PARTNERSHIP FOR COLLEGE COMPLETION
Accelerating action to close the graduation gap

Illinois Equity in Attainment
Moraine Valley Community College Equity Plan
Executive Summary for Board of Trustees

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Executive Summary

Building upon years of previous success in serving diverse students, Moraine Valley Community College has developed our Equity Plan with broad stakeholder input, review of internal equity data, and a focus on aligning our efforts with the College's Strategic Plan. Over 2,000 pieces of written feedback from Moraine Valley faculty, staff, and students helped inform this plan.

These plans were updated in July 2020 in response to both the COVID-19 pandemic and our acknowledgement of institutionalized racism impacting the minoritized populations Moraine Valley serves. Our commitment to our diverse students and employees is active in the plan, and provides guidance as we seek to bring more equity and equality to our campus and community.

Introduction

Despite improvements in high school graduation and college matriculation rates for Illinois students, there are wide and persistent gaps in college completion rates especially for low-income, first-generation students, and students of color. The launch of the **Illinois Equity in Attainment (ILEA)** initiative marks a major step forward for 28 two-year and four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities from northeastern Illinois and across the state who are committing to eliminate racial and socio-economic achievement gaps by 2025, while aggressively increasing completion rates on their campuses.

ILEA is the signature initiative of the Partnership for College Completion (PCC), a non-profit organization founded in 2016 to catalyze and champion policies, systems, and practices that ensure all students can graduate from college and achieve their career aspirations. With an initial focus on northeastern Illinois, PCC has set a goal to eliminate institutional achievement gaps in college degree completion for low-income, Latino and African-American students in Illinois by 2025, establishing the region as a national leader in equity in attainment.

Beginning with this initial cohort, PCC will offer direct support and resources to the colleges and universities who have volunteered to be members of ILEA. PCC will work alongside these partner colleges to jointly set commitments, identify appropriate evidence-based strategies to utilize on their campuses, and scale effective practices. PCC will support policy and practice change efforts that have the explicit goal of eliminating racial and socioeconomic degree completion gaps, while increasing institutional college completion rates overall.

The ILEA Equity Plan is intended to serve as a roadmap for outlining how Moraine Valley will work toward closing gaps in degree attainment for low-income, first generation, African-American, and Latino/a/x students. Due to the persistence and size of equity gaps across colleges and universities in Illinois, this initiative prioritizes urgent action on equitable degree completion outcomes for students across racial and socioeconomic groups.

Campus Engagement Efforts

Since joining the ILEA initiative, Moraine Valley has worked to create excitement and engagement around these efforts. The College published a news release about joining these efforts in October 2018. An initial introduction to ILEA was provided to the faculty and staff through the all employee newsletter, *The Valley View*. ILEA campus lead, Dean of Student Engagement Dr. Scott Friedman, provided an overview to the faculty and staff at the January 2019 in-service program. This overview included background on the PCC and ILEA, and also shared baseline campus equity data, described the timeline of next steps, and opened a call for volunteers. More than 70 employees expressed an interest in participating in ILEA efforts, and the College's Completion Commitment (which is a committee that focuses on data-driven retention and completion initiatives) volunteered to support ILEA efforts during the first year.

The Achieving the Dream *Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool* (ICAT) survey was completed by 247 faculty and staff at the College. The ICAT verifies an institution's readiness to engage in diversity and equity efforts. 60 attendees also participated in the ICAT debrief session on March 1st, 2019 (including 7 students, 19 faculty, and 34 staff and administrators). Feedback was used to help prioritize an initial set of equity strategies.

On October 1st, 2019 the entire afternoon of Staff Development Day was reserved for discussions on equity. The afternoon started with a panel in which our students openly shared about issues of access, resource inequities, and ways in which faculty and staff could better engage diverse students. After that, Dr. Friedman led over 400 faculty and staff members through two discussion-based exercises. The first session had tables discuss a series of definitions for diversity, equity, and inclusion-related terms. Each table was given copies of 3-4 terms, and employees were asked to discuss the options and provide feedback on what definition was the best fit for the campus. More than 300 individual comments were collected so that definitions could be revised to align with the culture and context of MVCC. In the second exercise, Dr. Friedman led the groups through discussion on three questions related to: 1) areas where improvement is needed in serving our diverse and low-income students, 2) where the College is succeeding in supporting diverse students, and 3) what resources and training are needed to continue our efforts. Over 730 comments were provided, and these comments have helped to both confirm equity strategies being recommended by the ILEA Core Team, and also identify additional equity-focused opportunities.

