



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 15, 2024

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**ISAC HOSTS 14TH ANNUAL COLLEGE CHANGES EVERYTHING[®] CONFERENCE:
COMMUNITY HEALTH AND EDUCATIONAL EQUITY**
PLUS: Free On-site FAFSA Completion Workshop Open to All Students and Families
July 18, 2024

CHICAGO – The [Illinois Student Assistance Commission \(ISAC\)](#) and statewide partners will host the [14th annual College Changes Everything[®] \(CCE\) Conference: Community Health](#) Thursday, July 18, 2024 from 8:00 am – 4:00 pm at the Tinley Park Convention Center. The state’s premier annual college access event will focus this year on the role community health plays in advancing educational equity for Illinois students and families. Diverse professionals and stakeholders will come together to learn and collaborate to support college access and success and career readiness.

Running concurrently with the conference, ISAC will host a Financial Aid Application Completion Workshop from 7 am to 7 pm at the same location, where students and families can walk in and get free help completing their [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA[®]\)](#) or [Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid](#) (Alternative Application).

“Studies show that educational attainment can positively impact the health of communities and individuals,” said ISAC Executive Director Eric Zarnikow. “As the CCE Conference has developed over the years, we’ve been increasingly focused on bringing together a diverse array of stakeholders to share their unique perspectives and expertise to expand our understanding of what education can do for the community and the individual. This year we are excited to broaden our scope to look at the relationship of educational equity and community health, and how we can build and support equitable communities that nurture the physical, mental, and environmental well-being of all residents.”

Featured speaker for the morning plenary session, Dr. Lesley-Ann Noel, brings this unique perspective to the conference. Dr. Noel is the author of *Design Social Change: Take Action, Work Toward Equity, and Challenge the Status Quo* and is the Dean of the Faculty of Design at the Ontario College of Art & Design (OCAD), Canada's largest and most comprehensive art, design, and media university. She is a designer, researcher, and educator with research interests focusing on those traditionally excluded from research, design-based learning, and design thinking. She practices primarily in social innovation, entrepreneurship, education, and public health.

A wide range of interest sessions will be offered during the conference covering topics related to college access and completion and career readiness, such as student retention, persistence, and completion;

programs and services for underrepresented students; educational equity; student wellness and emotional support; career and technical education; career development experiences; education, business, and the economy; college costs, financial aid, and affordability; community stakeholder engagement, and more. Our atrium exhibit will focus on the links between community health and educational equity and will highlight the impact of state financial aid programs that support efforts to advance and nurture personal and professional growth as they build stronger communities.

For more information about the conference and to view the agenda, visit <https://www.collegechangeseverything.org/events/2024-cce-conference-information.html>. Use #CCE4me to join the conversation on social media.

The College Changes Everything Conference is sponsored by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission in collaboration with partners: Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Illinois Department of Employment Security, Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois College Access Network, Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities, Advance Illinois, Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University, ACT Now, Women Employed, and iCan Dream Center.

Financial Aid Application Workshop July 18 at Tinley Park Convention Center—Free and Open to the Public

At the same date and location as the conference, ISAC is hosting a FREE Financial Aid Application Completion Workshop at the Tinley Park Convention Center in the Samuel Tinley Room from 7:00 am – 7:00 pm for students and their families to get help completing their FAFSA or Alternative Application. All 2024 high school graduates who complete a FAFSA or Alternative Application at the event will receive a \$25 e-gift card to cover the costs of transportation and other expenses.

The 2024-25 FAFSA, redesigned as part of federal FAFSA Simplification, launched three months later than usual and was plagued with numerous technical issues, making it difficult if not impossible for many students to complete it after the launch. Many of these issues have now been resolved. There is still time for students to get financial aid for this coming school year if they complete the FAFSA (or, for eligible undocumented students, the Alternative Application).

ISACorps™ financial aid experts will work one-on-one to help students and families complete their applications at the workshop. Computers will be available for those who do not bring their own, and in-person assistance is available in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, Polish, Japanese, Mandarin, and Mongolian. Registration is not required, walk-ins are welcome, and parking is free! Dependent students should bring their parents to complete the application. Students can use this handy [tool](#) to find out what information they need to bring to complete the application. With the information they need on hand, they can complete the FAFSA at the workshop in as little as 30 minutes!

Students and families who are unable to attend the workshop can schedule a free virtual meeting with ISAC FAFSA experts at <https://bit.ly/4birpF5>. Students can also find a free Financial Aid Application Completion Workshop in their community, <https://studentportal.isac.org/Events>.

About College Changes Everything

College Changes Everything® (CCE) is a college access movement that recognizes that college can be a life changing experience not only for students, but also for families and communities. In Illinois and across the nation, those who obtain education beyond high school not only see a significant impact on their potential career prospects and future salary, but also change levels of poverty, life expectancy, crime, and obesity rates in their communities. CCE is an essential part of helping Illinois reach its goal of increasing the proportion of adults in the state with high quality degrees or credentials to 60% by 2025. Find out more and join the conversation at collegechangeseverything.org.

About ISAC

The mission of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) is to provide Illinois students with information and assistance to help make education beyond high school accessible and affordable. ISAC provides comprehensive, objective, and timely information on education and financial aid for students and their families—giving them access to the tools they need to make the educational choices that are right for them. Then, through the state scholarship and grant programs ISAC administers, ISAC can help students make those choices a reality. Find us at isac.org or on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ILStudentAssistance) (@ILStudentAssistance), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/ISACinaid), on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/ISACinaid) @ISACinaid, and watch our videos on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/ISACinaid).

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