



ECACE
EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCESS
CONSORTIUM FOR EQUITY

ECACE CONSORTIUM MEETING

APRIL 24, 2023

Please sign up at the registration table for public comment.



Illinois
State Board of
Education



Governor's Office of
Early Childhood Development



Opening Remarks

Ginger Ostro, Executive Director, IBHE
Dr. Francis Godwyll, Dean, College of Education, ISU
Dr. Brian Durham, Executive Director, ICCB



Guiding Principles – Adopted April 19, 2022

The Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) is a consortium of Illinois higher education institutions that **work collaboratively** toward our shared goal of creating more **accessible and equitable early childhood higher education opportunities.**

Our work will create more seamless educational pathways for early childhood student access and success, benefitting not only the students but leading to a strong, well-qualified workforce to better support providers and employers in the state, young children and families in their care, and the broader workforce generally.

Center Student Success

Behave as Equals

Respect Consortium
Agreements, While
Accommodating
Institutional Differences

Simplify Student
Navigation

Share Leadership

Meeting Goals

Provide opportunities for institutions and agency partners to connect and share.

Review the needs assessment findings and discuss the recommendations.

Reflect on aspects of the upcoming ECACE report and discuss strengths, opportunities, and next steps.

Review Consortium's charge and guiding principles, including the role of the Consortium as a learning community.

Agenda

Welcome, Housekeeping, and Opening Remarks

Smart Start Illinois and the Role for Higher Education (Governor's Office)

Needs Assessment Findings and Discussion (Afton Partners)

Lunch and Networking

Table Talks: Choose a Topic

ECACE Reporting Overview & Table Discussion

Minutes: Review and Approve

Public Comment

Next Steps and Adjourn

Smart Start Illinois

Dr. Teresa Ramos, First Assistant Deputy Governor for Education





OFFICE OF
Governor
JB Pritzker

LAUNCHING SMART START ILLINOIS

TRANSFORMING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE FOR OUR YOUNGEST

✓ Creating more than 20,000 new Pre-K spots by December 2027 through the Early Childhood Block Grant

✓ Investing in the Early Intervention program to maintain services for families and give providers a raise

✓ Launching the Childcare Workforce Compensation Contract program, stabilizing funding for providers and raising wages for workers

✓ Expanding DHS and ISBE Home Visiting Programs, targeting the highest-need communities

ADDITIONAL INVESTMENTS INTO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

✓ Funding scholarships and apprenticeships to expand the early childhood workforce

✓ Improving or expanding facilities for early childhood providers

✓ Launching the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, a statewide literacy initiative

✓ Investing in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)



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INVESTING IN K-12 EDUCATION

HISTORIC FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE A QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL OUR STUDENTS

- ✓ Launching a 3-year program to build the teacher pipeline with new funding for 170 districts with the most need for educators
- ✓ Investing in the K-12 Evidence-Based Funding Formula
- ✓ Expanding access to computer science coursework and preparing students for the tech economy
- ✓ Creating the Clean Energy Career and Technical Education Pilot Program to expand electric vehicle vocational training opportunities for high school students



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Governor
JB Pritzker

THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

ENSURING AFFORDABLE COLLEGE FOR ALL

- ✓ A \$100 million increase for MAP this year, bringing funding to the highest level in state history and 75% higher since Governor Pritzker took office

- ✓ *Virtually all community college students at or below the median income* will have their tuition and fees covered through MAP and PELL grants to go to school

HISTORIC INVESTMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- ✓ Funding for public universities to close gaps in enrollment, retention, and completion
- ✓ Funding for community colleges to assist students in job training, degree completion, and economic empowerment
- ✓ Funding for the Pipeline for the Advancement of the Healthcare Workforce Program



IL Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity

Needs Assessment Results & Recommendations

Consortium Meeting

April 24, 2023





A national advisory services organization that partners with public sector organizations to analyze and transform policy and practice

Our goal: Engage Consortium members and Institutional Teams to understand and clearly articulate needs and priorities of ECACE to help Consortium staff set a future direction.

Our methodology included



Focus Groups



Survey



1:1 Interviews



Key Insights



Collaboration: Institutions have appreciated the collaboration ECACE has created and want more structured opportunities to work with and learn from each other.



Institution implementation: Institutions have made progress implementing positive changes and need more support on key topics including credit for prior learning and debt relief.



Infrastructure and support: State agency staff have provided many meaningful supports, though some institutions are experiencing challenges with fully benefitting from ECACE.





ECACE has enabled valuable collaboration and relationship building

Institutions have built deeper relationships:

Within their communities

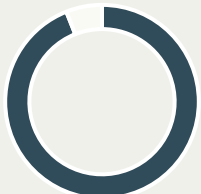
“ECACE has led to increased communication with students and with child care centers in the area.”

Across institutions

“The Consortium has helped bring a shared sense of community around this project. We have appreciated the brainstorming and problem solving that have occurred.”

Within institutions

“The institution has come together for early childhood. Each area involved in our institutional team is aware of guidelines and able to direct students effectively. We are all moving in the same direction!”



94% of survey respondents believe the Consortium has increased collaboration across Illinois institutions of higher education.





Institutions want more structured opportunities to connect and learn from each other

“In Consortium meetings...we would like to see more time for targeted conversations amongst higher education institutions.”

“(Moving forward, we want to see) more time for colleges to collaborate on initiatives that are working for them.”

“I would love to see more space for collaboration and shared working knowledge.”





Institutions have made many meaningful changes

Institutional attention and growth

“We have been able to make ECE a priority program here and grow our course offerings to fit student need.”

Institutional processes

“We've streamlined our application process but more work needs to be done in regards to student data tracking.”

Increased staff

“Mentors have been super helpful. That group is the biggest bright spot.”

Institution collaboration

“We have become more connected across programs and more nimble to address consortium requirements and student needs.”

Accessible program and course design

- Online courses
- Spanish courses
- Asynchronous courses
- Evening courses

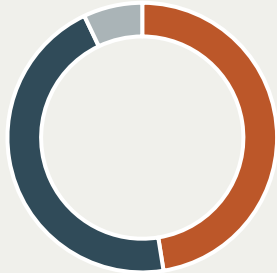
Meaningful student supports

- Scholarship
- Barrier removal – gas cards, laptops, internet access
- Debt relief
- Stipends





Institutions report they have made progress on key strategic initiatives



■ Significantly ■ Somewhat ■ Minimally

48% of institutions reported that they have made significant progress on removing barriers to accessibility, persistence and completion for the incumbent ECE workforce.



