WEI SYMPOSIUM 2026 Advancing Equity and Student Success

# State of Illinois' Workforce Empowerment Initiative (WEI) Symposium
# May 27-28, 2026: Bloomington-Normal Marriott Hotel & Conference Center

## QUICK AGENDA

**SESSION DETAILS - SYMPOSIUM WEBSITE: https://icsps.illinoisstate.edu/events/wei-symposium**

| Date / Time | Session Description | Marriott Location |
|---|---|---|
| **Wednesday, May 27** | **CONSORTUM MEETING & OPENING RECEPTION** | |
| 12:00 noon | **Symposium Registration Desk Opens** | Registration Office |
| 12:30 – 4:00 pm<br>Closed meeting for current WEI colleges | **WEI Consortium Meeting: Closed Meeting for Current WEI Colleges (runs 12:30 – 4:00 pm; lunch is provided)**<br>**12:40 ICCB Updates**<br>- Terrance Bond, Heartland Community College<br>- Jennifer K. Foster, Illinois Community College Board<br>- Ahja Howard, Illinois Community College Board<br><br>**1:00 Building Capacity: SNAP Employment & Training Programs**<br>- Chris Warden, Women Employed<br>- Matt Weis, National Able Network, Inc.<br>- Kathi Medcalf, Seattle Jobs Initiative<br><br>**2:00 Breakout Sessions:**<br>- **Spotlight on WEI Healthcare Training Programs** – Southwestern Illinois College, Illinois Central College, Oakton College<br>- **Black Student Next Level Conference: Helping Students Develop Their Leadership Style** – Lincoln Land Community College<br>- **Empowering Students Outside the Classroom: Employability and Financial Skills Workshops** – Black Hawk College<br>**3:00 Consortium Discussion Groups**<br>**4:00 Break:** (colleges can set up showcase tables in the foyer) | Redbird CD<br><br>Redbird CD<br><br>Redbird CD<br><br>Redbird G<br><br>Redbird F<br><br>Redbird CD<br>Foyer |
| 4:30 – 6:30 pm | **Symposium Opening Reception: Welcome to Uptown!**<br>(open to all Symposium registrants)<br>- Hosted by Heartland Community College<br>- Opening Remarks: Dr. Keith Cornille, President, Heartland Community College<br>- Appetizers and Cash Bar | Redbird F and Foyer |
| 7:00 pm | **Open Dinner:** Enjoy a Variety of Restaurants in Walking Distance from the Hotel | |

| Thursday, May 28 | SYMPOSIUM DAY | |
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| 8:00 am | **Registration Desk Opens** | Registration Office |
| 8:00 – 9:30 am | **Breakfast & Networking** | Redbird CD<br>Foyer |
| 8:50 – 9:20 am | **WEI College Showcase: Information Tables Available**<br>- Meet WEI Program Administrators from 20 Illinois Community Colleges | Foyer |
| 9:30 – 9:45 am<br>General Session | **Welcome Address: Advancing Equity and Student Success**<br>- Dr. Brian Durham and Jennifer K. Foster, Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) | Redbird CD |
| 9:45 – 10:45 am<br>General Session | **Morning Keynote: Achieving the Dream's Community Vibrancy Framework – Connecting Access and Credential Attainment to Economic Mobility**<br>- Dr. Lenore Rodicio, Incoming President and CEO, Achieving the Dream (ATD)<br>- Facilitator: Arnitria Karen Shaw-Whitfield, Illinois Central College | Redbird CD |
| 11:00 – 11:45 am<br>Breakout Sessions | **Breakout Sessions**<br>- **From Barriers to Careers: A Collaborative Model Empowering Women Through Workforce Training** – Heartland Community College and Dreams Are Possible<br>- **Finding Your Niche: Pivoting and Building on Collective Assets** – Olive-Harvey College<br>- **From Access to Outcomes: Building a Culture of Care That Drives Equity in Workforce Education** – Rock Valley College<br>- **Helping Students Navigate Professional and Academic Spaces: Building Power, Voice, and Belonging** – Lincoln Land Community College and John A. Logan College<br>- **Roundtable Discussion: College Presidents Meet & Greet** – with Dr. Lenore Rodicio, ATD and Dr. Brian Durham, ICCB | Redbird E<br>Redbird F<br>Redbird G<br>Beaufort<br>North Boardroom |
| 11:45 – 12:30 pm | **Lunch & Networking** | Redbird CD |
| 12:30 – 1:15 pm<br>General Session | **Lunchtime Panel with College Presidents: Leadership Perspectives on the Impact of WEI**<br>- Facilitator: Jennifer K. Foster, ICCB<br>- **Panelists:**<br>- President Keith Cornille, Heartland Community College<br>- President Lynette Stokes, South Suburban College<br>- President Mary-Rita Moore, Triton College | Redbird CD |

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| 1:30 – 2:15 pm<br>Breakout Sessions | **Breakout Sessions**<br>- **Building Stronger Pipelines: Cross-Sector Partnerships That Drive Workforce & Financial Stability** – Illinois Central College and JP Morgan Chase Bank<br>- **Journey with Us: From Progress to Student Success** – South Suburban College<br>- **College Equity Planning** – Illinois Community College Board and Global Educational Consultants, Inc.<br>- **Turning Academic Success into a Team Sport: The WEI Buddy Race Model** – Triton College<br>- **Roundtable Discussion: WEI Consortium Data and Estimating Economic Impact** – Illinois Central College | Redbird E<br><br>Redbird F<br><br>Redbird G<br><br>Beaufort<br><br>North Boardroom |
| 2:30 – 3:15 pm<br>General Session | **Closing Session: ICCB Update on Workforce Pell**<br>- Whitney Thompson, Deputy Director of Workforce Education, ICCB | Redbird CD |
| 3:20 – 3:30 pm | **Closing Remarks** | Redbird CD |

**THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING! Please visit the Symposium website for all the session details.**

**SESSION DESCRIPTIONS, SPEAKER BIOS, MATERIALS: https://icsps.illinoisstate.edu/events/wei-symposium**

**SYMPOSIUM PRESENTED BY: The Illinois Community College Board, Illinois Central College, Heartland Community College, and the Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support. Please direct any questions to: Dawn Koeltzow, Senior Director, WEI Consortium, dawn.koeltzow@icc.edu**

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