



EQUITY PLAN AND PRACTICES

GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY

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EQUITY PLAN AND PRACTICES

FOR GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY



In response to the strategies outlined in [A Thriving Illinois](#), P.A. 102-1046 (110 ILCS 205/9.16) Governors State University (GovState) updated its Equity Plan and Practices to close gaps in enrollment, retention, completion, and student loan repayment rates for underrepresented groups, including students of color, low-income students, working adult students, rural students, and individuals with disabilities so that individuals, families, and communities throughout the state can thrive.

EQUITY PLAN AND PRACTICES DEFINED:

Governors State University's Equity plan is aligned with the policies and practices of the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Partnership for College Completion's Illinois Equity and Attainment Initiative. Governors State University's Equity Plan includes student-centered practices designed to meet the needs and support the success of historically underserved and underrepresented students so that all students have the tools they need to succeed. At the same time, the framework focuses on populations where the data shows gaps in outcomes - Black, Latinx, low-income, rural, women, individuals with disabilities, working adults, and other racially minoritized groups, as outlined in statute. GovState's 2024 Equity Plan and Practices is designed for sustainable actions across all marginalized populations. GovState commits to practices that support student success and achievement in their academic and career goals while promoting respect, fairness, diversity, equity, inclusion, and access.



Section 1: Introduction

INSTITUTION VISION OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY

IBHE CRITERIA

- Adopted Institution Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Statements
- Adopted Institution Mission, Vision, Value Statements
- Other institutional statements and goals that support DEIA efforts (such as College, Division, or support areas)
- Institutional vision for Equity

GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

Governors State University (GovState) complies with the Institutional Vision Statement of the IBHE on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. The response below provides evidence of alignment with the IBHE criteria as reflected in the mission, vision, and core values statements of the university which are widely published and available to internal and external stakeholders. Additional documentation is found in the individual academic and campus units’ individual mission, vision and values statements and expressed in the institutional vision for equity.

In alignment with the “A Thriving Illinois and the Illinois Equity and Attainment Initiative,” Governors State University (GovState) is committed to eliminating disparities in degree completion rates of underrepresented groups, including students of color, low-income students, working adult students, rural students, and individuals with disabilities so that individuals, families, and communities throughout the state can thrive. GovState has adopted diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility statements at the institutional college, and departmental levels, as evidenced throughout the [website](#), current practices, and continuous improvements.

MISSION

Governors State University (GovState) is committed to offering an exceptional and accessible education that prepares students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed in a global society.

VISION

GovState will create an intellectually stimulating public square, serve as an economic catalyst for the region, and lead as a model of academic excellence, innovation, diversity, and responsible citizenship.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT

Governors State University in University Park occupies land that was originally the ancestral homelands of various Native Nations, including the Bodwéwadmí (Potawatomi), Kaskaskia, Peoria, Myaamia (Miami), Ochéthi Šakówin (oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we) (Sioux), Kiiikaapoi (Kickapoo), and many others. As an institution dedicated to education and truth, we acknowledge that this land was unjustly taken from Native inhabitants. The original Native peoples held these lands sacred for thousands of years, and they remain important to Native communities today.

Governors State University resides on land cherished by past, present, and future generations of local Native Peoples. We recognize and respect the many thriving Native communities in the Chicagoland area, home to one of the largest urban Native populations, representing over 175 Tribal Nations. As part of our commitment to honor the land’s heritage, Governors State University pledges to honor, respect, and share this Land Acknowledgment statement at all public events hosted by GovState.

CORE VALUES

Invest in **Student Success** through a commitment to mentoring and a deliberate university focus on student achievement of academic, professional, and personal goals.

Provide **Opportunity** and **Access** to a first-class public education to residents of our surrounding communities and all those traditionally underserved by higher education.

Serve as an **Economic Catalyst** for the citizens of the State of Illinois and our larger Midwest region, so that our communities grow and flourish.

Prepare **Stewards** of our **Future** to thrive in the global economy, to contribute to ongoing innovative research and to serve as stewards of the environment.

Demonstrate **Inclusiveness** and **Diversity** to encourage acceptance of wide-ranging perspectives among students, staff, faculty and members of the broader community.

Promote **Quality of Life**, which encompasses civic, personal, professional, and cultural growth.

GovState’s believes that by following its mission and core values it achieves its vision of creating an intellectually stimulating public square, serve as an economic catalyst for the region, and lead as a model of academic excellence, innovation, diversity, and responsible citizenship.

GovState's mission and values were developed through a collaborative process involving an internal steering committee, the University community, and Board of Trustees as part of the previous Vision 2020 strategic plan development. Vision 2020 was adopted by the Board of Trustees at its February 27, 2015, meeting. The Board of Trustees re-affirmed the mission, vision, and values at its February 14, 2020, meeting as part of the development of the current university strategic plan Strategy 2025.

[DOWNLOAD STRATEGY 2025](#)

Strategy 2025 delineates GovState's guiding strategy for 2020-2025. The Strategy 2025 development process was a comprehensive, campus-wide, inclusive endeavor in institutional planning that started in February 2018. At that time, GovState convened a 27-member Strategic Planning committee with membership reflecting the Campus Community: Students, Faculty, Deans, Chairs, Academic Advisors, Administration, Student Affairs, Enrollment Management, Development, Sponsored Programs, Finance, Civil Service Senate, Information Technology Services, Library, International Services, and Budgeting. To fulfill its charge, that committee performed a SWOT analysis, a gap analysis between 2020 and GovState's current standing, and offered suggestions for Strategy 2025. Those suggestions were then presented to a larger audience of campus constituents and college and program external advisory boards by conducting charrettes to gather feedback and suggestions. The committee then incorporated the recommendations into an edited version of Strategy 2025 and posted it in GovState's internal Share Point portal for further campus-wide discussion. The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness monitors progress based on key performance indicators and routinely updates the Board of Trustees, most recently at its June 2023 meeting.

At GovState, the development of strategic plans embraces the diverse and inclusive culture of the university and advances the university mission. Subsequent to the adoption of Strategy 2025 and its core values, the instructional units within the University were encouraged to develop their own strategic plans in alignment with Strategy 2025. Each unit has a strategic planning process resulting in a mission statement and key performance indicators that provide qualitative and quantitative data which demonstrates the unit's contribution toward meeting the goals of the university strategic plan.

Some examples include:

- [College of Arts and Sciences](#)
- [College of Business](#)
- [College of Education and Human Development](#)
- [College of Health and Human Services](#)
- Student Affairs
 - [Latinx Resource Center mission statement](#)
 - [First Generation Center statement](#)
 - [Counseling and Wellness Center mission statement](#)
 - [Achieving Completion with Excellence](#) (Post Secondary Foster Students)
 - [Access Services for Students with Disabilities](#)

The mission, which is at the heart of GovState's work, guides all our actions and decisions. As noted above, GovState's [Strategy 25](#) includes goals and objectives tied to the teaching and learning including Academic Excellence Goal 1), Student Success (Goal 2), and High Quality Faculty and Staff (Goal 3). GovState also developed a mission-led Strategic Enrollment Plan (2022-2026) focused on enrollment and student success that includes strategies related to student retention. Supporting Instructional Excellence that led to the rebranding and strengthening of what became GovState's [Center for Teaching and Learning](#) to support instructional excellence. GovState's vision and values describe serving as an economic catalyst for the region, a commitment that we all share and strive to fulfill.

ACCESSIBILITY

GovState is committed to offering high-quality, accessible undergraduate and graduate programs, as listed in the [University Catalog](#). GovState offers 35 undergraduate programs, 28 master's level programs, and five doctoral programs. These programs represent a strong blend of the liberal arts and professional studies. Programs are offered through academic units located in GovState's four degree-granting academic colleges: Arts and Sciences, Business, Education and Human Development, and Health and Human Services.

GovState's accessibility mission has been in place since its founding in 1969 because of the Illinois Board of Higher Education's recommendation that Illinois create a university for commuters in the Chicagoland area. From 1969 to 2014, GovState was an upper division (transfer) and graduate university before transitioning to a full-service comprehensive university admitting its first class of freshman students in 2014. The University student population includes a significant portion of transfer (73.1% UG) and part-time (33.9% UG) learners. With limited student housing, most students commute to campus and/or take online courses.

Given its ongoing adult, part-time, and commuter population, evening programs remain popular, along with growing demand for online and hybrid programs and class offerings. Distance education, including online and hybrid courses, is offered through the academic colleges and supported by GovState's Center for Teaching and Learning.

GovState's student population includes a diverse set of transfer, graduate, and direct from high school audiences as well as an intersection of diverse ages, races, socioeconomic status, and first-generation population.

PRACTICES

Following its mission, informed by its core values, and looking to accomplish its vision, GovState transitioned from an upper-division institution to a regional, comprehensive university in 2014. With nearly a decade as a full-service, regional comprehensive institution, GovState continues to refine and expand academic offerings at all levels. In Summer 2022, the campus initiated a six-week, residential, immersive summer bridge program, [Jaguar LEAP](#), to assist incoming first-time, first-year students with the transition to college. The program provides seven academic credits, academic and social supports to foster student success. GovState expanded its growing honors program into an [Honors College](#) (approved by the Board of Trustees at its June 12, 2023, meeting and by the Illinois Board of Higher Education). At the same time, the University established a [College of Graduate Studies](#) (approved by the Board of Trustees at its June 12, 2023, meeting and by the Illinois Board of Higher Education). Both colleges, which serve as academic units within the Division of Academic Affairs, are designed to enhance the campus' ability to coordinate accessible and exceptional education offerings and student support services across the institution.