■ Significantly ■ Somewhat ■ Minimally

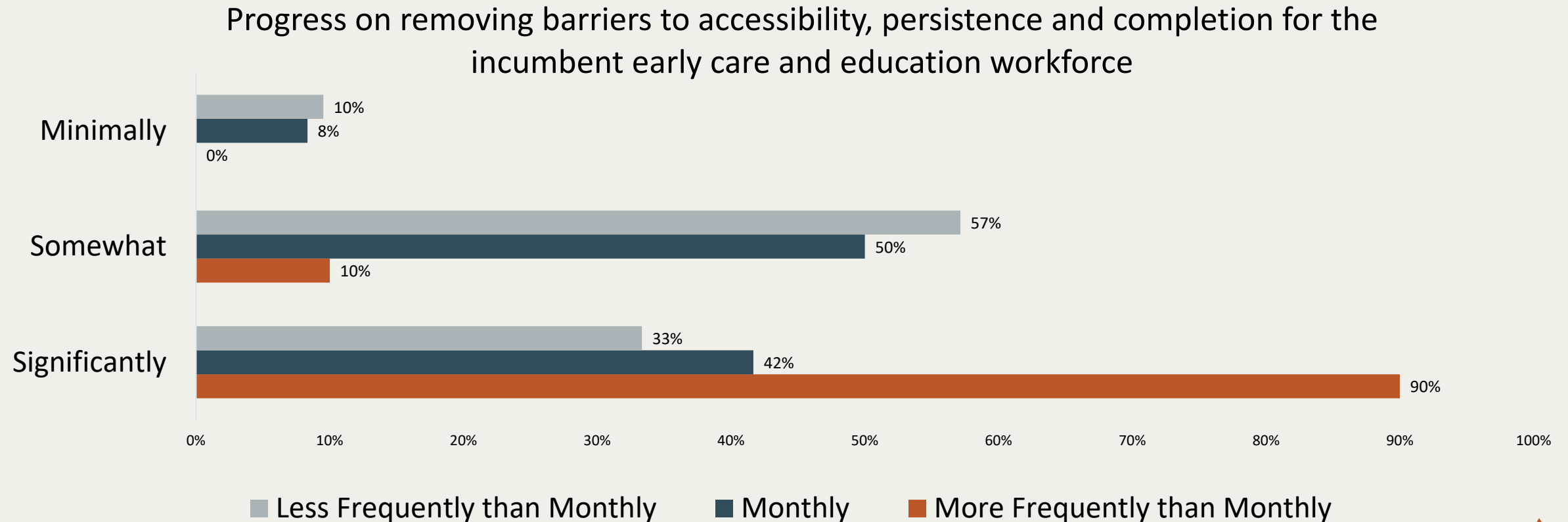
29% of institutions reported that they have made significant progress on recognizing prior learning for ECE students.

Many focus group participants have also made significant progress implementing CDA for credit and some with prior learning assessment.





The more frequently an institutional team meets, the more likely they are to make progress on removing barriers for students





But, they have also experienced implementation challenges, partially due to:

Lack of internal capacity to sufficiently implement the work

- As demonstrated by:
 - Some institutions are struggling to hire mentors
 - Mentors and faculty are often taking on administrative work

“We just don't have the manpower to address all initiatives fully.”

Internal processes are getting in the way of implementation

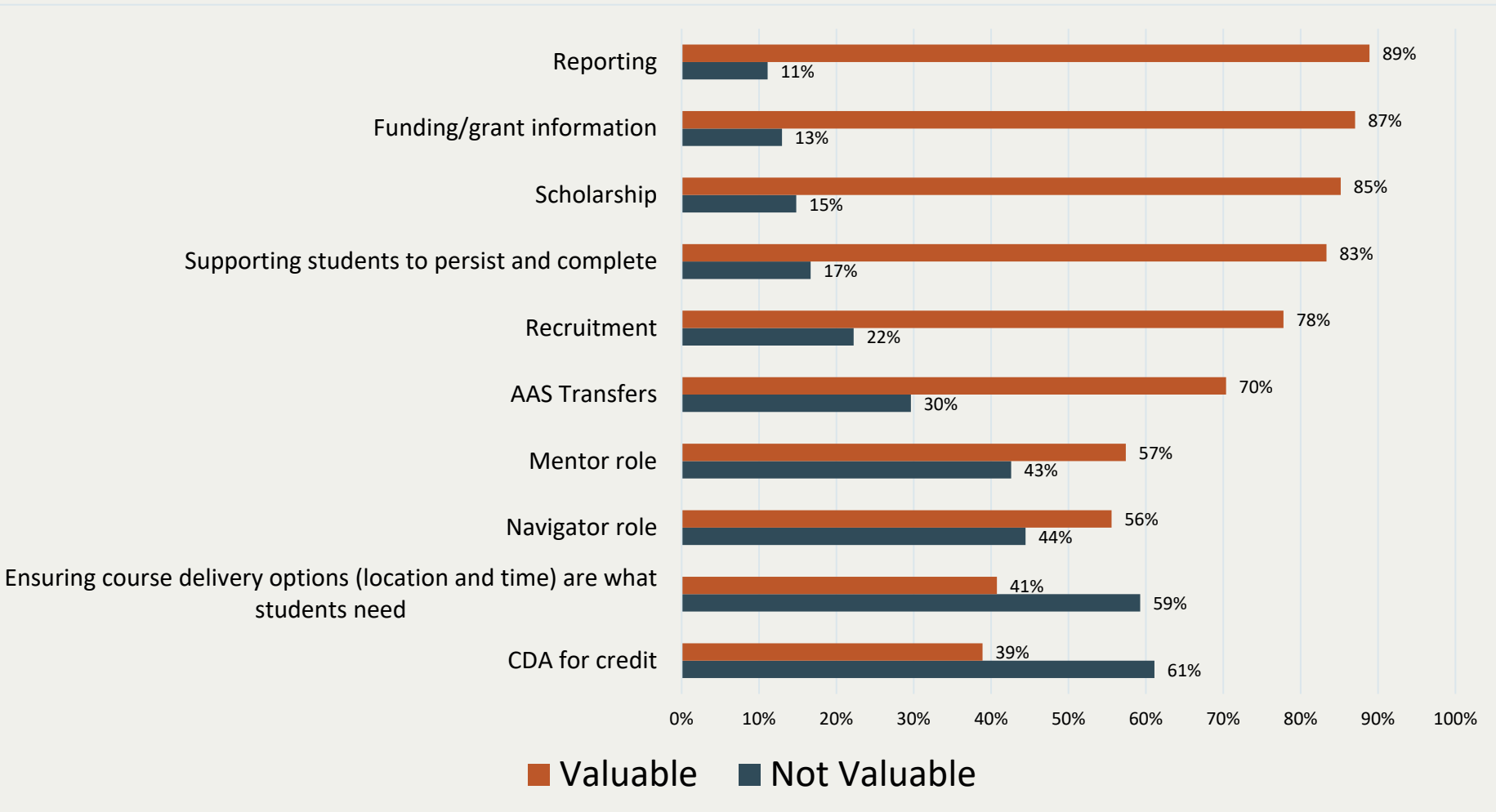
- Particularly for large institutions, it takes a lot of time and coordination across many departments to make a change (i.e. moving a course online)

