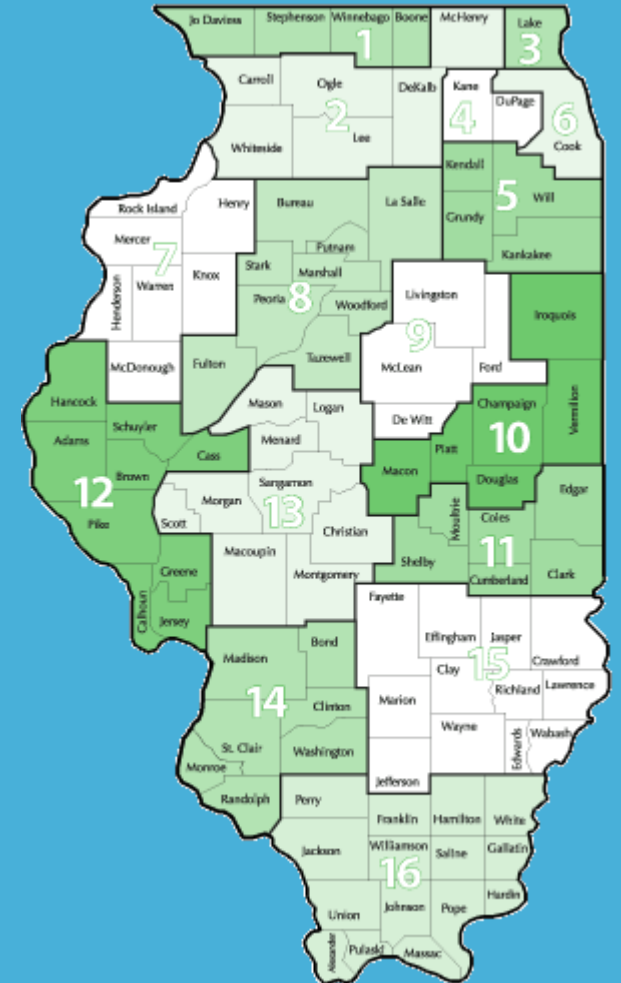


# Roles: Navigators and Mentors

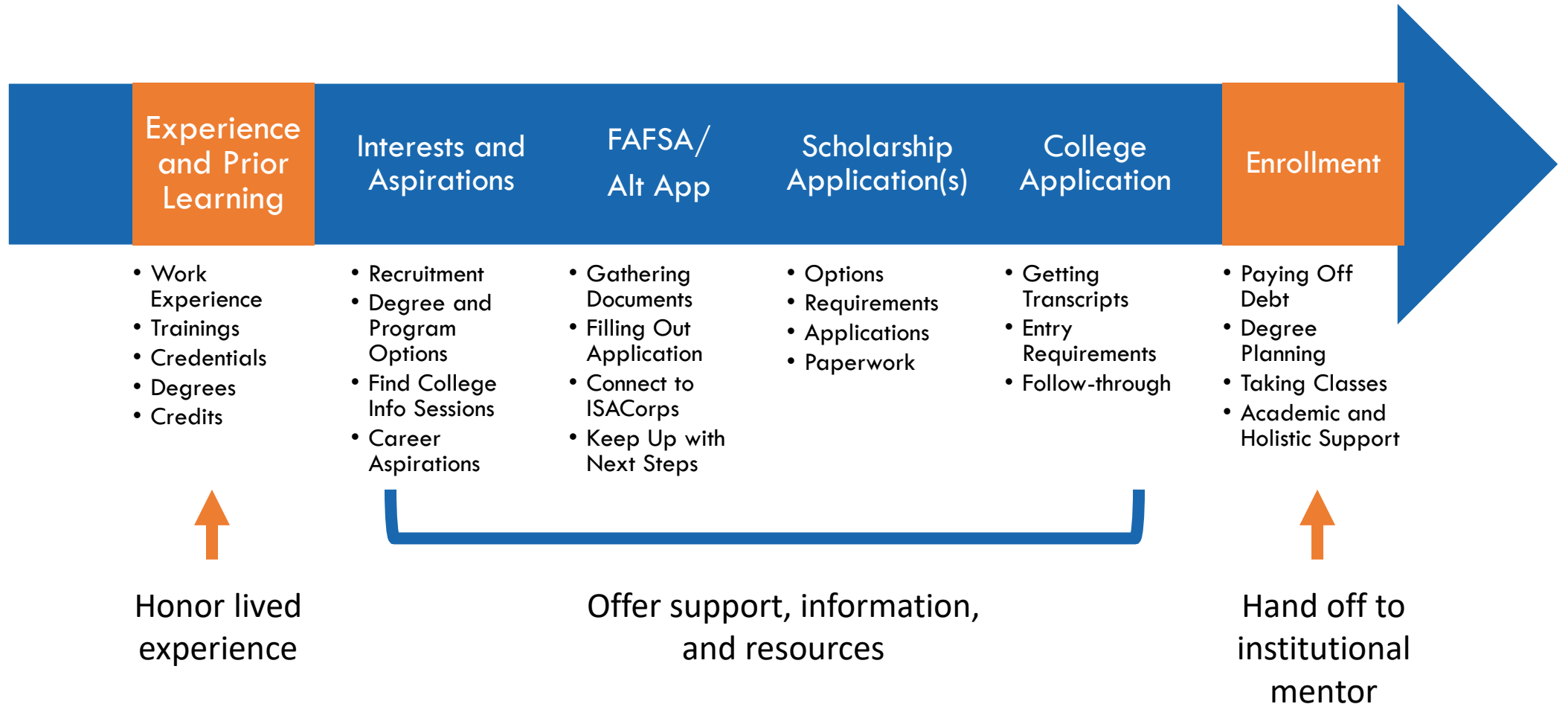
# Navigators

**Goal:** 32 regionally-based navigators at 16 CCRRs

- Backgrounds in higher education, early childhood, working in community organizations, former ISAC Corps
- To provide personalized assistance to students to access higher education and provide a warm handoff to institutions
- Example supports:
  - Scholarship and FAFSA applications
  - Finding and applying to an institution
  - Attaining transcripts
- **To Access a Navigator:** [www.tinyurl.com/4b4em9zw](http://www.tinyurl.com/4b4em9zw)



# What parts of the student journey can a navigator help with?



# Mentor: Potential Roles

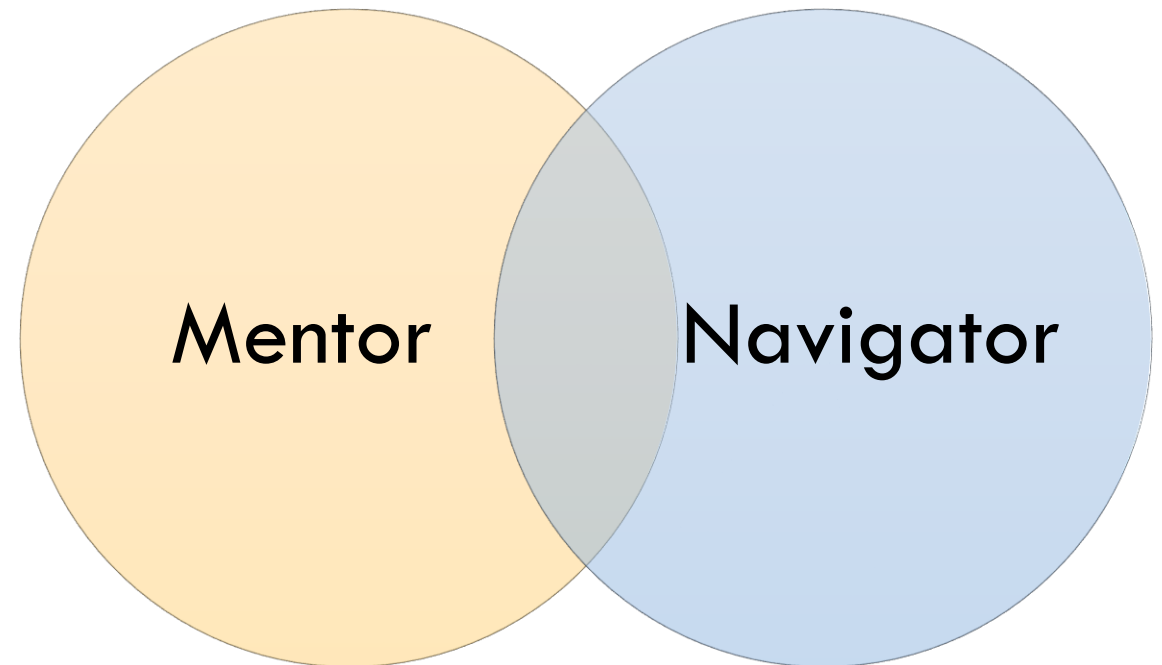
- Warm handoff from navigators
- Students' central point of contact within an institution
- Intrusive advising
  - Intentional tracking and monitoring progress, with intentional intervention
- Connect students to contacts within an individual institution
  - Academic and other student supports, Financial Aid, Registrar, Enrollment Office, Bursar's Office
- **MAYBE** Academic advising (optional, might be someone else)
- Outreach, recruitment, relationships
- Onboarding
- Student support for persistence and completion
- Deep knowledge of their institution's early childhood program, courses, and relationship to Gateways Credentials
- For community colleges, knowledge of options for transfer and potentially knowledge of ILCCO options, if needed

