

Today's Student: Returning Students in Illinois



Students' and families' difficulty affording college remains the most significant barrier in their pursuit of higher education. But affordability varies among different groups of students and institutions. Through this research we show the diversity of today's student population, and apply one definition of affordability to all institutions in the state, for different groups of students.



For Illinois to reach its goal of 60 percent of the workforce holding postsecondary credentials by 2025, it is critical that the state reach not just graduating high school seniors, but also older workers with information about postsecondary pathways. Adult learners need more options for degree and credential programs tailored to meet their unique needs, and need smoother processes for counting previously-acquired credits toward their degree or credential.

Number of Returning in Illinois

Out of the 690,000 college students in Illinois
11,000 are returning students.

Affordable Institutions in Illinois

Only 27% of Illinois institutions are "affordable," with 8% being affordable for returning students.
Under the Rule of 10, returning students should save \$47,300 to pay for college.

Lumina Foundation's affordability benchmark, known as The Rule of 10, states that students should pay no more for college than 10% of their discretionary income for 10 years, and the earnings from working 10 hours a week while in school. Using the U.S. Census, we applied median incomes of different groups of students to test all of Illinois's institutions' net prices (cost of attendance minus grant aid, drawn from IPEDS) on the Rule of 10 to determine if they are affordable. For students who were heads of household, we counted only 10% of discretionary income over 10 years, and didn't treat student worker earnings as a separate number. For each group we took a weighted average of affordability for students who are heads of household and dependent students.



Least
Affordable
(net price)

4-year public school
Northern Illinois University

\$19,782

4-year private nonprofit school
School of the Art Institute of Chicago

\$43,494

Affordable
(net price)
Most

4-year public school
Chicago State University

\$11,293

4-year private nonprofit school
Saint Augustine College

\$6,889