“Internal processes of approvals and timelines make it difficult to pivot as needed for this grant.”





And, institutions think technical assistance from ICCB or IBHE on these topics would be valuable



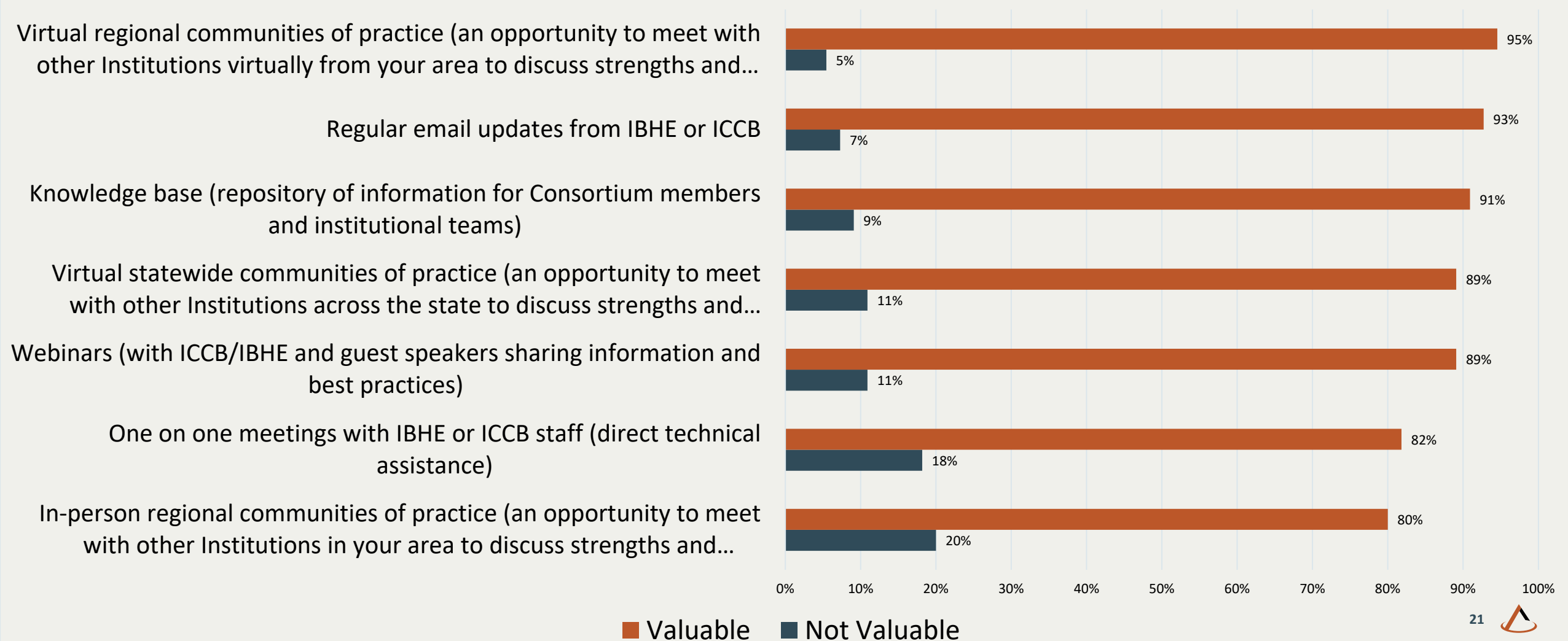
Focus group participants also requested support with:

- Modularizing courses for variable credit
- Prior learning assessments
- Debt relief
- Student teaching
- Course sharing
- Clarity on scholarship expansion to AA
- Culturally responsive teaching and learning standards



