



Northwest Illinois Community College Partnership

The Northwest Illinois Community College partnership includes Highland Community College, Illinois Valley Community College, Kishwaukee College, Rock Valley College and Sauk Valley Community College (*NIU included on map for reference*).

“We believe this partnership is unique among colleges, and know that the collaboration will produce results for regional stakeholders.”

– Dr. Laurie Borowicz, President, Kishwaukee College

The **Northwest Illinois Community College Partnership** represents the most robust and skilled workforce in North America. Illinois’ unmatched productivity is well documented, and demonstrated by companies which continue to invest in Illinois, citing the state’s workforce strengths:

- In a 2017 study¹, Illinois businesses reported greater satisfaction with their workforce than Midwestern and U.S. averages in terms of availability, quality, stability and productivity;
- The State of Illinois has among the most educated workforces in the nation with 40% of Illinois’ population over 25 having an Associate degree or higher²; and
- The University of Illinois graduates more engineers each year than MIT, Stanford, and Cal Tech combined, ensuring the State of Illinois will continue to drive the innovation for the next generation of manufacturing.

Illinois offers Project Pace full access to its higher-education system, with a vision for a collaborative future.

The five Presidents of the Northwest Illinois Community Colleges have joined together to support the workforce development needs of the Northern Illinois region. Recognizing that collaboratively the colleges are stronger in meeting regional workforce needs, the Presidents have committed to a partnership of sharing programs and workforce strategies.

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¹ Study used the Synchronist Business Information System® administered by the State of Illinois DCEO and partners

² United States Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey

The College Presidents initially met in October 2017, committing to meet on a bi-monthly basis to develop and expand collaborative efforts. Initial collaboration is focused on:

1. Program Sharing: A document is being developed that outlines the Career and Technical Education Programs and Certificates of the five Colleges, ensuring regional support of workforce needs between the five institutions. The information will be linked to each of the College's websites.

2. Partnerships with K-12: Each College is building pathways and dual credit programs with their respective K-12 partners that focus on local business talent needs. The pathways are based on career clusters, helping young people choose coursework and related educational opportunities that support their future occupational goal. Working together, the Colleges will gain insight and expertise in multiple pathways and enrollment strategies.

3. Partnerships with Businesses: The Career and Technical Programs at the Illinois Community Colleges have business advisory committees that meet bi-annually to ensure college programs and curriculum are designed to meet local workforce needs. All five Colleges are currently faced with lack of sufficient enrollments in Career and Technical Education programs. Current conversations with businesses are focused on working together to provide incentives to students, build internship programs, and be responsive to changing industry needs. The community colleges maintain close relationships with economic development organizations in the region, understanding that our regions are competing for the growth of our businesses. Economic development organizations in the region include:

- DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation
- Greater Rochelle Economic Development Corporation
- North Central Illinois Economic Development Corporation
- Northwest Illinois Development Alliance
- Rockford Area Economic Development Council

4. Partnerships with Northern Illinois University: The community colleges in the region have strong partnerships with Northern Illinois University, allowing students to transfer seamlessly from associate to bachelor degrees. As the community colleges discuss and develop new and innovative programs with NIU, the Northwest Illinois Community College Partnership will allow for facilitation of the programs across the five colleges.

5. Funding opportunities: Collective regional strength positions the group for funding opportunities to expand their work with education and business partners. Rock Valley College and Highland Community College recently received funding from the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois to launch Linking Talent with Opportunity, a regional effort to better connect high school students with high-demand local jobs.

In 2014, the community colleges collectively graduated approximately 7,000 students with both degrees and technical certificates, over 60% of which were for career and technical training.