To serve the breadth of the student population, GovState continues to increase its student support services. This includes the centralized [Undergraduate Academic Advising Center](#), a centralized [Academic Resource Center](#), and a [Counseling and Wellness Center \(CWC\)](#). The CWC includes GSU4U, which strives to offer a wide range of services, bridging the gap and connecting students experiencing basic needs insecurities with on-campus and community resources. Together, the Counseling and Wellness Center and the [GSU4U](#) provide comprehensive support, ultimately enhancing services supporting students' persistence, retention, and graduation completion. Based on the institution's Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan (Strategy 5: Latinx Recruitment and Support) and guided by its mission and core values, GovState hired its inaugural director of the [Latinx Resource Center](#) in Spring 2023. In Fall 2023,

the [First-Generation Center](#) opened, offering student programming, intrusive advising, peer mentoring, resources, and support for first-generation students throughout their academic career to graduation.

GovState's enrollment profile is very diverse and consistent with the University's accessibility mission and values that address "...opportunity and access to a first-class public education to residents of our surrounding communities and all those traditionally underserved by higher education." The enrollment profile diversity in race/ethnicity, adult learner and transfer population, first generation, and Pell-eligible population indicate the University profile is consistent with our mission, values, and strategic plan.

The mission, vision, and values statements for GovState are made available to faculty, staff, and students through printed materials, the website, and the internal portal. The University Catalog and Student Handbook also provide a venue for the university's publicly articulated commitments. The mission statement is explicitly present in every class a required statements in course syllabi. For on-campus courses, the mission is displayed on the home screen of every classroom computer. The mission is also articulated and demonstrated to the region through campus units that service external constituencies. These include units focused on providing education to community members, from children at the [Family Development Center](#) to adults and seniors through the [School of Extended Learning](#). The mission is communicated to the public through arts and cultural programming of the [Center for the Performing Arts](#), [Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park](#), and the [Center for Community Media](#) and through our industry and business community through the [Supply Chain Innovation and Business Incubator](#). Starting in September 2020, all employee business cards included the mission statement on the reverse side. The mission is included in each issue of The Agora, the GovState's monthly newsletter sent by email to over 47,000 people in the GovState community. The University's values and commitments are reflected in other communication with internal and external members of the community, they also inform each college and program mission and are the building blocks for focused strategic plans for each college. Progress is shared with internal and external stakeholders through Annual Reports.

Institutional priorities are clearly demonstrated through the annual budgeting process at GovState and operationalized through the Planning and Budget Advisory Council (PBAC) PBAC is composed of faculty, students, staff, and administrators and co-chaired by the Provost and the Executive Vice President of Finance and Administration. PBAC establishes annual guidelines for budget requests from all units of the University, and those guidelines follow the corresponding GovState strategic plan. This process demonstrates the close alignment between institutional mission, strategy, resource allocation, and operational performance.

GovState's mission is evidenced in actions that underscore its commitment to the greater good. The University actively provides higher education opportunities to a broad and diverse spectrum of individuals, thereby creating pathways for those who might otherwise lack access. This inclusive approach fosters social equity and paves the way for underserved communities to benefit from education. By equipping students for "success in a globalized society, "GovState ensures their academic readiness and cultivates a global perspective, increasingly vital in today's interconnected world. A well-rounded education that imparts knowledge and skills enhances the likelihood that individuals will make positive contributions to their communities, the workforce, and the collective welfare through their professional and civic involvement. GovState's mission to nurture self-assurance in its students is pivotal in empowering them to confront challenges, assume leadership roles, and spearhead constructive transformations within their communities, ultimately enabling them to make substantial contributions to the greater good.

GovState was founded in 1969 on diversity and inclusion, primarily focusing on serving community college graduates pursuing baccalaureate degrees. During the five intervening decades, GovState has continued to embrace its role of educating students in the southern region of the Chicago metro area. GovState provides educational and extra-curricular activities for students of all ages and has a long record of serving varied constituencies on and off campus. At the leadership level, the University President hosts a two-day planning retreat with the Cabinet each summer. During this time, Cabinet members have the opportunity to discuss goals and ideas for improving the mission and reputation of GovState. In the Summer of 2022, for example, the president led the group in a discussion of Tia McNair's 2022 monograph, *Becoming a Student-Ready College*, which has been subsequently used in support of socializing the strategic plan, the Strategic Enrollment Management plan (SEM), and other actions that demonstrate commitment to the public good.

Students are GovState's most crucial internal constituency. While internal stakeholders are essential, the university also interacts with and offers a wide variety of services to its external constituents – community members of all ages, local businesses, community non-profit agencies, industry associations, workforce and economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, state agencies, elementary and high school districts, numerous employers, municipal officials, law enforcement professionals, the U.S. military, and many more.

The scope of curricular offerings at GovState indicates its ability to perform an educational role in serving the needs of the public in our region, as well as statewide and nationally. Through the Colleges of Education and Human Development, Health and Human Services, Business and Arts and Sciences curricula, the University offers graduate and undergraduate education in such fields as accounting, early childhood education, communication disorders, and the liberal arts, including computer science and information technology. Students can combine service learning with social justice and leadership through community service efforts such as [Kaleidoscope](#). The University supports local food pantries, such as the Greater Chicago Food Depository, and connects students to community service and leadership through career and volunteer fairs hosted by the Colleges and the Division of Student Affairs. Additional examples focus on family counseling and family services such as F.U.T.U.R.E. (foundation youth services) which focuses on after school enrichment activities for low-income youth and Wayne Winfield Youth Family Services ([WAYS](#)), which develops societal support to help families grow and achieve positive roles in the community through counseling, parenting classes, and behavioral modification training.

As a cultural resource, GovState houses [The Center for Performing Arts](#), the [Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park \(The Nate\)](#), the [Visual Arts Gallery](#), the [Social Justice Initiative](#), the Illinois Black Hall of Fame, and the [Center for Community Media](#) which collectively contribute to the quality of life in the region.

The university will continue to support these highly valued artistic and cultural venues as they demonstrate our commitment to our role as an educational entity for the public, including our students and community members. These endeavors are actively integrated into relevant curricula. Incorporating these resources into academic programming enriches students' educational experiences, enhances their practical skills, and fosters a deeper understanding of various fields and social issues. They also encourage interdisciplinary collaboration and community engagement as such efforts will increase public awareness of the university and further enhance GovState's value to the south suburban region. GovState will continue demonstrating and increasing its presence as an important venue for dialogue and problem-solving related to these critical issues.

As suggested by the university's land mass, GovState is focused on environmental preservation as described in Policy 40 on Land Use. Beyond the Manilow sculpture park, the University includes the monarch butterfly habitat, Biological Field Station, and the environmental viewing stations. The University engages in sustainable waste and energy practices through recycling and LED construction.

GovState remains steadfast in its core mission, which revolves around delivering exceptional education and academic resources to students while nurturing their personal growth and success. Recognizing the significance of financial sustainability, GovState diligently directs its resources toward elevating the quality of instruction. This involves investing in classroom enhancements, offering diverse modalities to cater to various learning styles, establishing specialized offices dedicated to first-generation and Latinx students, and implementing a robust programming framework to ensure a successful transition for incoming freshmen, transfer, honors, and graduate students. In doing so, GovState reaffirms its unwavering commitment to providing a holistic and empowering educational experience.

GovState invested nearly \$100,000 to develop nine [Hyflex classrooms](#) with basic Hyflex technology in response to student interest in course offerings delivered through different modalities. Technologies include a room camera with preset of the entire room, zooming in on the projection screen, and zoom to the podium. Each room is equipped with a webcam at the podium that can be used for either faculty up close or to swing around for classroom views. All classrooms have speakers, so in-classroom students can hear online students. Via GovState's Learning Management System and the projector, in-classroom students can see online students. Faculty are provided lapel microphones to be connected to the podium computer so online students can hear the faculty as they move around instructing the class.

Beyond investing in the educational infrastructure, GovState is creating an environment where every student at Governors State University thrives, excels, and achieves their highest potential. [The First-Generation Center \(FGC\)](#) is committed to empowering and supporting first-generation students throughout their educational journey while ensuring equitable access to opportunities and resources that promote academic success, personal growth, and professional development. The mission of the newly established [Latinx Resource Center](#) is to serve GovState's growing Hispanic student population. The Latinx Resource Center provides resources, support services, and academic environment where students can thrive. [Jaguar LEAP](#) is a Summer Immersion Program for new students entering their first year at GovState. Students can earn seven college credits as they live on campus in Prairie Place and participate in exciting cultural and academic programming designed to equip them with the academic and social support necessary for success.

GovState actively engages with its external constituencies by collaborating with local communities, businesses, and organizations to identify shared goals and address mutual needs. This often includes joint projects, internships, clinical, apprenticeships, and service-learning opportunities that benefit the University and its external partners. GovState regularly solicits feedback from external stakeholders, such as students, alumni, employers, advisory board members, and the broader community. This input helps the University refine its programs, services, and outreach efforts to better align with their expectations and requirements. GovState conducts ongoing needs assessments to identify emerging challenges and opportunities within the region enabling GovState to adjust its offerings and resources to meet the evolving demands of its constituencies. GovState tailors its educational and outreach programs to address specific needs in the community, whether it is creating workforce development initiatives, continuing education courses, or research projects that target local issues. The University organizes events, seminars, and workshops that engage external constituencies, encouraging them to participate in discussions, share insights, and collaborate with GovState on shared interests. GovState has established partnerships with various industry sectors to place students

in internships, externships, clinicals, and apprenticeships to provide on-the-job training and real-life experiences for students. GovState is engaged with many local chambers, industry associations, workforce and economic development organizations, state and non-profit agencies, and community-based organizations to identify student resources and collaborate on grant initiatives and opportunities.

The College of Business Supply Chain Innovation Center and Business Incubator has provided two thought leadership programs around Reimagining the Electric Vehicle Industry, bringing together policy-makers, private sector leaders, and other stakeholders to share progress, discuss opportunities and challenges they are facing in galvanizing Illinois Governor JB Pritzker's' bold vision to bolster Illinois manufacturing as a top destination for electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing and grow the ecosystem to create new capacity for EV vehicle and parts production.