During the January 9th, 2020 All Employee In-Service, Dr. Friedman was asked to provide a status update and timeline of next steps. Dr. Friedman thanked the MVCC faculty, staff, and students for their superior participation in ILEA activities. The College's Executive Leadership Team understands the value of strengthening our commitment to equity, and has strategically allocated time at all employee events to continue these important discussions.

Data Summary

Data indicate some areas of sustained success where near equity exists; however, there are several areas where efforts to close equity gaps will require significant work. The first table shows three-year cohort graduation rates by racial breakdown for students seeking a credential. This table shows significant equity gaps in the graduation rate outcomes measure.
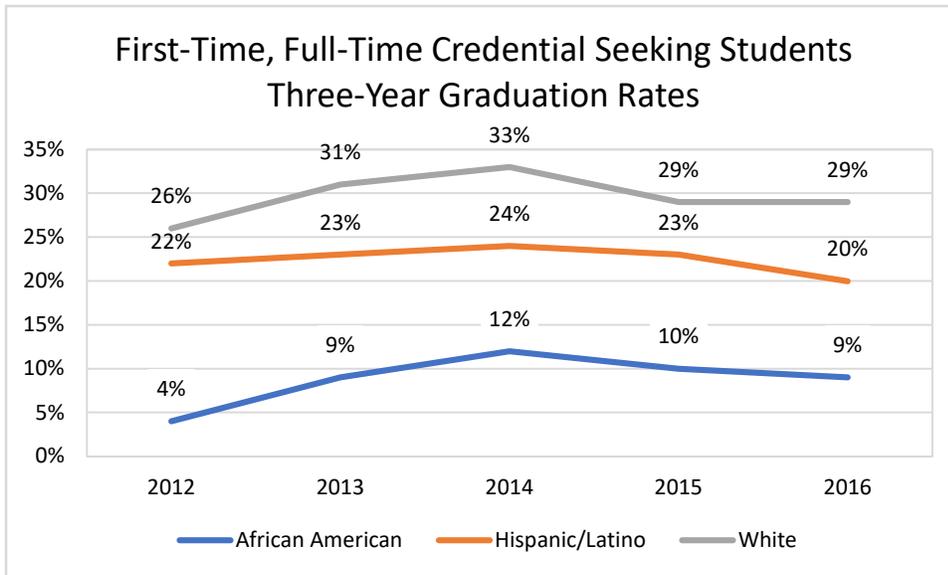
This second table shows the three-year cohort graduation rates comparing students utilizing Pell funds versus those not utilizing Pell funds. There is a narrowing of the equity gap over this period, and the gap is nearly closed by the 2016 cohort.
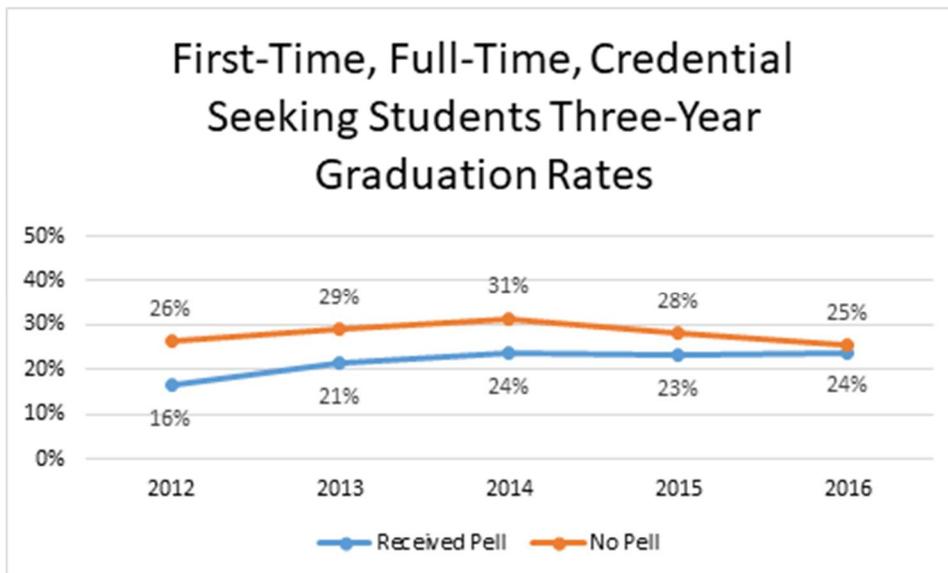
Metrics Showing Successes: Current successes include average fall-to-fall persistence rates for Hispanic/Latino/a/x students compared to White students, as well as the three-year graduation rate for students utilizing Pell funds being almost equal to students not using Pell.