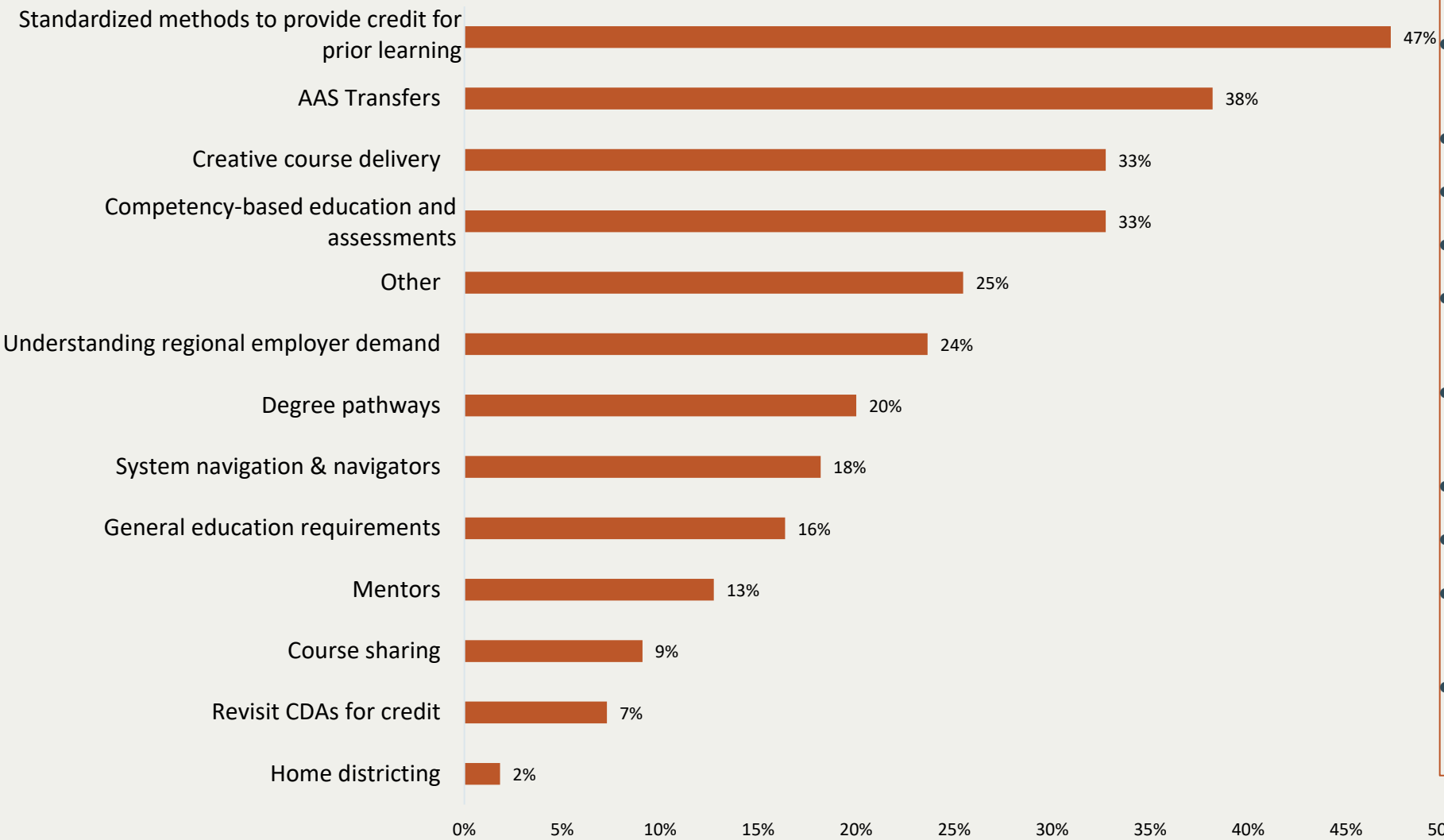


Institutions think many different types of support would be valuable





Institutions would like the Consortium to work on the following topics moving forward



- Other includes:
- Extending funding x3
 - Expansion of scholarship and new eligibility requirements x2
 - Addressing industry wages x2
 - Student Teaching
 - Admission GPA
 - Including navigators & mentors in Consortium meetings
 - Credit for prior learning (not standardized)
 - Debt Relief
 - Retention strategies
 - Culturally responsive teaching & learning standards
 - Navigator goal setting & reporting on activates and outcomes



ICCB & IBHE have provided some strong infrastructure and supports

- Staff have clearly communicated the mission and vision of ECACE
- Consortium meetings are well-facilitated and engaging
- Working groups are productive
- Consortium staff are generally responsive to feedback
- Many Consortium staff do their best to answer questions quickly





Some institutions have experienced challenges in fully benefitting from ECACE

Reporting

Several institutions named changing and extensive requests for data as difficult to accommodate.

Communication

Some institutions experience inconsistent communication from state agencies.

Funding Timeline

Many institutions are concerned they won't be able to effectively spend all the funds by the end of the grant period.

Scholarship Processes

Some institutions listed challenges with scholarship approval and disbursement processes for students.

Recruitment

Some institutions are having difficulty recruiting prospective students.



To build on progress, Consortium staff could:

Create more opportunities for collaboration

- Build more time for discussion in existing meetings
- Stand up learning communities for institutions to share challenges, uplift best practices, and engage in collective problem solving

Support institutional implementation

- Support institutions in working through challenging internal processes and enhancing communication within institutional teams
- Launch working groups to address requested topics
- Provide additional guidance and technical assistance on key topics

Enhance state agency support

- Be clear and consistent with reporting requirements
- Build a knowledge base
- Dedicate additional state agency staff time to align and clearly communicate



To build on progress, institutions could:

Continue external collaboration efforts

- Continue proactive outreach with navigators and institutions in your region to support a seamless experience for students
- Actively participate in learning communities to share challenges, uplift best practices, and engage in collective problem solving

Work with institutional teams to resolve implementation challenges

- Enhance institutional team collaboration and communication (i.e., monthly meetings)
- Assess and work to improve scholarship issues and processes
- Consider adding additional internal capacity with underspent grant funds

Take advantage of state agency support

- Carefully review resources shared by state agency staff (i.e., emails, webinars, guidance) and share with appropriate institutional team members

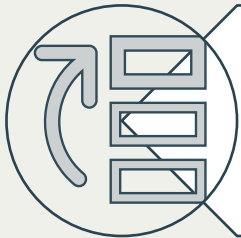


In small groups, please discuss:



How have you seen your feedback reflected in this presentation?

- What is missing?

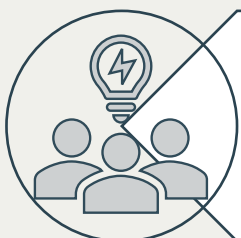


What is your biggest priority for the Consortium in this next year?



What would you hope to see working groups accomplish?

- What are the most important topics to address in working groups this year?



What would you most want out of a learning community?

- What topics are most important to address in a learning community?