By actively engaging with external constituencies and being responsive to their needs, Governors State University ensures its mission remains relevant and continues to contribute positively to the communities it serves. The local community can attend public events such as art show openings in the campus gallery. The community contracts the University in a variety of ways, such as athletic competitions, dance competitions, community enrichments such as the All-Girls Matter program, local government meetings such as meetings of the Will County Board, and governmental events such as the signing of legislation that has recently included the Stroke Awareness Bill. In collaboration with the University's production unit, [Digital Learning and Media Design \(DMLD\)](#), students in the athletics program can intern with DLMD, and serve as sports broadcasters on video feeds and learn the basics of sports media production.

GovState has more than 45,000 alumni throughout the United States and worldwide. The University continues to solicit advice and input from graduates as it assesses its performance and plans for new and modified programs and services. The Alumni Association continues to support alumni and the university through a wide range of intellectual events, social gatherings, and other programs and services throughout the year. Alumni are invited to special networking events and are notified of and welcomed to the university on other occasions throughout the year.

GovState serves students with children, parents, and children from throughout our community at our Family Development Center (FDC). Part of the College of Education and Human Development, the FDC was designed by educators to serve the educational needs of children and families. The childcare, pre-school, and home-visiting programs model the best practices in Early Childhood Education and draw extensively on the expertise of university faculty and staff in Early Childhood Education, Nursing, Communications Disorders (speech and hearing), Psychology, and Counseling. University students in these undergraduate and graduate levels are active participants in the Family Development Center.

The School of Extended Learning (SXL) serves as the university's continuing education and workforce development center. SXL offers learning opportunities for all ages with a camp for middle and high schoolers, short-term training programs for individuals to enter the workforce, professional development, and continuing education for individuals to advance in their profession, academic and professional certification at the testing center, and the knowledge exchange for retirees and semi-retirees. SXL also provides customized training opportunities for local and regional businesses by identifying training gaps and providing workable solutions. An annotated source of programmatic offerings is posted on the SXL website.

GovState supports veterans by providing a dedicated welcoming and comfortable space, helping them navigate VA Education Benefits, offering career planning assistance, and immersing them in campus life, including cultural events and sports. GovState is also a participating school with Air Force ROTC, and our staff represents military-connected student interests on many regional, statewide, and national associations and boards.

By actively engaging with external constituencies and being responsive to their needs, GovState ensures its mission remains relevant and continues to contribute positively to the communities it serves.

DIVERSITY

Diversity is celebrated and supported throughout GovState as reflected in our mission statement: “Governors State University is committed to offering an exceptional and accessible education that prepares students with the knowledge, skills and confidence to succeed in a global society.”

This commitment to diversity is also reflected in our Core Values, where GovState highlights the commitment to serving diverse populations and to being a venue for sharing diverse perspectives and ideas. For example, the core value Demonstrate Inclusiveness and Diversity, calls upon the University to encourage acceptance of wide-ranging perspectives among students, staff, faculty, and members of the broader community.

Dedication to fostering civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world is further operationalized in the University’s strategic plan. Strategy 2025 includes specific objectives to: hire, develop, and retain diverse and exceptional faculty and staff; increase enrollment of and support for our Hispanic student population; demonstrate a commitment to ethics, equity, inclusiveness, diversity, and accountability for all students, faculty, and staff; and to realize the University’s public responsibility to stimulate educational, cultural, environmental, and economic development in Chicagoland and beyond, with particular emphasis on community members historically underserved by higher education.

Co-curricular activities are often demonstrated through collaboration between academic and student affairs. The mission of the Division of Student Affairs is to provide a seamless and supportive pathway from the prospective student to alumni, focused on personal and academic success in to ensure that students are career ready and positioned to be leaders and active citizens in the community. Within GovState’s Division of Student Affairs and Support Services, the [Center for Student Engagement and Intercultural Programs \(CSEIP\)](#) promotes a sense of belonging and connectedness through clubs and organizations, campus programming, leadership development, civic engagement, intercultural education and service learning as partners with all campus community members. Students interested in campus leadership positions are encouraged to collaborate with peers and participate in Jaguar Leadership Workshops to gain skills. Through Student Senate, Kaleidoscope Service Council and Student Activities Council, the opportunities are boundless. CSEIP provides students with holistic programs and activities to enhance the collegiate experience of all students.

Civic engagement opportunities are available for students, faculty, and community members with a dedicated emphasis on social justice, community service and civic responsibility. Students interested in service opportunities, faculty interested in incorporating service and civic engagement activities in their classes, and community partners interested in recruiting volunteers, are able to bridge resources through CSEIP.

Civic engagement is also included in one of GovState’s undergraduate general education outcomes on Social Responsibility. The outcomes are infused in undergraduate program curricula and typically introduced or reinforced in the junior seminar course or the capstone course, required for every degree program, according to GovState Policy 72 on Junior Seminar and Undergraduate Capstone Requirements for Undergraduate Degrees. GovState’s Students Learn, Students Vote initiative was recognized for its efforts to increase student voter turnout with an award by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge.

Alternative Spring Break (ASB) is a service-learning program that takes place during the week of spring break. The objective is to give students opportunities to learn and build relationships through direct experience locally, nationally, or abroad. The goal is to partner with service-based organizations working for social change while allowing students an opportunity for personal transformation by serving others.

The GovState Food Pantry is another campus resource available to GovState students. Center for Student Engagement and Intercultural Programs staff manages the Food Pantry in partnership with the Northern Illinois Food Bank. The GovState Food Pantry offers non-perishable and perishable food, including produce, meat, and dairy, as well as toiletries and over-the-counter medication to GovState students and their families.

Each month [GovState’s Dual Degree Program](#) (DDP) coordinates a community service event with the help of its student staff. Since Fall 2020, 217 DDP students have participated in over 645 hours of community service. The service projects are a perfect opportunity for students to become active members of their community, which has a lasting positive impact on society at large. Federal Work Study students that work within DDP, called “Student Transition Assistants” or “STAs,” are responsible for connecting with a non-profit organization to plan and execute a service project for 5-20 students.

Students have opportunities to participate in faculty-led international study abroad service-learning opportunities including participation in the Health Brigade trip to Ghana focused on public health and a Business Brigade trip to Panama, focused on assisting local entrepreneurs with accounting and inventory.

GovState prepares students for workplace success in many ways including the First Year Experience which places first-and-second year students within one of seven Focus Areas around common intended majors. Focus Areas are designed with schedules including common general education courses and introductory major courses to give students a foundation on which to build during their college career and for life after GovState. As part of a challenging academic community, students learn strategies and skills to become critical thinkers. Students become confident in their abilities and as members of a diverse community. Many degree programs allow an optional internship for academic credit or require an internship or practicum experience. GovState’s Office of Career Services offers workshops, resources, internship and career fairs, and other resources to prepare for workplace readiness and explore career options.

Students have the opportunity to participate in conference recognized athletics teams and intermural sports. Sports offered on campus include men and women basketball, cross country, golf, indoor track, outdoor track, volleyball, soccer, and women’s bowling.

The University has one residence hall that is professionally staffed called Prairie Place. Programming for the students is offered by the Residence Hall personnel, the Division of Student Affairs and through

the [faculty-in-residence \(FIR\) program](#). The FIR organizes an annual Friends Giving for the Thanksgiving break and serves meals in the residence hall over break periods.

GovState provides civic engagement applied learning through its alternative spring break and through global and national study away programs that introduce students to diversity and inclusive practices. As a Minority Serving Institution in STEM fields and an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), GovState is committed to achieving equity and inclusive excellence through our participation in the [Illinois Equity in Attainment Initiative \(ILEA\)](#) from the Partnership for College Completion which seeks to eliminate institutional achievement gaps in college degree completion for low-income, first generation, African American and Latinx students in the region by 2025. Through participation in ILEA, GovState has bolstered its commitment to equity. Simultaneously, GovState is pursuing the [Seal of Excelensia](#) in order to increase institutional capacity for serving Latinx students.

[The Office of Access Services for Students with Disabilities](#) provides academic and technical assistance to students and works closely with faculty to facilitate access in the learning environment in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Students who are veterans also have access to a strong support network on campus. [The Veterans Resource Center/Military-Connected Student Services](#), was established in 2011 and provides special services to veterans by certifying veterans' education benefits and by helping student veterans and dependents connect with available resources. This is done through staff and peer-to-peer support, both inside and outside of the classroom, for all military personnel. Information on VA benefits, education support, employment opportunities and other resources are provided through the Veterans Resource Center.

In addition to addressing its role in a multicultural society, GovState attends to human diversity in the context of our mission and service to our students. [The Office of International Services](#) serves many populations at GovState, including international students, faculty, staff, scholars, study-abroad students, and the local community. Programming includes day trips to Chicago, international mixer events, employment workshops for international students, an annual multicultural fashion show, International Education Week (IEW) events, and study abroad fairs.

GovState has multiple sites of engagement to educate the campus community, share ideas and explore diverse perspectives to foster a multifaceted climate of respect and to demand a respectful campus. Through student research on inequities and social injustices, through courses focused on societal disparities and differences, and co-curricular activities including participation in the Beloved Community and Ghana Service Brigade programs, students have the opportunity to travel and experience diverse worldviews and human experiences in person. These curated learning opportunities are designed to confront inequity through education and community-based service-learning projects. As discussed below, the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Business provide representative examples of how students gave valuable learning experiences through study abroad.

The College of Arts and Sciences has developed relationships with universities in Italy (University of Insubria) and Brazil (Universidade Federal do Pará), which has included hosting visiting faculty and scholars on J1 visas at GovState. While on campus, they conduct research and guest lecture in our classes. Faculty have partnered on grants and travel abroad that showcase their leadership through

travel to Brazil in April 2024 to share research on environmental restorative justice five criminal justice students traveled to the University of Insubria to share their research on restorative justice in the United States and engage in comparative analysis with Italian students. In addition, one GovState faculty member and a graduate student in criminal justice were invited by the Brazilian National Council (CNJ), the administrative branch of the Supreme Court of Brazil, to serve as guest speakers at their first National Brazilian Seminar on Restorative Justice.