Metrics Indicating Gaps: Three-year graduation rates, fall-to-fall persistence rates, credit accumulation, and average terms enrolled between cohorts show several equity gaps. The greatest equity gaps in these measures occur between African-American and White students. For example, White students stay enrolled an average of 4 semesters and earn 35.75 credits, while African-American students stay enrolled an average of 2.65 semesters with an average of 16 credits earned.

The use of these data trends has allowed a number of goals and targets to be set for closing equity gaps by 2025. For some of the larger equity gaps, we must recognize it will be a substantial stretch to achieve complete equity in this short timeframe. Additionally, we must consider the influence to our metrics as a result of COVID-19 and the substantial impact the pandemic has had on minoritized students and communities.

Institutional Strategies

Institutional strategies were developed through feedback received from multiple sources. Many strategies monopolize on expanding current successful work at the College.

Engaging Diverse Students:

1. Increasing access for low participation communities is a continuing strategy identified out of the Enrollment Services strategic enrollment management plan. College data shows that communities with low participation are also the most minoritized communities in the district. The College recognizes there are large opportunities to increase access to higher education by continuing to engage these communities.
2. Scaling-up the DREAM mentoring program is aimed at improving early success and engagement of our diverse students. DREAM mentoring has existed for years, and now aims to serve more students annually.
3. The inaugural College Readiness Day event was held during spring 2020 with the intent of providing critical information to diverse high school students about the process of transitioning from high school to Moraine Valley.

Supporting Low-Income Students:

1. The financial aid book voucher awarding process was redesigned in spring 2020 to make it much simpler for eligible students to access their books and materials. Instead of the previous separate process and deadlines, book vouchers are now automatically awarded to qualifying students.

2. Receiving early case management from Academic Advisors and Counselors will be designed to reduce barriers while also increasing proactive approaches for at-risk students. By harnessing the retention algorithm in the new Starfish early alert system, students can receive proactive outreach before they encounter academic struggles.

Strategies that Bring Equity to All Students and/or Employees:

1. The College previously piloted an intervention process prior to allowing students to withdraw from the courses with the highest withdrawal rates. A team is working to determine how to scale-up this process since some data indicate the intervention can have a positive impact on course completion rates.
2. Standardizing class start/end times is one way to help students plan their schedules. A review determined several departments with non-standard class start/end times, and these off-grid times particularly affected developmental education students.
3. An initial equity-based policy review occurred to help inform this plan, and a number of policy concerns were identified (including items like payment policies and position search expectations). The next step is to ask work groups to dig deeper and recommend policy changes that would bring more equitable outcomes.
4. Faculty and staff professional development on diversity, equity, and inclusion is critical to continuing positive momentum on this work. Many sessions were provided during the spring 2020 employee professional development day, and additional professional development opportunities are under development.
5. Using equity data for institutional planning is a strategy to examine and close equity gaps at the departmental level. Departments will be asked to review equity data and implement a plan utilizing the College's current Plan, Improve, Evaluate continuous improvement process.
6. While the Starfish early alert system is live at the Educational Center at Blue Island, the next step includes campus-wide scale-up. In addition, the predictive retention scores will become live to proactively identify students who may be academically at-risk.
7. Determining the best structure for supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion work at Moraine Valley will be crucial. The Executive Leadership Team is participating in a PCC and Aspen Institute sponsored Equity Academy with the goal of learning more about what structure would be best for the College.

Each student-focused initiative will employ a number of different student success metrics to assess effectiveness. The institution-focused initiatives each have different measures aimed at determining the effectiveness of the individual strategies. An annual review of success metrics and outcomes for the cohort populations will show how Moraine Valley continues to move the needle to close the equity gaps across the institution.

The full Equity Plan includes additional detail for each strategy, a summary of the assessment plan for each strategy, a listing of resources needed, and a timeline showing planning and implementation phases.