



January 21, 2022

Happy New Year from the Illinois College Access Network!

As you know, the past two years have brought about both challenges and opportunities for our network. At a moment when students, families, and the professionals who support them need assistance most, sustaining a local dues-based membership organization has become increasingly difficult. It has been particularly challenging because opportunities for in-person learning and relationship building have been the cornerstone of the network for nearly 25 years. Since the early days as the College and Career Readiness Network, and through every transition since 1998, what has remained constant is the regular convening and mutual support of a passionate and dedicated group of individuals helping students prepare for life after high school.

Throughout 2021, Mike Dessimoz and I worked together to transition IllinoisCAN to the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) and as we begin 2022, ISAC has assumed all operations for the network. This is not without precedent, as many of us recall that the Illinois College Access Network was housed within the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce for years. Returning to a structure which provides IllinoisCAN with a backbone organization that can leverage capacity, expertise, and reach, will allow the network we have all built together to not only survive but grow. As so many of us have discussed over the years, we are hopeful that the move will help us expand into a truly statewide network.

There is still much work left to do in the transition, and so much to look forward to as we approach the 25th anniversary of this incredibly resilient and adaptive organization. In the coming weeks, please look for additional communication from the Illinois College Access Network regarding the following:

- **Member Survey** – A brief questionnaire for members to gauge interests and opinions on topics and directions for the network.
- **History of the Network** – An opportunity for all members, past and present, to contribute to the creation of print and interactive materials documenting and celebrating the first 25 years of the Illinois College Access Network.
- **Strategic Planning** – Invitations to participate in facilitated focused conversations among members to develop the guiding principles, directions, and goals to navigate the next three years.
- **Upcoming Events** – A calendar of upcoming meetings, events, and other opportunities for network members.

Many of you will be thrilled to know that Renee Tucker Martinez, a long-time member and board member of IllinoisCAN, who fortuitously joined the ISAC team in early 2020, will be managing the day to day operations of the network. Her email address is renee.martinez@illinois.gov. Sincere appreciation to everyone who has supported IllinoisCAN and ISAC over the years, and especially those who have helped and will help during this time of transition and planning. Thank you!

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