Two other faculty in the College received a Department of Education grant award, "Making Spanish & Global Studies Accessible to All (UISFL)." The grant provided funding to develop a Language and Culture Resource Archive in the library and provided students with funding for study abroad experiences. In addition, GovState was named a Fulbright Award host site for 2024-25 and has had two faculty members awarded Fulbright awards for the 2023-24 and 2024-2025 academic years.

Within the GovState College of Business, Global Business Brigades is an international movement of university students and professionals that seek to build economic opportunities for the poor and marginalized in the developing world. Brigades work with entrepreneurs in remote and under resourced areas of countries such as Honduras, Panama, Ghana, and Nicaragua to create financial opportunities and sustainable businesses. Between July 23 and 31, 2023, 10 students participated in a Business Brigade trip to Panama. During this immersive experience, they engaged in a multifaceted mission that involved studying the business practices of entrepreneurs within an underserved community in rural Panama and offering valuable business advice. The students also dedicated their efforts to strengthening the capabilities of the community bank that plays a pivotal role in addressing the financial needs of these enterprising individuals.

Further, with funding from a subgrant from the Center for International Business Education and Research at Kelley School of Business, Indiana University, students have consulted for businesses in Brazil since the spring semester of 2021. This impactful experiential learning opportunity provides students with a unique opportunity to participate in real-life consulting and case projects for large companies in Brazil. The program provides opportunities for applied international experience and cross-functional business interactions. Along with students from a top university in Brazil, undergraduate and graduate students engage with leaders of the local business, and experienced faculty mentor from Brazil. They are prepared by a GovState faculty member.

A significant indicator of GovState's success in pursuing diversity is the character of the various groups represented in the community is composed. In Fall 2023, 66.3 percent of GovState's domestic student population came from a racial or ethnic minority (41.6 percent African American, 18.5 percent Hispanic, 3.3 percent multiracial). International students comprise 14.3 percent of the total student population. Diversity is also reflected in gender with 63 percent of our students being female.

According to the Fall 2022 Profiles of Academic Majors, 49.1 percent of all degrees conferred over a three-year period were earned by minorities and 67 percent of all degrees were earned by women. The graduation rates at GovState for African American and Hispanic students are higher than their counterparts across the nation.

University President Cheryl F. Green created the cabinet-level position of Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) in 2021. The CDO is responsible for leading the development and implementation of the University's

diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategies. [The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) has identified four primary goals to guide its work. These include support for students, faculty, and staff from underrepresented communities, inclusive excellence in the formal curriculum (and co- and extra-curricular experiences), and engagement with alumni and community partners. [The DEI Council](#) includes representatives from faculty, staff, administration, students, and alumni. The office sponsors Lunch and Learns twice a month and launched [DEI mini-grants in 2023](#). The Office completed a [campus climate survey](#) in Spring 2023 and a [faculty trend report](#) in Fall 2023. In the campus climate survey, 81% of respondents were generally or very satisfied with the campus climate (compared with 72% at other four-year public universities). Additionally, 94% of respondents (compared with 88% at other four-year public universities) agree or strongly agree that diversity improves campus interaction.

In the Fall 2023, GovState conducted its first comprehensive [“Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey”](#). Sponsored by the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusive, and Belonging, this instrument captured data on the HEDS model regarding campus stakeholders’ perceptions or experiences of aggressive or micro-aggressive conversations or biased actions generated from race and gender and harassment or discrimination that referenced gender, identity, or religious orientation. There were 404 respondents with undergraduate students and faculty and staff comprising the largest respondent groups. Broadly summarized, the results of the survey indicate that 80% of participants state they are satisfied with the campus climate. Additionally, the survey results are posted on the DEI webpage and publicly available. Action items that resulted from the Climate Survey include launch of a report on faculty trends in hiring with a focus on diversity requested by the provost and additional campus programming through the DEI Lunch and Learn series to address themes that surfaced through the report.

In conjunction with the School for Extended Learning, the Office of DEI created 10 mini-courses on a range of topics on learning and leading through diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and belonging. The Achieving Completion with Excellence program aims to provide learning equity at the postsecondary level for individuals who have experienced foster care. Other initiatives and centers support students including the Latinx Resource Center, Veterans Resource Center, First Generation Center, and Jaguar Jumps. GovState’s faculty is 37.9 percent minority, which is higher than the national average for American universities (28.5%). In 2022, 63 percent of the faculty were women, which is significantly higher than the national rate of 49.8 percent. The 22 percent of African American faculty members is three times the national average based on the College Professor Demographics and Statistics in Higher Education. In Fall 2023 GovState’s Chief Diversity Officer published a “Faculty 5-Year Trend Report” finding important insights to help attract and retain faculty and to help the GovState community understand how the University is fulfilling its mission to educate and prepare students for a global society. Of the full-time administrative and staff employees, 37 percent are Black/African American, 9 percent are Hispanic/Latinx, and 67 percent are women.

The Title IX Office ensures compliance with GovState Policy 52 on avoiding harassment and other forms of discriminatory behaviors. Board Regulation 2.A.21 created the Title IX policy, and the related office was implemented in 2021. All faculty and staff are required to take this training annually. In addition, the University provides a civility policy and employs a dedicated Labor Relations expert to address issues related to employee conduct. These trainings and the HR labor relations focus further foster a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff, and administrators regardless of their backgrounds, ideas or perspectives on equity and responsible conduct. Section Two of the GovState student handbook, entitled Student Rights and Responsibilities, includes the Civility Statement that is rooted in the University’s mission statement. In addition, the student handbook outlines five tenets that students will follow and four tenets the University will uphold.

Launched in 2022, the Social Justice Initiative began as a university presidential mandate to create a resource for the campus and the community to better understand injustice and to develop action plans, research, and campus programming to educate and transform the local community. The SJI was approved by the Illinois Board of Higher Education as an initiative on track to become a center in the next five years. The SJI’s work is funded by the University’s E&G budget and supplemented by grants from the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation to underwrite the campus’ ability to provide a pro bono legal clinic. The SJI is managed by an Executive Director who reports to the University provost. The SJI webpage makes information about the programs and services available to on-and off-campus stakeholders.

The University also supports centers with a variety of operational and support functionalities. Some of these have been described above as part of the School of Extended Learning.

SUMMARY

GovState publicly articulates its mission in its admissions documents, catalog, on the website, through on campus signage and elsewhere to remind the campus and community of its commitments to educate, enrich and improve the lives of those the University serves. The goals outlined in Strategy 2025, the college and program mission statements and core values delineate approaches to meeting the GovState mission statement. The University adheres to the mission statement in activities ranging from budget and hiring to grant writing, educational offerings including co-curricular activities, and cultural and community programming. The Social Justice Initiative, begun in 2022, expands the mission statement into community outreach through the pro bono legal clinic, for example, just as the addition of the role of the Chief Diversity Officer as a Cabinet member codifies the campus’ commitment to diversity and inclusion. The University has a transparent and understood culture of excellence driven by the mission.





Section 2: Analyze Data

Assess the equity gaps for Black, Latino, low-income, adult, rural students, students with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups, as identified in 110 ILCS 205/9.16.

IBHE CRITERIA

IBHE/ICCB will provide data on current gaps and five-year trends in enrollment, persistence, advancement, completion, and student loan repayment rates, as collected statewide.

Use IBHE/ICCB data and additional institutional data provided from Parts a and b above to identify gaps to be addressed.

Identify major barriers in policy and practices that have led to equity gaps for each group identified above.

Assess programs, efforts, curricular, or pedagogical changes that have been implemented to address the equity gaps and their outcomes. Describe any “lessons learned” that inform this plan and the practices/policies recommended.

GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

GovState’s total headcount is 4,338 with FTE enrollment at 3,057. The average age is 27.3 for undergraduate and 32.7 for graduate students. Of degree-seeking students, 59.1% are undergraduate, 35.4% graduate, and 5.4% are doctoral students; 56.8% of students identify as a racial/ethnic minority; 40% of enrolled students are defined as first generation college students and 14.3% are international students, primarily pursuing master’s degree.

According to the Illinois Board of Higher Education’s comprehensive institutional performance report, known as the Big Picture data set, 51.4% of the undergraduate students are Pell Grant recipients. In Fall 2023, 73.1% of the undergraduate students (new and continuing) are transfer students who began their higher education journey elsewhere before choosing to come to GovState.

Serving nearly 5,000 students, GovState six colleges – College of Arts and Sciences, College of Business, College of Education and Human Development, College of Health and Human Services, Honors College (established in 2024), and Graduate College (established in 2024) offer 69 degrees; 35 bachelor programs, 27 certificate, and 34 graduate programs. Our students obtain skills and credentials needed to success in the business, healthcare, liberal arts, and education. The University’s broad range of graduate programs prepares students for their next level of academic and professional achievement.

GovState’s demographic profile aligns with its mission and vision. As a regional comprehensive university, students come primarily from the Chicago metro region with 85% residing within a 50-mile radius, and 60% within a 20-mile radius. Consistent with GovState’s mission to “prepare students with the knowledge, skills and confidence to succeed in a global society,” since 2020 and with the easing of COVID-related restrictions, the institution has increased enrollments of international students to a record headcount of 620 in Fall 2023. GovState also continues to provide options for study-abroad and travel-abroad opportunities, enabling the native Illinois students to experience a wider range of cultures and gain a better understanding of the global economy.