## Mentors and Navigators

The Navigators guide students to the door (and may help them apply), and mentors greet students at the door and serve as the “guide on the side” inside the institution.

In some cases, there is no clear cut, definitive line between the role of the navigator and the institutional mentor/coach.

Some of this may be negotiated between the Navigator and Mentor.



# ECACE Scholarship

## ECACE Scholarship

To apply or for more information  
<https://www.isac.org/ECACEscholarship>

**Funding:** Includes tuition & fees\*, and funding for up to the full cost of attendance (room and board, transportation, etc.)

**Undergraduate** (prioritized attaining Gateways Credentials, Associate and/or Bachelor's Degree) at a Consortium Institution

**Work Setting:** Must work or have worked w/children birth to five in child care, preschool, family child care, Head Start, Preschool for All, etc. (Eligible on day 1)

**Eligible Positions:** Teachers, assistants, aides, floaters (if w/0-5), and others (see ISAC website for full list); Positions must be documented in **Gateways** Registry

**AY2022 (Fall 21 – Summer 22)** ~1000 applications, ~500 scholarship students

**AY2023 (Fall 22 – Summer 23)** – Open since June and already >1000 applications



\*Tuition capped at highest tuition at a public institution.

# ECACE 2022-2023 Scholarship Application Process

1. Students must also complete (or have completed) a 2021-22 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®)
  - Financial Aid Offices (and often navigators) can help with this
2. The application requires information from the Gateways to Opportunity Registry about the student's employment in early childhood education, including:
  - Gateways Member ID number
  - An ECACE Eligibility Verification Form

TIPSHEET: <https://www.isac.org/students/during-college/documents/ECACE-Elig-Verif-Form-Tips.pdf>
3. The ECACE Scholarship application must be completed online through ISAC's Student Portal at [studentportal.isac.org](http://studentportal.isac.org)
  - Students will need to create an ISAC Student Portal account
  - The ECACE application will time out after 30 minutes of inactivity, so applicants should have Gateways information ready

Minute Video: [https://youtu.be/aU3L\\_7A5Bqo](https://youtu.be/aU3L_7A5Bqo)





# After an Application is Submitted

- 1) Students receive a confirmation e-mail when the ECACE application has been received by ISAC
- 2) When students' applications are processed (~3 weeks)
  - Institutions' financial aid offices receive the names of students and their status in the GAP system
  - Students get an email/letter with their status
    - Complete
    - Incomplete (what's missing)
    - Ineligible
- 3) Prequalification: ISAC running prequalification 1 /week right now
  - Institutions' financial aid offices receive amount of funding in the GAP system
  - Students get an email/letter saying they are prequalified (or not)
- 4) Approved for Funding:
  - Financial aid offices verify students are eligible on the institutional side
  - Satisfactory Academic Process; no outstanding debt; enrolled in an approved program



## ISAC Student Services

E-mail: [isac.studentservices@illinois.gov](mailto:isac.studentservices@illinois.gov)  
Phone: 800-899-4722

## Gateways to Opportunity Registry

<https://registry.ilgateways.com/login>  
Phone: 866-697-8278



## Important Things to Note

- Please work with your financial aid office on individual student issues. If needed, the financial aid office can reach out to ISAC about individual students. (ISAC cannot talk to mentors or navigators about individual students).
- Spend time on the ISAC Website – it has a lot of resources.
- Get to know the navigators, build relationships, support one another. Create processes for “warm handoffs”.
- Each institution has a Consortium Institutional Representative and Team. Get to know who the representative and team are. They can help with internal issues. And, work with them to make sure that you are connected with everyone you need to be. (financial aid, registrar, bursar, admissions, etc.)
- To the degree possible, avoid sending the student somewhere without a contact or connection.
- If you get stuck, reach out.



# CONTACTS

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