Institutional Teams

Marcus Brown



Post Lunch Table Talks

Table Talks: Choose a Topic 12:20 – 12:50

Old Main: Institutional Representatives

Circus Room: Other Guests (or observe in Old Main)

- Choose a topic (signs on the tables)
- Spend 5 minutes reading/thinking about the handout on the table
- As a group, choose a facilitator and note taker (we will be asking you to hand in notes for the table).
- Discuss the questions.
- Add your ideas to the form with any questions.
- Return to the Brown Ballroom at 1:00pm

Post Lunch Table Talks

Innovative Approaches For Spending to Support Programs and Students

Supporting Transfer Through Gen Ed Alignment

Scholarship: Institutional Processes

Building Strong Navigator and Employer Connections

Standardized Prior Learning

LUNCH

Institutional Representatives:

- Boxed lunches – side of the room (turkey, roast beef, hummus wrap)

Guests:

- Food court has several options

Brown Ballroom:

Video Provided by SAL Community Services
Featuring two staff members and the director
of the Rockford location
Start Time: ~12:00 pm





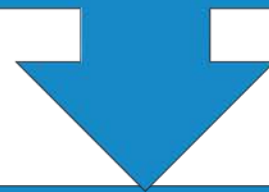
SAL Family And Community Services

Video for ECACE

What We Are Learning: Reporting on Consortium Work

Reporting Overview

The Consortium is required to report to the General Assembly, the Governor, and the ECACE advisory committee on progress made by the Consortium.



Two reports will be published per year (fall and spring)

First report: May 2023

Next report: October 2023

Reporting Overview

Data Sources:

- Quarterly Program Reports (PPRs)
- Meetings and institutional check-ins
- Historical information
- Surveys
- Data reported by institutional research offices to IBHE and ICCB

Approach to first report is to:

- Share an overview of ECACE work from **July 2021 – December 31, 2022**
- Highlight successes
- Note any significant barriers or challenges
- Set the tone for future reports

Enrollment, Persistence, and Completion of the Incumbent Workforce

Bridging together the necessary information

- Several core aspects of the reporting requirements could not be addressed using existing information sources in isolation
 - The higher education agencies do not currently have a way for systematically verifying the early childhood incumbency status of enrolled students
 - The reporting requirements (e.g., persistence) and the core work of the consortium highlighted the need for more student-centered measures as opposed to traditional institutional-centered measures (e.g., retention and graduation)
- All paths led to the Gateways Registry to get at incumbency status...
 - A process had already been established for verifying ECACE scholarship eligibility with eligible position types, etc.
 - Why not use that source and the existing operational definitions?
 - ...and eventually to the Illinois Longitudinal Data System

Utilizing the ECACE Dataset for Mandated Reporting (Public Act 102-0174) and Enhancing Program and Student Success

Combined ECACE Dataset

ECE enrollment numbers for the fall and spring semesters

Retention rates

Persistence in relevant associate, baccalaureate, and credential programs

Race, ethnicity, and federal Pell grant status disaggregation

Completion numbers and rates

Employer type

Years worked

Reported overall and by early childhood workforce incumbency status

Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator (CDDA)

- Handling the matching and the automation of reporting in partnership with IBHE, ICCB, and INCCRRA/DHS
- Housed at Northern Illinois University's Center for Governmental Studies since 2015
- Supported by all the state agencies participating in the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS): ISBE, ICCB, IBHE, DCEO, IDHS, ISAC, IDES, and DCFS
- Since 2015, has matched and provided identity resolution for nearly 217 million records representing 21.5 million individuals who touched one or more of the ILDS agencies
- Facilitates matching across disparate datasets
 - Creates a single ID that could be used for research across all agencies
 - Eliminates the need to share additional personally identifiable information, reducing risk
- Supports longitudinal research and data analysis

Persistence

- Non-linear persistence and completion patterns are becoming more common (they were fairly common two decades ago)
- Traditional measures (e.g., retention and graduation rates) have not kept up and tend to focus on new first-time, full-time undergraduate students (freshmen)
- A stop-out from the perspective of one institution is considered a new transfer student from the perspective the receiving institution
- In the matching project there were around 150 students who were enrolled at more than one ECACE member institution during the same academic year.
 - Concurrent enrollment
 - Traditional reverse transfers
 - Lateral transfers
 - Vertical transfers
 - Summer sessioners

Example of non-linear enrollment patterns for the Illinois HS graduating class of 2003