The [2023 IBHE Big Picture Report](#) and [IPEDS](#) has been shared, discussed, and analyzed with the President's Cabinet, Academic Deans, the Equity Plan team, and other related committees to assist with identifying gaps and opportunities. A quick summary of IBHE Findings shows the diversity in ethnicity, age, gender, and socioeconomic status of GovState students:

- **Total Enrollment:** Undergraduate 2,588 (58.5%), Graduate 1,755 (39.6%), non-Degree 84(1.9%)
- **Undergraduate Enrollment Intensity:** Full-Time 1,626 (62.8%) / Part-Time 962 (37.2%)
- **Undergraduate Enrollment Type:** Dual Credit (Non-Degree) 0, First-time Undergraduate 216(8.3%), New Transfers 540(20.9%), Continuing Students 1,832 (70.8%)
- **Transfer type (New Transfers):** Illinois Community College 242 (53.4%), Other 298 (55.2%)
- **Undergraduate Gender Female** 1,637 (63.3%), Male 951 (36.7%)
- **Average Age Undergraduate:** 27.7yrs, <25yrs.- 57.6%;25+yrs -42.4%
- **Average Age Graduate:** 33.1 yrs., <25yrs-26.4%;25+yrs-73.6%
- **Veterans:** 158 (3.6%)
- **Pell Recipients:** 1,329 (51.4%)
- **MAP Recipients:** 1,448 (56.0%)
- **Urbanicity/Rurality Undergraduate:** Rural 0.9%, Urban 99.1%
- **Residency for Domestic Undergraduates:** Illinois Residents 2,493 (96.3%), Domestic Non-Illinois 53 (2.0%), International 42 (1.6%)
- Mostly female undergraduates at 62%
- Mostly adult population
- Large percentage of part-time adult population
- Most undergraduates are transfer students.
- Most transfers are from community colleges.
- Most transfers seek CIS or psychology programs.
- Most new freshmen are African American. Most transfer students are White.
- ECACE enrollment is growing.
- Most full-time freshmen come from Illinois public schools.
- Most full-time freshmen come from low funded high schools.
- Most freshmen had average GPA.
- Low rural population.
- Robust African American undergraduate population
- Latinx students transfer successfully.
- Robust enrollment of Latinx transfer students.
- Good graduation rate for low-income transfer students.
- Low-income transfers from Illinois community college do better than low-income transfers from other institutions.
- Enrolls a large percent of African American Students
- Most undergraduate student population is African American and female at 64%.
- Chart 2 shows that GovState have a largely adult undergraduate population at an average age of 28.
- A high proportion of students attending part-time, over 37%.
- Enrolls a high proportion of student parents at 15.9% / 412 undergraduates
- Significant proportion of new undergraduate transfer students at over 70%.
- Greatest proportion of new undergraduate transfer students and less than half from Illinois community colleges.
- Top three feeder community colleges are Moraine Valley, South Suburban, and Joliet Junior College. The top three majors are Business, Computer Information Science and Psychology.
- Chart 8 shows that GovState's new transfer students from community colleges are mostly White compared to new freshmen who are mostly African American.
- Most full-time freshmen are from Illinois public high schools at 77.1%.

- Significant number of freshmen that come from the least funded school districts at 82%.
- Incoming freshmen had high school GPAs above 3.5 at 16%.
- African American undergraduate enrollments and completions are large by comparison.
- Enrolls over three times the percentage of African Americans as public universities overall and the share is growing.
- Highest increase of Latinx undergraduate students.
- Transfers from IL community college did much better.

In addition to the Equity Plan team, GovState has a number of standing committees such as Retention to Graduation (R2G), D, F, W (Drop, failure, withdraw), First Year Curriculum, DEI Council, and the Curricular Analytics that meet regularly to review data, which includes the [IBHE Big Picture Report](#) to identify equity gaps and discuss student success data that impact improvement, resources, and practices to continually improve student outcomes. These meetings are conducted through an equity lens to address the following gaps of our historically marginalized students.

Equity Gaps Identified:

- Retention, persistence, and completion rates of African American undergraduate students
- Retention, and persistence, and completion rates of Latinx undergraduate students
- Migration patterns by demographics
- The D grades, F grades, and Withdrawal (DFW) rates of undergraduate students
- Retention rates of first-time freshmen students
- Retention, persistence, and completion rates of low-income undergraduate students
- Retention, persistence, and completion rates of first-generation undergraduate
- Completion rates for undergraduate students with disabilities
- Retention and completion rates for adult students' which children (student parents)
- Financial assistance for low-income students



Section 3: Access Climate

CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEY

CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEYS

IBHE CRITERIA

- Describe the institution’s methods or approaches used to assess the campus climate and culture, including the campus community’s perceptions and experiences of diversity, equity, belonging, inclusion, and other relevant factors. This must include describing the institution’s process for engagement with, at a minimum, staff, faculty, students-including those who are minorities, from marginalized and under-represented populations, low-income, rural, are individuals with disabilities, adult students, other under-represented backgrounds. The institution may also include processes to engage local perspectives of key partners providing services to minority, marginalized, and underrepresented populations. Partners may include but are not limited to education, community, policy makers, and employers. Examples of methods or approaches used may include formal campus climate surveys, online surveys, focus groups, etc. Institutions should consider accessibility to ensure inclusion of all minority, marginalized, and underrepresented populations.
- Indicate how often campus climate surveys or assessments are administered and when the most recent climate assessment was completed. If an assessment has not yet been undertaken or is underway, indicate when it will be completed, and data analyzed.
- Summarize the key findings of the campus climate assessment that will inform your Equity Plan and Practices.

GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY CAMPUS CLIMATE ASSESSMENT

Diversity emerged as an essential cornerstone of higher education in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world. Governors State University (GovState), as an institution of learning, research, and cultural exchange, is uniquely responsible for fostering an inclusive environment where students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds can thrive and contribute their unique perspectives to the collective intellectual and social tapestry.

GovState students participated in three different campus climate surveys in AY 24 – The Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey, the Campus Sexual Misconduct Climate Survey, and the College Student Inventory. These surveys help us better understand GovState’s climate and increase students’ opportunities for success.

The 2023 [Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey](#) (Campus Climate Survey) is a testament to GovState’s commitment to celebrating and promoting diversity in all its forms. It represents an earnest endeavor to evaluate our progress, acknowledge our challenges, and chart a course toward a more inclusive and equitable future for all members of our academic community.

The Campus Climate survey results also help illuminate areas requiring additional attention and new ideas. This feedback helps create a road map for leadership and every individual who takes part in GovState’s culture, not to be perfect but to ensure that we consciously and continuously improve.

Diversity encompasses an array of dimensions, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, socioeconomic status, disability, religion, and age. It extends beyond

mere representation to encompass the genuine appreciation and valuing of differences and create an environment where every individual feels respected, supported, and empowered to succeed.

CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

In this survey, participants were asked about their perception of GovState’s climate, how GovState supports diversity and equity, and their experiences with discrimination and harassment at GovState.

The Campus Climate Survey was administered during the spring of 2023 to students, faculty, staff, and administrators to develop a better understanding of the extent to which our campus climate supports diversity and equity. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The participants’ voluntary cooperation and willingness to provide information that will help us better understand GovState’s climate. We are committed to ensuring that our campus has an inclusive, engaging, and supportive environment, and the participants in this survey will help us work toward this goal.

Emails, table tents, classroom announcements, and flyers were sent to the GovState students and employees to voluntarily participate in the Campus Climate Survey.

Participants were asked many questions about their identity in this survey to develop a better sense of the diversity on our campus. All the responses were anonymous. The survey was administered by an independent organization, the [Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium \(HEDS\)](#). All personal information, including name, email address, identification number, and IP address was excluded. This data is stored in the offices of Diversity Equity and Inclusion and Institutional Research for security.

CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEY OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

In this report, the responses from students, faculty, staff, and administrators who took the survey were reviewed and compared to the responses of those same groups at other institutions. GovState’s results were compared to two different groups: 1) All 4-year public institutions and 2) all participating institutions.

The report consists of a series of worksheets in which we summarize the data from different perspectives and with varying levels of detail. The additional worksheets are in the supplemental information section of this report.

Approximately 20% of enrolled students, faculty, and staff voluntarily completed the [Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey \(Campus Climate Survey\)](#) administered during the spring term of 2023. The Campus Climate Survey results were separated into the following categories:

- 1. Campus Diversity,
- 2. Climate for Diversity Equity,
- 3. Experience with Negative Remarks,
- 4. Experience with Discrimination and Harassment,
- 5. Campus Climate,
- 6. Institutional Support, and
- 7. Disparaging Remarks,

Overall, the participants reported moderately positive general climate experiences at GovState. Below is a list of highlights based on the results from the Campus Climate Survey respondents:

- GovState shows greater diversity in ethnicity and gender than like universities.
- Half the respondents were persons of color and half were White.
- 68% identified as female.
- 21% identify with the LGBTQ+ community.
- 20% identify as First Generation.
- 80% are satisfied with the campus climate.
- 65% are satisfied with a sense of belonging.
- 12% identify with having a long-term disability.
- 75% indicate that they are comfortable with sharing views on diversity and equity.
- 64% agree or strongly agree that the campus is free from tensions.
- 94% agree or strongly agree that diversity improves campus interaction.
- 17% indicate having experienced discrimination or harassment.
- The gender identity group identified as experiencing the most discrimination/harassment.
- Of the four groups surveyed, students feel the greatest satisfaction of the campus climate while faculty feel the least satisfaction.
- The overall satisfaction with the campus climate and feeling a sense of belonging was much higher at GovState compared to like universities.

FOCUS GROUPS

We invited all GovState members and external stakeholders, to join us on this journey as we explore the current state of our climate, celebrate our successes, and work together to address the challenges that lie ahead.

During the fall 2023, we conducted focus groups to gather feedback about the Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey results that would supplement areas of concerns raised by the respondents.

