



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ISAC HOSTS 15TH ANNUAL COLLEGE CHANGES EVERYTHING® CONFERENCE: *HOW DO WE BUILD COMMUNITY?*

Attend Illinois' Leading College Access and Success Event on July 17, 2025

CHICAGO –The [Illinois Student Assistance Commission \(ISAC\)](#), the state's college access and financial aid agency, is pleased to host the [15th annual College Changes Everything® \(CCE\) Conference](#) on Thursday, July 17, 2025 from 8:00 am – 4:00 pm at the Tinley Park Convention Center. The State's preeminent college access and career readiness event, sponsored by ISAC and statewide partners, brings together a diverse audience from across Illinois and beyond to focus on educational opportunity and student success. This year's conference theme will focus on building community and inspiring hope. In these uncertain times, hope is a critical anchor enabling people to navigate challenges with resilience and purpose and with a sense of belonging and community.

"Our students are part of the fabric of our communities, and they are our future," **said ISAC Executive Director Eric Zarnikow**. "When schools, families, community organizations, neighbors, and state and local governments collaborate, they not only provide more opportunities for our students, but they also provide the learning, encouragement, and support systems for students to identify and take advantage of those opportunities. Strong communities inspire; they are hope and dreams realized.

"During this year's CCE Conference, we will work together to better understand the needs of students and how to meet them, develop connections to strengthen and expand our communities, and explore how to marshal resources for our most vulnerable students."

The conference will open with a keynote from Dr. Teresa Ramos, the Inaugural Secretary of the Illinois Department of Early Childhood. Prior to this role, Dr. Ramos served as the First Assistant Deputy Governor for Education for the Office of Illinois Governor JB Pritzker, and prior to that was the Vice President of Public Policy, Research, and Advocacy at Illinois Action for Children.

Attendees can explore 34 interest sessions covering a wide range of topics, including *Family Voices in College Planning*; *Direct Admissions Program in Illinois*; *Innovations and Frameworks in Credit for Prior Learning*; *Centering Wellness, Building Community*; *Supporting Students with Disabilities*; *Aligning Networks of Support for First Generation Students*; *Creating Community: Support Strategies for Aspiring Educators*; *Building Bridges through Dual-Credit and Intercampus Collaboration*; *Unseen, Not Unsupported: Advancing Inclusive Excellence for Students with Invisible Differences*; *From Self-Doubt to*

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Self-Empowerment: Combating Imposter Syndrome in Higher Education; By Us, For Us: Youth at the Center of Civic Engagement; several interest sessions on the PaCE Framework, and so much more.

For more details about the conference and to view the agenda, visit <https://www.collegechangeseverything.org/events/2025-cce-conference-information.html>. Use #CCE4me to join the conversation on social media.

The College Changes Everything Conference is sponsored by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission in collaboration with partners: Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Illinois Department of Employment Security, Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois College Access Network, Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities, Advance Illinois, Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University, ACT Now, Women Employed, and iCan Dream Center.

About College Changes Everything

College Changes Everything® (CCE) is a college access movement that recognizes that college can be a life changing experience not only for students, but also for families and communities. In Illinois and across the nation, those who obtain education beyond high school not only see a significant impact on their potential career prospects and future salary, but also change levels of poverty, life expectancy, crime, and obesity rates in their communities. Find out more and join the conversation at collegechangeseverything.org.

About ISAC

The mission of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) is to provide Illinois students with information and assistance to help make education beyond high school accessible and affordable. ISAC provides comprehensive, objective, and timely information on education and financial aid for students and their families—giving them access to the tools they need to make the educational choices that are right for them. Then, through the state scholarship and grant programs ISAC administers, ISAC can help students make those choices a reality. Find us at isac.org or on [Facebook](#) (@ILStudentAssistance), [X](#) and on [Instagram](#) @ISACfinaid. and watch our videos on [YouTube](#).

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