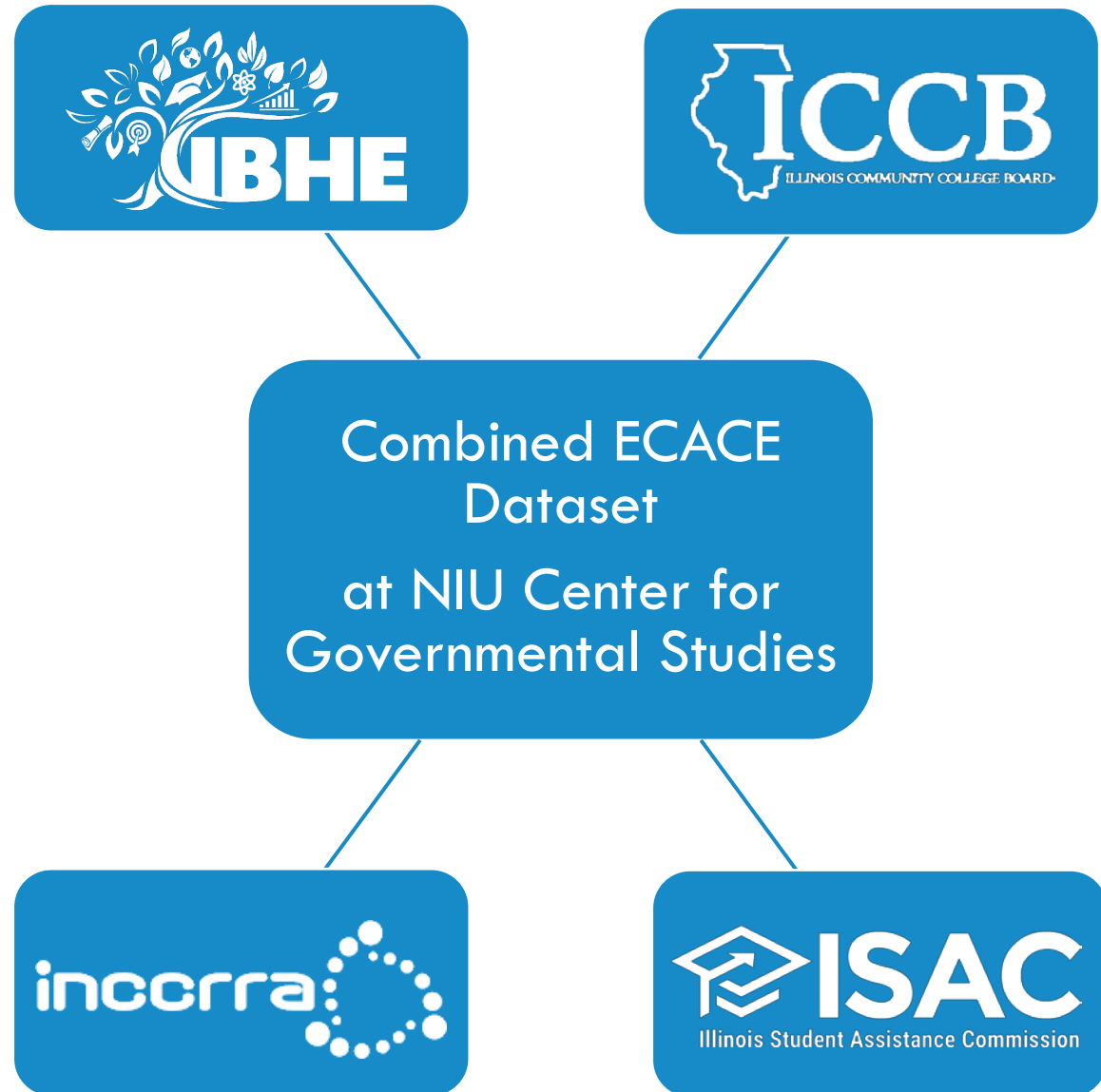


By the end of the seven-year tracking period, half of students who initially enrolled at a four-year institution enrolled at a community college.



Maximizing State Agency Data Systems and Illinois Longitudinal Data System Processes

- **IBHE:** Early Childhood Program Student-Level data deriving from IBHE Illinois Higher Education Information System
- **ICCB:** Early Childhood Program Student-Level data deriving from Centralized Data System
- **ISAC:** ECACE Scholarship Program Individual-Level Data
- **INCCRRA:** Gateways to Opportunity Credentials Individual-Level Data
- **ISBE:** Information on Paraprofessionals (to be added)



Next Steps

- Finalizing and releasing the first annual report (release will occur later in the spring)
- Figuring out ways to automate the ingestion of new information (enrollment and completion records & Gateways registry information) and to automatically generate reports
- Producing the information regionally (CCR&R or Economic Development Regions)
- Thinking of ways to provide a value-add to the ECACE member institutions
- Fine-tuning our operational definition and measures of persistence (i.e., what to do with ECACE students who transfer to institutions outside the consortium, and/or switch majors?)
- The next required report highlighting fall 2022-23 will be available in late summer/early fall

Academic and Holistic Supports



Academic and Holistic Supports

Mentors/Coaches:

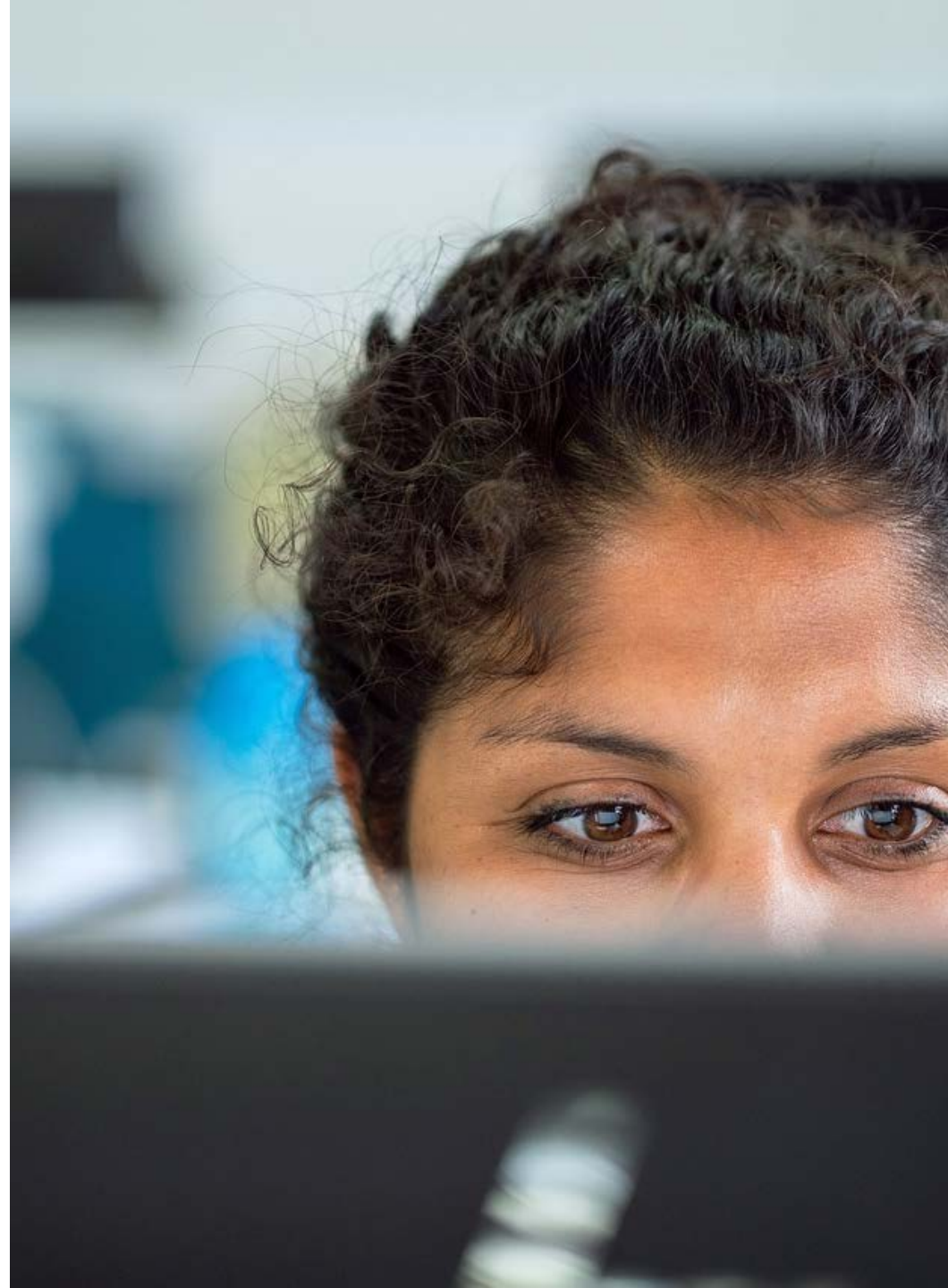
- Intentionally and intensively supporting students to persist.
 - Regular outreach
 - Monitoring academic progress
 - Intervening when students are struggling with responsive supports
- Working with students when and where they need it
- Focusing on enrollment (warm welcome) to supports for completion
- Developing close relations inside the institution (student supports, registrars, financial aid, etc.) and outside the institution (navigators, employers, other institutions)