The four hybrid focus groups were held during the day and evening to increase participation. The four focus groups were separated by students, staff, faculty, and administrators. The results were also shared during the President Cabinet meeting, Faculty Senate, Student Senate, and Civil Service Senate meetings to collect additional feedback.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following combined recommendations came out of the focus groups and supplemental meetings and were shared with the President’s cabinet, DEI Council and made accessible on the [DEI webpage](#).

Curriculum and Instruction:

- Change the teaching evaluation to allow for more thoughtful comments.
- Incorporate questions related to belonging and culturally relevant teaching.
- Encourage dialogue and courageous conversations inside the classroom.
- Add DEIAB as a course objective in every course.
- Remove curricular barriers for students.

Social Emotional:

- More things for students to do on campus.
- More opportunities to listen.
- Create safe spaces for open dialogue.
- Create affinity groups for staff.
- Create a culture to practice self-care.
- Provide more SEL resources and professional development.
- Provide more resources for employees to receive mental health care.
- More communication with faculty about low satisfaction.

Professional Growth Opportunities:

- Create annual or quarterly development sessions for frontline live staff who provide costumer services.
- Continue doing lunch and learn meaningful topics.
- Professional Development on equity related topics.
- Book discussion on culturally related topics.
- Require all employees to take sensitivity training.
- Provide training to help understand the students we serve.
- Provide focus group and training with marginalized groups to better understand them.
- More DEI professional development.
- More training for advisors about how to help students succeed.
- Continue to have professional development about the LGBT+ community.

CAMPUS SEXUAL MISCONDUCT CLIMATE SURVEY

Illinois law (110 ILCS 155/35) requires the University to conduct the Sexual Misconduct Campus Climate Survey annually. According to the mandate, this survey is an important tool to understand and address sexual harassment and sexual misconduct on campus.

An email was sent in April 2024 to actively enrolled students with the request and instructions to complete the [Sexual Misconduct Campus Climate Survey](#). Once the data is compiled, a diverse taskforce of employees and students will review, analyze, share, and collect feedback on recommendations to eliminate sexual misconduct on campus.

COLLEGE STUDENT INVENTORY

GovState implemented the [College Student Inventory \(CSI\)](#) assessment during the spring 2024 term designed by a higher education enrollment management firm, Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL) an to identify at-risk students in the incoming class using noncognitive indicators of college student success. The results from the [CSI survey](#), allowed us to enable resources such as retention specialist, first generation specialist, or the Latinx Resource center to intervene early. Intervention strategies are built into the [Retention to Graduation \(R2G\) Plan 2024](#) to reduce barriers and provide greater access to academic support.



Section 4: Equity Plan and Practices

Based on the data analysis, campus climate assessment, evaluation of any current programs/services, outline an integrated, holistic plan of research- or practice-informed policies, services, strategies, and practices to be implemented (or continued) to close equity gaps for minority, low-income, rural, adult, individuals with disabilities, or other marginalized, underrepresented groups. Include strategies to close gaps in enrollment, persistence, advancement, completion, and student loan repayment rates. Describe the connection between the analysis, the research, and the strategy chosen.

IBHE CRITERIA

- Outline curricular or pedagogical changes, academic support, student support (including basic needs), faculty/staff diversity efforts, financial assistance (and increasing awareness of financial assistance available), policy, or other changes to be implemented.
- Include a timeline for implementation with appropriate milestones.
- Identify approaches to assess near-term and long-term outcomes of the strategies. Include data and metrics that will be collected and reviewed.
- Describe the institution’s approach to the development of the equity plan, including efforts taken to ensure all staff including but not limited to, faculty, student, executive leadership, institutional committees, staff, students, administrative personnel, and transfer coordinators, participated in the design of this plan and how feedback and buy-in at all levels occurred.
- Describe the relationship of this equity plan to other institutional plans (e.g., institution strategic plan, enrollment management plans, other DEIA plans).
- Describe the institution’s plans to solicit ongoing feedback and how information will be shared with staff, students, and faculty as well as the community.

GovState Response

GovState provides a rigorous curriculum appropriate to the degree field and students it serves. Students, through their programs, are encouraged to collect, analyze, and communicate existing information while having the opportunity to create new knowledge through curricular and co-curricular experiences. Faculty and staff support student success and GovState maintains resources that support student learning and effective teaching.

We aim to prioritize student retention and implement targeted equity minded interventions in an effort to close gaps in enrollment, retention, completion, and student loan repayment rates for underrepresented groups, including students of color, low-income students, working adult students, rural students, and individuals with disabilities so that individuals, families, and communities throughout the state can thrive.

Institutional and national data reflect that underrepresented student such as students of color, low-income, and first generation may struggle to navigate college resources and opportunities. We understand and accept our responsibility to ensure that student resources are integrated into pedagogical, academic support and overall student support to give our students the most access, a sense of belonging, and the best opportunity towards success.

Pedagogical Support

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

After a series of exploratory discussions, GovState, through the Office of the Provost and the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs and Student Engagement joined the IDEAA Exchange project with the Partnership for College Completion (PCC) at the invitation of the PCC leadership. The focus of the IDEAA exchange is to improve student performance in math and writing at the developmental learning level. While Governors State University does not offer remedial courses, the departments of Mathematics and of English offer supplemental instruction pedagogical models to increase students’ ability to achieve success in first year coursework. The IDEAA project will also allow GovState to partner with Almy Education, through a PCC contract, to examine the effectiveness of the supplemental

instruction in the general education required math courses. The study commenced in the spring 2024 and will close in the summer 2025. The purpose of the campus’ involvement is to better understand barriers to student success in the math courses and to address any placement, DFW, and time to degree issues associated with the course. For the English course, at this time, no similar PCC-sponsored consulting is offered and the first-year writing program will work with the first-year seminar and the ENG program to address persistence and completion issues in the first year writing class. This work will be conducted on the same time as the math course examinations.

In April 2022, GovState joined the [Gardner Institute’s](#) Curricular Analytics Community (CAC), which is designed to involve faculty and staff in a process that leverages improvement through curricular analytics methodologies to identify opportunities for equitable curriculum redesign.

The provost initiated a pilot [curricular analytics project](#) facilitated by the chief diversity officer and a team of faculty and senior administrators to critically examine the completion rates in professional licensure programs for accounting, social work, early childhood education, and nursing.

The curricular complexities have been correlated with low retention rates, extended time to graduation, and increased credit accumulation for students enrolled in graduate and undergraduate licensure programs in early childhood education, social work, school counseling, accounting, and nursing.

Through examination of data on time to degree, course repeats, and other barriers to success, our CAC team of faculty, staff, and administrators, identified gaps, delays and blocking factors within each program. The results are being used to examine prerequisites, learning supporting, and licensure testing supports to improve student performance within these fields. The long-term goal is to systematically work through a similar review process with faculty across all majors to dynamically adjust the curriculum based on these findings and test the impact on persistence to graduation.

The colleges within the university embrace and practice equity-minded practices to ensure meet the needs of the students by employing initiatives and strategies to close gaps in enrollment, retention, completion, and student loan repayment rates for underrepresented groups, including students of color, low-income students, working adult students, rural students, and individuals with disabilities. Some activities include:

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE

- The LEAP summer bridge program, which assists in the transition to college providing high touch support for students earning 7 credits as they develop the knowledge, confidence, and skills to succeed in college.
- Creating the Stats co-requisite for added support, updating our placement process for all Math gateway courses to better meet students where they are with math skills.
- Implemented a social belonging activity in the First Year Seminar course to enhance students’ sense of belonging and confidence in their ability to be successful.
- Offering programs of study fully online (Anthropology and Sociology; Criminal Justice; Interdisciplinary Studies) and starting in F24, offering an accelerated schedule for ideal for working adult students (Interdisciplinary Studies).
- Providing a common intellectual experience during the first semester (integrating the Theatre and Perfor-

mance Studies production into FYS course). In process of developing common intellectual experiences for the second and third semesters. These CIE's support community building and integrative learning across distinct classes.

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

- Added course fees to several core undergraduate business courses, resulting in lower cost of instructional materials for students and provided access to materials by day 1 of class.
- COB programs offered 705.4 total content hours on global awareness and cross-cultural competence.
 - Experiential Learning
 - Virtual Consulting with Brazil
 - Business Brigade to Panama
 - 4 consulting projects in Capstone
 - Exchange program with Rhodes University in S. Africa
- Streamlined internship application/approval process.
- Career Ready Module in ACCT 3151 & BUS 3200
- Launched a new Jaguar Journey Mentorship Program
- 20 accounting students elected to participate in the Mary T. Washington Wylie Scholarship program organized by the IL CPA Society
- Offering Tutoring for Business Statistics Students which led to a 6% DFW reduction in Fall 2023 compared to Fall 2022
- Added tutoring in certain areas such as accounting where there were gaps with the tutoring center
- Fifth annual COB Internship and Jobs Fair: September 2023
 - 22 employers
 - 90 students
- COB Societal Impact Plan
 - We aim to leverage our educational programs, scholarship, and strong community partnerships to reduce economic, employment, and social disparities in the region.
 - We focus on serving a traditionally underrepresented and diverse student body, predominantly from the Chicago metropolitan area, alongside individuals and organizations within the region.
 - We achieve this by cultivating a diverse and inclusive educational environment. Additionally, we address intersectional inequalities by recognizing the multifaceted nature of economic, employment, and social disparities. Through research and creative activities, we explore solutions that address these issues at their root.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

- Provided collective equity workshop.
- Offered mini grants to faculty to design courses that utilize open access educational resources to reduce cost of courses.
- Created online incumbent workforce program (undergraduate and graduate) that allow for online courses and work-embedded observations and student teaching.
- Creating modularized courses in Early Childhood so people can take part of a course instead of “all-or-nothing” credit for courses.
- Providing more opportunities for Credit for Prior Learning Experiences
- Selected two faculty members to facilitate equity-minded workshops for faculty.
- Implemented the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading standards into the curriculum for 18 educa-

tor preparation programs.

