Dear Colleague:

At its June, 2014 meeting the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) passed the attached Resolution calling on all of Illinois higher education to “remodel” the way it delivers learning to its students using a proven set of interventions that have been shown repeatedly across the country to increase college completion, especially for low income and students of color. These changes also accelerate students’ progress to degree and make college more affordable. Known popularly as the “Guided Pathway System,” (GPS) it defines an interconnected set of institutional changes that together make a real difference. The IBHE is joined by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) in calling for all us to lead this change.

In IBHE’s recent analysis of Illinois’ progress toward achieving the goals of its “Public Agenda for College and Career Success” five years into this ten year effort the results clearly pointed to the importance of GPS work for us (see “The Public Agenda Five Year Mid-Point Report at www.1illinois.org). While Illinois has made good progress in increasing the overall education of its workforce over the last five years, we are facing challenges that threaten our ability to create a successful state with a strong economy and civic infrastructure.

- Illinois higher education has become less affordable, faster, for middle and low income families than almost any other state.
- Gaps for students of color (including our fast growing Hispanic population) have widened. We are similarly, lagging behind national averages in serving low income students.
- We are making little progress in helping our adult workers without a college degree to find a path to a college credential. Without a significant increase in college completion for our current workforce Illinois will suffer as a state. Illinois’ demography simply does not allow us to only focus on the traditional pipeline.

The GPS remodel has been shown in states across the country to directly address these challenges. The IBHE is currently working with Complete College America (www.completecollege.org) to provide technical assistance to fully implement this system at three of our institutions who initially stepped up to the challenge: City Colleges of Chicago, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Their work has shown us at a deep level how to (a) remodel developmental education to promote student success, (b) improve our student
data and advising systems to provide students just in time help when it matters, and (c) restructure how we deliver curriculum to give students timely access to the courses they need to progress along clear pathways to on time graduation and careers.

The IBHE will be working with our state agency partners and with our higher education leaders to define a path forward for scaling up this work across Illinois’ higher education system to accelerate our progress toward increasing education attainment in Illinois for all of our citizens.