Hearing from institutions that mentors are making “all the difference” in supporting students

Academic and Holistic Supports

Other Supports

- Writing tutors, sometimes embedded into courses
- Study groups – online and in person
- Content test prep and paying for practice (and real) tests
- Wrap around supports (child care, materials and supplies)
- Just in time and responsive interventions – tutors, mentoring, coaching
- Bilingual coaches
- Academic success plans
- General support to instill confidence, support students through family and life events, help students think about how to best tackle and balance work and school assignments



Academic and Holistic Supports

Challenges

- Finding and hiring qualified mentors
- Mentors not always available when students need them
- Students unable to take advantage of the supports
- Lack of time to form relationships with navigators
- Students dropping and/or failing classes

Programmatic Changes- Access & Modality

Exciting models and continuous improvement

- Online, evening, weekend –multiple modalities
- Cohorts – some within community organizations and community colleges and universities
- Variable terms
- Student teaching at the workplace

Challenges

- Heavy course loads impacting success and persistence
- Some students struggling with asynchronous, online, or 8-week courses
- Limited opportunities to engage with faculty and peers
- Courses not available that term, not available online, not available at all in the district

ILCCO Course Sharing

- Online Course Exchange (OCE) system modified to add ECACE course markers
- Course sharing training provided to colleges
 - ILCCO course sharing overview webinars offered to colleges
 - 17 training sessions for OCE platform offered
 - 120+ staff members attending
- Complete GECC package is available through ILCCO
 - 1,607 courses from 20 colleges are available for sharing
- 79 ECACE program courses from 14 colleges are available for sharing
 - 50 ECACE courses were available July 1, 2022
- ECACE course sharing began in Spring 2023 semester
 - 4 students in 3 courses at 2 teaching colleges

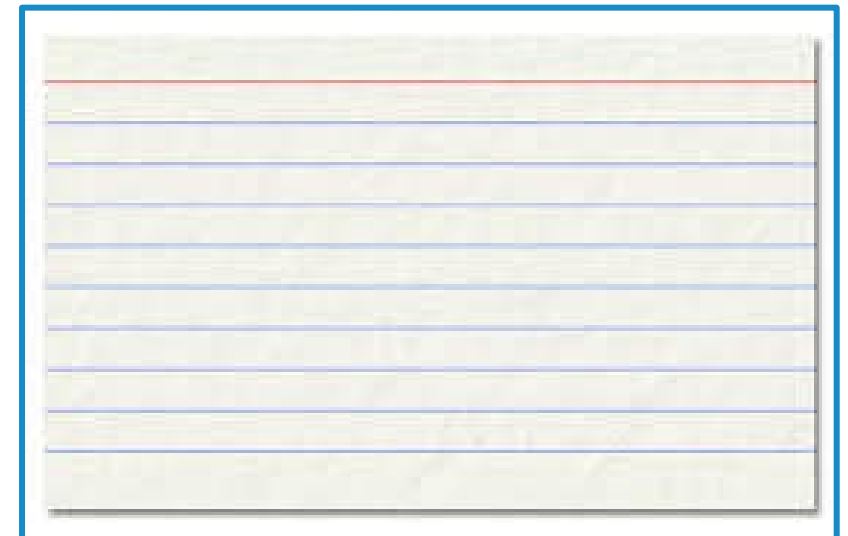
Directions for Breakout Discussion

Please make notes on notecards

- Specific ideas that resonate
- Things that are working
- Anything to note about mentors
- Specific questions for state agencies (if specific, mention agency and if you want a response, include your name)

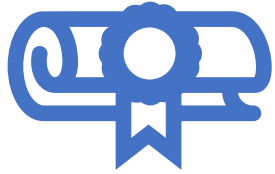
After the discussion, we will use the notecards to:

- Compile and share out with institutions
- *Supplement info in our report!*
- Use as a tool for ongoing communications about the work of mentors and institutions



1:35 pm – 2:00 pm

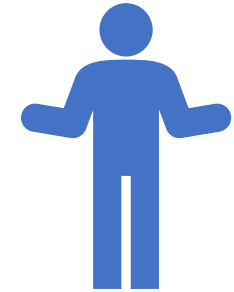
Table Discussion



In terms of persistence, what are you seeing at your institution?



What has helped to ensure student success?
What seems to be working or what are you trying?



What challenges are you experiencing?

Use the note cards provided at your table to note interesting ideas or any questions you may have; please leave these on the table.

BREAK

**Come back at
2:10pm**

Outreach Events and Participation

Between July and December 2022*, ECACE institutions reported hosting over 500 outreach events to engage the incumbent workforce.

Over 7800 members of the incumbent workforce participated

Recruitment fairs/open houses

Virtual and in-person sessions with childcare centers

Four-year institutions attending open houses at community colleges

Presentations and booths at conferences like Illinois AEYC

Collaborations between institutions and navigators

Partnering with local community organizations to host career fairs

Outreach Events and Participation

Additional Outreach From Institutions:

- Social media campaigns
- YouTube videos
- Newspaper articles
- Bulletin boards
- Websites
- Email blasts
- Direct mail

Outreach from Agencies/INCCRRA:

- Social media (ISAC, INCCRRA)
- Email blasts (INCCRRA)
- Newsletters (GOECD, INCCRRA)
- Direct mail (IDHS)



Outreach and Technical Assistance: Navigators

Between July and December 2022*, navigators reported extensive outreach to employers and workforce members. Navigators frequently visit workplaces to support staff to complete the FAFSA and scholarship applications.