- Implemented a Minority Teacher Plan and a “Paraprofessional to Teacher” initiative to increase the number of minority teacher candidates.
- Host the Annual Chicago Southland Educator Consortium Conference, designed to recruit and retain professional educators.

COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

- Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity (COTAD). COTAD is an Occupational Therapy student led group whose efforts focus on educating and promoting the value of diversity in Occupational Therapy.
- New initiative: Supporting Inclusion and Equity in the Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (SIERRA) of students of color. SIERRA is an initiative designed to increase the number of diverse students successfully completing the graduate program in the Department of Communication Disorders at Governors State University. More than that, SIERRA aims to improve the academic, social-emotional, and professional development experiences of our students of color as they progress through the graduate program (see attached flyer).
- Southland Stroke Prevention and Awareness Program funded through a congressionally awarded \$1 million Illinois Department of Public Health grant. Developed community education campaign aimed at the Chicago Southland in order to reduce health disparities.
- All of Us Research Program, funded through a 5-year, \$750,000, NIH sub-award from the University of Chicago. Program addresses disparities in health outcomes for communities that are underrepresented in medical research.
- Intellectual Life Grant for SP24 - “Deaf and Hard of Hearing: Interdisciplinary Education on Patient-Centric Care”.
- October’s EPIC Health Fair promoted cancer awareness and featured guest panelist Alfred Lacks-Carter, Jr., grandson of Henrietta Lacks.
- Fostering Educational and Vocational Success for Young Adults with Disabilities Conference.

STUDENT ADVISING

- Assign advisors to a full program so that students and advisors can foster relationships that are inclusive. (I will align this with the UPI agreement as much as I can). This will create rapport and build advisor/student relationships.
- As an institution we need to engage more in mentorship. Have white faculty paired with students of color and vice versa.
- Apply equitable hiring practices diversifying the demographics of advising.
- Encourage students to take advantage of the resources offered at GovState.
- Rural students: Learn the strengths/weaknesses and challenges of college students from rural communities.
- Share best practices for underrepresented, Rural student populations, students with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ students.
- Provide individualize support and guidance to help resolve some of the challenges that this population of students’ face.
- Resources Provided:
 - Academic advising- Provide targeted support. Educating staff on this type of student along with the parents we may encounter.
 - Veteran Liaison: Advisor assigned for this population of students.
 - Athletic Liaison: Advisor assigned for this population of students.
 - Career Services: refer students to career services 30 days after their first advising appoint-

ment to identify career options sooner. There is a gap in understanding what a job and a career is.

- TRIO Program work the TRIO program with assisting the underrepresented students of color. The Department of Education has outline specific guidelines for assisting the underrepresented students of color. One being, helping students understand the language of college. TRIO programs offer exclusive advising to encourage a sense of belonging. TRIO programs do outreach, host programming, provide one on one guidance which creates a great impact on lifelong learning.
 - Professional Development for all advisors through institutional departments and NACADA.
- Highlight of plans for underrepresented students
 - Freshman students should only have face to face general education courses. (1000 level courses)
 - Sophomore students can be socialized in the online learning environment with hybrid courses (2000 level courses)
 - Equitable grading designs to enhance academic success. (students of color feel that they are graded differently than non-black)
 - Build continuous student feedback to provide pathways for communication.
 - Have a resource website with information for faculty looking to support the first-generation students and learn more about this population. Current website offers student resources not staff.
 - Implement the buddy system. There should be a strong campaign for the effectiveness of a college buddy and degree completion. (It worked for me)

STUDENT SUPPORT

GovState provides an umbrella of services to support learning and growth. GovState offers on-sight and virtual counseling, advising, peer tutoring, and sponsorship for co-curricular activities. GovState also has a wide range of co-curricular programs and student support services designed specifically to meet the academic and social needs of our diverse student population. Programs and services include but are not limited to:

- Student Advising
- Academic Resource Center
- Center for Student Engagement and Intercultural Programs
- Civic Engagement
- Counseling and Wellness Center
- Dean of Students
- Disability Services
- English Language Learning Center
- Family Development Center – childcare services
- First Generation Center
- Food Pantry
- Latinx Resource Center
- Library
- Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships
- Social Justice Initiative
- Testing Center
- Writing Center

The [Center for Student Engagement and Intercultural Programs](#) (CSEIP) is predicated on creating programs and services that are holistic and provide integrated learning opportunities for student through

high-impact practices. The CSEIP provides support for affinity clubs and organizations, Greek life, special events, workshops, and thematic programs that recognize the ethnic and cultural diversity of the campus as a community strength.

The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) offers regular cultural knowledge programs as evidenced in the [DEI annual calendar](#) and on the [DEI webpage](#). Other DEI initiatives include the [Achieving Completion with Excellence \(ACE\)](#) program which is designed for college students who experienced foster care to receive additional social emotional and academic support. The Office of DEI also support faculty/student research collaborations through mini grants. DEI mini grants are available to all faculty and student organizations. Aligned to GovState's mission, \$25,000 is allocated annually to projects that demonstrate inclusiveness and diversity to encourage acceptance of wide-ranging perspectives among students, faculty, and members of the broader community and our institutional commitment to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion across the GovState community.

GovState has a new [Latinx Resource Center](#) and [First Generation Center](#), that was seeded with GEERS funds. The selection of population for the Trio grant was purposeful and aligned with the average age of our undergraduate students at 27. The University host a food pantry for food insecure students through the Office of Student Affairs and provides information on housing rights through the Social Justice Initiative.

GovState [Counseling & Wellness Center \(CWC\)](#), in partnership with Advocate Health Care, provides comprehensive medical, mental health, and case management services. The CWC's mission is to help improve GSU students' mental health, academic experiences, and overall well-being through facilitating personal, emotional, and social growth so that they can achieve their goals and aspirations. In order to aid and empower students to address their personal challenges, CWC programs include both individual and group counseling, couples counseling, and mental health crisis services—with a focus on wellness and prevention, services also include consultation, outreach, training, and educational services to students. To this end, the CWC also collaborates with other departments such as academic resources, disability services, career services, and other student service departments. The [CWC offers a variety of services](#) to all GovState students at no additional cost. Services and programs include Living Well at GSU, individual counseling, group counseling, couples counseling, crisis services, case management, consultation and GSU4U, which connects students facing personal difficulties, such as food and housing insecurity, to campus and community resources.

The [Academic Resource Center \(ARC\)](#) provides all students with a comprehensive range of academic support services. In addition, the Writing Center provides students multiple options for assistance. To give students additional supports, GovState offers two programs called [Back on Track and the Pathways](#) to Academic Recovery program. The Back on Track program is designed to help GovState students, who are readmitted after academic suspension, get back on track and off academic probation. The Pathways to Academic Recovery program is designed to support underprepared first-year students placed on academic probation after their first semester at GovState. The [Pathways to Academic Recovery](#) workshops series is a 15-week pass/fail course that allows students to explore their individual learning style personal strengths and receive academic support. The goal of both programs is to support students in achieving academic and personal goals.

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE RETENTION, PERSISTENCE, AND COMPLETION

Multiple committees such as the Graduate Completion, DFW, First Year Experience, Student Enrollment Management, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council, and the Retention to Graduation(R2G) engage specifically

designed to evaluate and make recommendations on how serve the students better to ensure their success. The R2G Committee, which consists of students, faculty, and staff from various colleges and departments, meets regularly and is developing the R2G Retention Plan for AY25. This proposed plan specifically targets strategies to drive the success of underrepresented groups of students.

The R2G Committee examined the student success data and equity gaps to draft of the AY25 [R2G Plan](#). The plan incorporates the work of all the equity-minded committees and will become the blue-print for supporting underrepresented groups of students. The R2G Committee will meet throughout the summer to finalize the plan, which will be shared and implemented in the fall of 2024. The R2G Plan goals addresses the following areas:

- Increase fall-to-fall retention rate of first-year, full-time students.
- Increase fall-to-fall retention rate of second-year, students to the junior year.
- Strategize and develop campus-wide retention plan to decrease number of D, F, W, and C-grades among GENST courses.
- Assessing Stop-Out & Interventions, including distribution of Exit Surveys.
- Provide financial awareness to enhance student support and persistence.
- Increase utilization of GSU STAR as a retention tool
- Transfer Population
- First Generation Population
- Graduate Population
- Close Equity Gaps for Students of Color
- Close Equity Gaps for Low-income students (Pell eligible)
- Close Equity Gaps for Student Parents
- Close Equity Gaps for Students with Disabilities

EQUITY PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Our approach to developing the Equity Plan starts with the Illinois Equity in Attainment Initiative (ILEA) Core Team, which is familiar with the literature, research, and equity plan submitted to Partnership for College Completion. The ILEA Core Team is a diverse team representative of different departments, roles, years of experience, ethnicities, backgrounds, and perspectives. The Equity Plan Team is comprised of students and employees. The table below list the students, staff, faculty, and administrators directly involved in the planning. Additionally, students and employees throughout the campus are invited to participate in feedback to the IBHE Equity Plan Team to gain a broader and deeper perspective.

EQUITY PLAN TEAM

Area	Name	Role	GovState-PCC/ILEA Equity Team	GovState-IBHE Equity Plan Team
President				
	Cheryl Green	President	✓	✓
	Janelle Crowley	Chief of Staff	✓	✓
	Joi Patterson	Chief Diversity Officer	✓	✓
Academic Affairs				
	Beverly Schneller	Provost	✓	✓
	Robert Stanley	Executive Director, Institutional Research	✓	✓
	Timothy Harrington	Associate Provost	✓	✓
	Christopher Dignam	Assistant Faculty	✓	✓
	Matthew Cooney	Associate Faculty	✓	✓
	Cheun-Yeong Lee	Assistant Faculty	✓	✓
	Cari Didion	Library Dept Chair	✓	✓
	Pam Penn	Student Advisor		✓
Enrollment Management				
	Paul McGuinness	VP Student Affair & Enrollment	✓	✓
	Francisco Serna	Program Specialist		✓
Student Affairs				
	Collice King	Admissions Associate		✓
	Mushtaq Choudhary	AVP Student Affairs / Dean		✓
	Amy Comparon	Executive Director, Student Resource Center		✓
	Montgomery Proffit	Coordinator Of Student Clubs And Organizations		✓
Students				
	Jalyn Woodard	Undergraduate Student		✓
	Jonathan Cooper	Undergraduate Student		✓
	Inala Bruce-Rose	Undergraduate Student		✓
	Allison Batts	Undergraduate Student		✓

The Equity Plan Team met each week according to the schedule identified in the following tables to review and discuss each aspect of the plan. As a matter of equity, students who volunteered to participate on the Equity Plan Team were subsequently paid for their time and dedication.

