



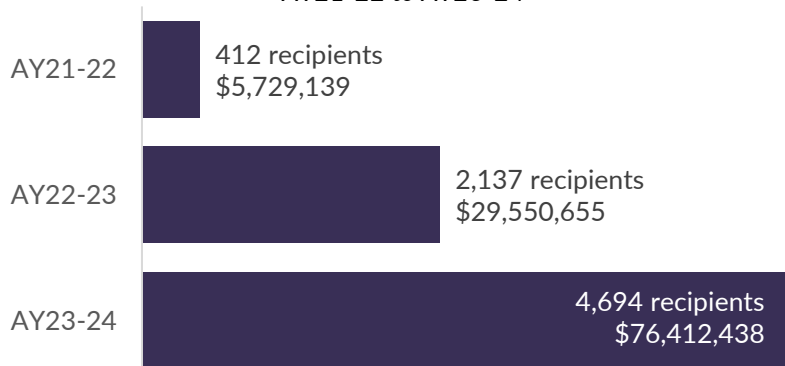
## EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCESS CONSORTIUM FOR EQUITY SCHOLARSHIP, AY 2023-24

From AY 2021 to AY 2024, the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) Scholarship was funded using federal Covid-19 relief funds in a targeted effort to support the incumbent early childhood workforce to access higher education credentials and degrees in Illinois. The ECACE Scholarship covered up to the full cost of attendance (COA) after other scholarships and grants were applied to address the often-prohibitive cost of attending higher education, which spans beyond tuition and fees and includes expenses such as books and supplies, housing, transportation, and more. Eligible students were incumbent workforce members seeking an early childhood undergraduate or graduate degree or certificate at Consortium institutions.<sup>1</sup> The program was expanded in AY23-24 due to substantial available funds to include those seeking a graduate degree.

### Scholarship Outcomes in AY 2023-24

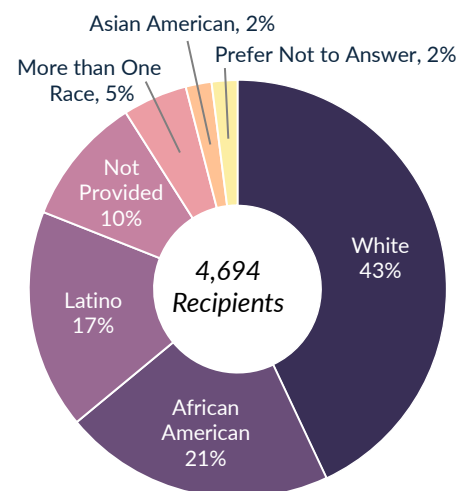
As shown in Figure 1, in AY 2023-24, \$76.4 million in ECACE Scholarship funds were distributed to nearly 4,700 members of the incumbent workforce. This is a large increase from AY 2023 (\$29.6 million in scholarships for about 2,100 incumbent workforce members) and AY 2022 (\$5.7 million in scholarships for about 400 incumbent workforce).

Figure 1. Expenditures and Recipients of ECACE Scholarship, AY21-22 to AY23-24



Source: ISAC, 2024

Figure 2. Distribution of ECACE Scholarship Recipients by Race/Ethnicity, AY23-24



Source: ISAC, 2024

### Recipient Demographics

As shown in Figure 2, in AY 2023-24, 45% of scholarship recipients were non-white. Of all recipients, 43% identified as White, 21% Black or African American, 17% Hispanic or Latino, 2% Asian, 5% more than one race or ethnicity, and 12% either preferred not to answer or did not provide a response. The racial makeup of scholarship recipients was similar to that of Illinois early childhood workforce members in licensed child care centers overall, as reported in 2020.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Students at participating private, not-for-profit institutions could receive a scholarship amount no more than the cost of the most expensive early childhood education program at an Illinois public university. In AY 2023-24, students were eligible for awards of up to about \$18,300 at community colleges and up to about \$33,600 at four-year institutions, not exceeding total cost of attendance.

