The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), created in 1961, is the planning and coordinating body that oversees academic affairs, budgeting, grants and capital improvement for the state’s four-year public universities, plus limited coordination over most private colleges and business and vocational schools. It provides budgeting oversight for community colleges and student assistance programs and holds a wealth of data on student demographics.

In September 2020, the board embarked on a strategic planning initiative to establish the blueprint for a higher education ecosystem to ensure individuals, families and communities thrive across the state. Although it is not yet final, the plan will focus on:

- Increasing postsecondary credential and degree attainment to develop the talent that drives Illinois’ economy.
- Closing equity gaps for those who have been left behind by the higher education system.
- Improving affordability, increasing access and managing costs.

This new initiative occurred despite the COVID-19 pandemic, during which the IBHE distributed $30 million in federal funds through the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund, private funding for emergency student grants, and initiated the creation of a drive-up Wi-Fi hotspot map.

The board consists of 16 members, including 10 members appointed for six-year terms, the respective chairs of the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission; a member of a public university governing board; a member of an independent college or university board of trustees; and two student members elected by the recognized Student Advisory Committee to the board.

**Board Members:** John Atkinson, *chair*; Veronica Herrero, *vice chair*; public university trustee member; Lazaro Lopez, *ex-officio member*, Illinois Community College Board; Kevin Huber, *ex-officio member*, Illinois Student Assistance Commission; Clarence Wyatt, independent colleges and universities; Max Coffey; Derek Douglas; Andrea Evans; Jennifer Garrison; Veronica Gloria; Alice Marie Jacobs; Pranav G. Kothari, Kenneth Shaw; Jennifer Delaney; Mackenzi Matthews, *student representative*; and Maria Cruz, *nontraditional student representative*. 