Outreach	#
Information sessions	732
Meetings with higher education	497
Surveys of interest received	2,058
Follow-ups with interested workforce members	7,140
Outreach emails	31,961

Technical Assistance	#
Phone calls	4,667
Emails	17,762
In-person meetings	898
Virtual meetings	745

Engagement and Responsiveness to Employer Needs

Institutions:

- Including employers on early childhood program advisory boards
- Allowing students to complete student teaching in their workplace
- Partnering with school districts and community-based organizations for job placements
- Cohort programs at the workplace
- Direct outreach to child care

Institutions reported engaging with over 1000 employers between June and December 2022.



Programmatic Changes- CDA

- All institutions indicated they have a process in place to award credit for the CDA, and most will provide credit for specific early childhood courses.
- **Most common courses awarded:**
 - Intro or Foundations in EC (56% of institutions)
 - Child Development (30% of institutions)
 - Health, Safety, and Nutrition (39% of institutions)
 - Practicum (20% of institutions)
- **Others used:**
 - Child and family, observation, assessment, career exploration, guided play, classroom management, creative activities
 - One institution provided credit for CDA Foundations
 - Six institutions used an unspecified elective or “special topics”
 - One institution used unspecified early childhood electives for all six hours

Credits Offered: Average: 6.28 SH

- 51 institutions: 6 SH
- Maximum: 1 institution: 11 SH

AAS Transfer

All universities have programs that support the AAS Transfer

Institutions are adhering to the ‘transfer cap’

- ~60 – 66 credits applied to the BA **PLUS** an additional ~54 – 62 credits
- EC coursework is applied as early childhood coursework or electives
- Gen Ed coursework is applied to graduation/licensure requirements

Some institutions have adjusted program content and approach

- “Level” courses by competency level (L5 and PEL focus)
- Separating preschool and K-2nd grade content
- Allowing student teaching at the workplace

Interestingly, many institutions report seeing few students with AAS and are more often seeing 60+hours or AA.

Questions



Reflections on the Day

Closing Comments

Upcoming meetings:

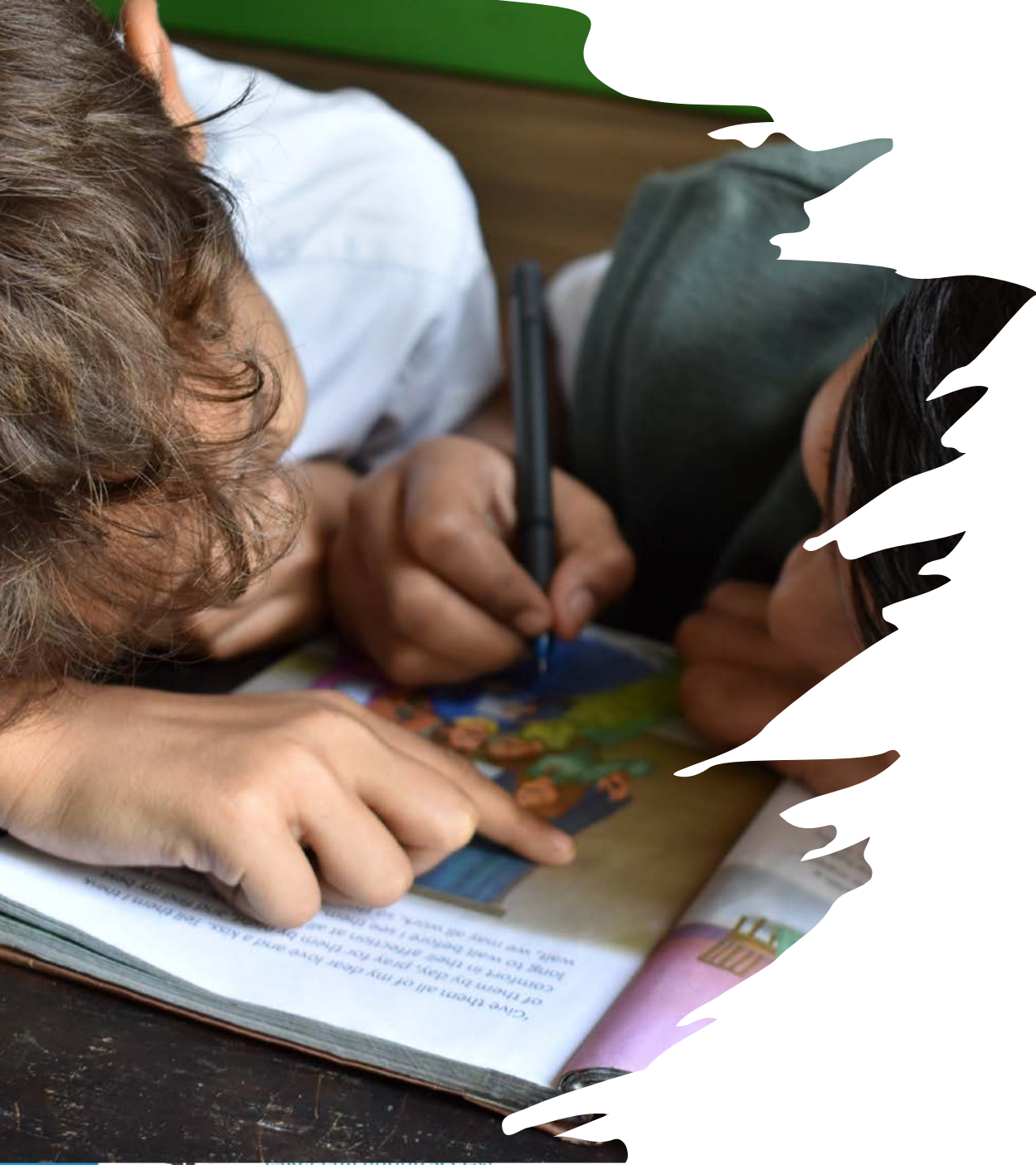
Advisory Committee	May 2023
October 2023 In-Person Consortium	October 27, 2023, 10 – 3

Based on October survey feedback, we increased time for engagement at today's meeting. Please take 5 minutes to complete today's exit survey below.



Approve October 2022 Minutes

Public Comment



Thank you!

