

## A Reflection on Year Three Progress

Dear City Colleges Community,

Reflecting on the third year of our five-year strategic framework, I am proud to share the significant strides we have made in realizing City Colleges' vision to serve as the city's most accessible higher education engine of socioeconomic mobility and racial equity.

### **Increasing Enrollment & Student Success**

This year, we celebrated a remarkable 12.7% year-over-year increase in Fall enrollment, more than double the state average for community colleges. Notably, enrollment among Black students grew by 11.3%, and Latine enrollment increased by 7%, reflecting our deepened commitment to equity and access.

To ensure student success beyond enrollment, we launched the Chancellor's Equitable Outcomes Fund, targeting improved retention rates. Early results show a 3.6 percentage point increase in first-year fall-to-fall retention for Black students—a promising step toward eliminating equity gaps.

Our continued investment in free college programs reached \$21 million in FY23, doubling over the past six years. Additionally, expanded Transitional Math and English offerings and new model pathways in high-demand fields have prepared more students for academic and career success.

### **Innovating for Excellence**

A new Centers of Excellence framework set quality and innovation standards for programs that help us meet Chicago's workforce needs. We prepared for strategic initiatives like Yearlong Scheduling and Intentional New Student Advising, set to launch in 2024, that will streamline the student journey from enrollment to graduation.

Through the Chicago Roadmap, our national model of K-12—community college partnership and in collaboration with four-year partner Illinois Tech, we launched our first extended pathway partnership, providing a seamless bridge for students pursuing bachelor's degrees. All seven colleges also joined Achieving the Dream's Accelerating Equitable Outcomes cohort, solidifying our commitment to student-centered strategies.

## **Enhancing the Student and Employee Experience**

City Colleges' commitment to holistic support was demonstrated by increasing Wellness Center staffing by over 20%, ensuring that students have access to critical mental health and wellness services. To strengthen leadership and institutional excellence, we created and filled two key roles: Chief Student Experience Officer and Vice Chancellor of Institutional Excellence.

## **Leadership and Financial Stability**

In 2023, we saw remarkable alignment with the Mayor's Office on our vision and strategy and enhanced recognition of City Colleges as a workforce development leader.

Financially, we remain strong, achieving an S&P credit rating upgrade and a Fitch outlook revision from stable to positive. Moreover, public and private grants and donations have more than tripled over six years, reaching \$63.2 million in FY23. These funds have fueled initiatives like the Chicago Roadmap, which supported a 33.9% year-over-year increase in Early College enrollment.

## **Looking Ahead**

The progress we made this year is a testament to the dedication and resilience of our students, faculty, staff, and partners. As we prepare for the years ahead, we remain committed to fostering student success, innovation, and opportunity across our system.

We will continue to grow student enrollment, improving retention rates and maintaining new student enrollment momentum, by scaling our advising and scheduling initiatives and expanding our investments in colleges demonstrating improvements in Black and Latine student retention.

We will execute a revamped student experience strategy, driving excellence across student services such as enrollment and advising, facilitating stronger use of data to inform action, and expanding support for students' basic needs and our partnership with student support organization One Million Degrees.

We will expand and create new quality academic programs that prepare Chicagoans for high-demand career pathways and create an inclusive

workforce. We will refine our transfer strategy to strengthen partnerships with four-year universities that help us offer students a clear path to a bachelor's degree and beyond.

Thank you for your continued support as we build upon this significant momentum and ensure that City Colleges of Chicago provides pathways to opportunity for our students and our city.

Sincerely,  
Juan Salgado  
Chancellor  
City Colleges of Chicago