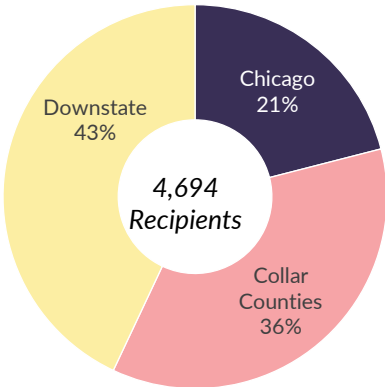
<sup>2</sup> Whitehead, J. (2021). *Illinois' Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Report*. Bloomington, IL: INCCRRA.

ECACE scholarship recipients were older than traditional college students, with 50% over the age of 30, compared to national data from 2021, where only 23% of undergraduate students were over 30 years old.<sup>3</sup> However, compared to the licensed early childhood workforce in Illinois, ECACE scholarship recipients tend to be somewhat younger.<sup>4</sup> Eighty nine percent of the scholarship recipients were women, <1% men, and 9% did not respond.

**Geographic and Institutional Distribution**

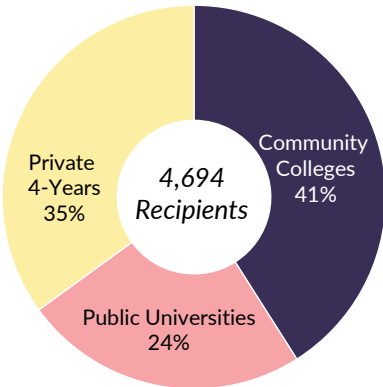
In AY2023-24, scholarships were awarded in every legislative district and at every Consortium institution. Overall, 36% of recipients were from the collar county area, 21% from Chicago, and 43% from all other areas of the state. Approximately 41% of scholarship recipients attended community colleges, 35% attended private, nonprofit institutions, and 24% attended public universities (see Figure 3 and Figure 4).

Figure 3. Distribution of ECACE Scholarship by Region, AY23-24



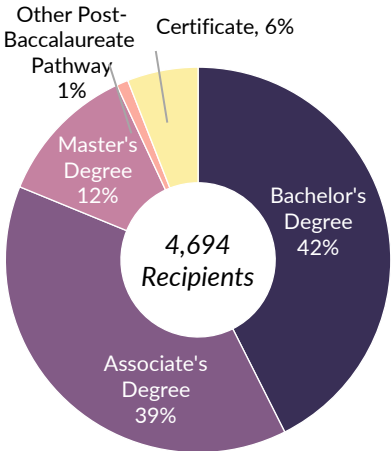
Source: ISAC, 2024

Figure 4. Distribution of ECACE Scholarship by Types of Institutions, AY23-24



Source: ISAC, 2024

Figure 5. Distribution of ECACE Scholarship by the Program Enrollment, AY23-24



Source: ISAC, 2024

**Recipient Enrollment Patterns**

Not surprisingly, most incumbent workforce members (64%) enrolled less than full time. ECACE Scholarship recipients were disbursed across undergraduate class level, with 24% being freshmen, 24% sophomores, 13% juniors, and 22% seniors. An additional 18% of recipients were enrolled in graduate programs. The breakdown of students across degree pathways is demonstrated in Figure 4. Notably, most students were enrolled in bachelor's degree programs (43%) and associate degree programs (39%).

*Because of the ECE Scholarship I have earned, I am one semester away from my 2nd degree, I earned a substantial raise at work and got promoted to the center Director. NONE of this would have been possible if this grant was not available. It is because of this grant that I also have enrolled in ISU for the fall to pursue my B.A in ECE. This grant has changed the trajectory of my life and has impacted my family's life tremendously. Because of this grant I can continue to grow and advance in a field that I absolutely enjoy. My current and future students at my center deserve to have the best educators in their classroom. This grant is making that possible.*

*– Student Testimony, Joliet Junior College*

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. (2023, August). Condition of Education, Characteristics of Postsecondary Students. Retrieved from U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences: <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/csb/postsecondary-students>.  
<sup>4</sup> Whitehead, J. (2021). *Illinois' Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Report*. Bloomington, IL: INCCRRA.