TIMELINES AND MEETING DATES

Team	Primary Responsibility	Meeting Dates
IBHE Equity Plan Team	The Equity Team consist of the original ILEA Team members, students, staff, and faculty, and executive leaders, and administrative personnel. The Equity Team is responsible for meeting regularly, reading prepared materials in advance, researching, providing content, interpreting, sharing, writing, and reviewing.	February 1 – April 14 Weekly 1.5 hr. full meetings Dates and Times TBD by Team Letter of Invitation from the President Blackboard Shell
Executive Leadership Team	The Executive Leadership Team aka President’s Cabinet members are responsible for review, additions, edits, and feedback.	April 15 – April 30 2 meetings plus asynchronous feedback.
President	The President is responsible for final review and feedback.	May 1 – May 15
MarCom	MarCom is responsible for designing a cover page and publication of the document to be submitted to IBHE before May 31, 2024.	May 15 – May 29th Design created in advance

IBHE EQUITY PLAN TEAM MEETINGS

Date and Time			Topic	Pre-Work	Data or Content Needed
Week	Date	Time			
1	W: 2/7	9:00	Meeting Protocol Overview of Assignment	Review IBHE charge and Thriving Illinois, and IBHE DEI site.	IBHE Documents Shared Folder
2	W: 2/14	3:00	Team Collaboration Knowledge Sharing	Understanding the Opportunities Read IBHE Reports	IBHE Reports GovState Big Picture
3	W: 2/21	9:00	Part 1: Introductions	Read Other Reports TBD	Other Reports
4	W: 2/28	3:00	Part 2: Analyze Data	Review dashboards, data, demographics	Reports by demographics, high needs, and student parents for admission, persistence, completion.
5	W: 3/6	9:00	Part 2: Analyze Data	Interpret dashboards, data, demographics	Reports by demographics, high needs, and student parents for admission, persistence, completion.
6	W: 3/20	3:00	Part 3: Assess Climate	Review, Interpret Campus Climate report and recommendations	Campus Climate report and recommendation
7	W: 3/27	9:00	Part 4: Equity Plan & Practices	Consider best practices for an improvement plan. Describe the connection between the analysis, the research, and the strategy chosen.	Draft of plan
8	W: 4/3	3:00	Part 4: Equity Plan & Practices	Consider measurable outcomes to the actions	Draft of plans with objectives and activities
9	W: 4/10	9:00	Review and Assessment	Complete criteria for each section	Criteria
10	W: 4/17	3:00	Final Team Feedback	Review Draft	Draft

EQUITY PLAN ALIGNMENT

In Fiscal Year 2023, GovState made significant progress in advancing academic excellence across the university. We launched two new administrative units - the Honors College and the College of Graduate Studies in June 2023. The Social Justice Initiative was also established to serve communities in south suburban Chicago by hosting events, educational activities, and most recently, a pro-bono legal assistance clinic. Our focus continues to prioritize Latinx and graduate student enrollment, revenue diversification, equity, and inclusion, and enhanced local, regional, national, and international visibility for the university.

[GovState’s Strategic Plan](#) focuses on eliminating disparities among African American, Latinx, and Pell-eligible students while emphasizing adult learners, first-generation students, men of color, students with disabilities, and veterans and military-connected students.

GovState’s student performance tracking data reveals that gaps continue to persist in enrollment, retention, and graduation rates for African American students compared to their White peers. However, Latinx students outperform other ethnic/racial student groups and generally achieve greater persistence toward degree completion.

Low-income students comprise half of GovState undergraduates, but the proportion has decreased from 60% in the past ten years. A small advancement gap remains with recent declines for low-income students and low-income freshmen. Low-income transfers at GovState have higher rates of retention and advancement than their non-low-income peers, but lower than statewide rates. Retention rates for Pell-eligible students over the past five years indicate the need to analyze and address compounding variables of students’ socioeconomic status(es).

In developing our strategies for 2024/25, the GovState equity team examined our current strategy, the [2023 GovState Annual Report](#), the [2023 IBHE Equity Report](#), and the [Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey Report](#). GovState continues with the major strategies to increase access, address equity, and close the achievement gaps.

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

GovState has supported numerous positions, programs, initiatives, activities, and policies within the past three years to continuously eliminate disparities in degree completion rates between African American and White students, between Latinx and White students, and between low-income students (as identified by Pell data) and non-Pell eligible students. Some of these equity-minded actions include but are not limited to the following activities:

Events	Initiatives	Plans	Policies	Inaugural Positions	Resources
Equity Actions		Notes			
Events					
Center for Performing Arts		Multicultural community events and partnerships with local schools			
Chicago Southland Educator Consortium Conference		Conference with over 30 Title I school partners to focus on attracting diverse teachers.			
Cultural Events and Activities		Cultural Event and Activities Calendar designed to provide knowledge and a sense of belonging.			
DEI Lunch and Learn		Bi-monthly Lunch and Learn series.			
GSU Affirmative Action Webinar		Statewide invitation Recording			
Safe Zone Training		Training for faculty in staff to better serve the LGBTQ students.			
Initiatives					
Accelerated Degree Program		Accelerated degree completion for those students with 85-90 credits who had stopped out			
Achieving Completion with Excellence		Foster Youth Transition Program			
Curricular Analytics Community with the Gardner Institute		GovState CAC Team and Pilot Project Remove barriers from persistence and completion			
DEI Mini-Grants		5 -5K mini grants per year to collaborations of faculty, staff, and students designed to create pathways, eliminate barriers, and promote inclusion.			
DEI Micro-Credentials		10 DEI mini online courses offered free to employees			
Diversity Culture Climate Survey Equity		Release date on Monday, February 13, 2023, 4 groups: students, faculty, staff, administration. Designed by The Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS).			
Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity - Early Childhood Incumbent Workforce		Program designed to recruit, retain, and complete early childhood teachers to earn a degree and licensure. Program includes scholarship, multiple delivery pathways, partners, and pathways to completion.			
Emerging HSI status		19.6% Hispanic			
Emerging PBI Status		40% requirement will be met with the next application.			
Hall of Flags		Installed over fifty-five flags representing the countries of student and employees.			
ILEA Equity Partnership		Team of administrators, faculty, staff			
Math Specialist Program		Partnership with Title I schools to provide scholarships via grant and program to add math specialist to professional educator licensure.			
Men of Color initiative		Partnership with Chicago Public Schools 100 Black men minority recruitment initiative.			
Minority student recruitment campaign		Minority recruitment is embedded into the Student Enrollment Management and Admissions.			
MSI Status for STEM		Federally designated in 2023			
Named among the Best for Miliary Veterans		Top Veteran Friendly schools			
5 – 5K annual DEI Mini-Grant to student, faculty, and staff collaborations.		A study of minority-owned enterprises in the Chicagoland region and Illinois state Building a Culture of Accessibility and Inclusion in Teaching & Learning Advancing Equity Minded Leadership Chicago Southland Film Festival The Southland History Collective: Engaging Local Histories for Diverse, Inclusive, and Equitable Civic Action			
HR diversity recruitment plan		Expanded HR recruitment to retain more employees underrepresented groups and abilities.			

Para-to-Teacher Initiative	Partnership with local schools and early childhood community-based organizations. Cohort hybrid programs amenable to working non credential educators, to receive degrees and licensure.
Pipeline to Teaching Consortium	Partnership with over 30 local Title I schools via MOU to increase diverse licensed teachers.
Social Justice Institute	Social Justice Initiative Ground Breaking October 2023.
Social Justice Pro Bono Legal Clinic	Free legal advice to students and local community.
Summer Bridge	
Transfer Boost – EAB – ILEA	
TRIO Program	
Plans	
College Student Inventory	Designed to identify students at risk and financial literacy initiative.
Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards	Professional development and implementation of CRTL standards in all 18 licensure programs.
DEI Strategic Plan	DEI Strategic Goals and Mission Statement .
Diversity Teacher Pipeline Plan	GSU Diversity Pipeline Draft to increase diverse teachers.
Emergency funds for students	Foundation funds issued to students in need.
Faculty Trend Report through an Equity Lens	Recommendation Taskforce to address and create outcomes.
Faculty equity and social justice scholarship	Research grants and publications.
ILEA Equity Plan	2020 Equity Plan
Retention Plan	New retention plan based on best practices from Hanover Research (to include student of risk and freshman experience model).
Policies	
Adult Learner Policy changes	Expanded the enrollment policy to allow career-changers with zero credit to enroll as evening part-time students
Bilingual website	Designed to provide access to limited English-speaking families.
Inaugural Positions	
ADA Compliance Committee	President’s Advisory Committee for Ability and Access ADA training for faculty and staff.
Bilingual recruiter and advisors	Designed to provide additional support for limited English speaking students and families.
Chief Diversity Officer	Inaugural installation of a CDO. See DEI Website
Compliance Officer position	Creation and retention of a compliance officer for Title IX, tip hotline, reporting, and more
Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey	Focus Groups recommendations and plan to address recommendations.
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council	Inaugural installation of 25 diverse members of employees, students, and community members
ECACE Board Participation	CDO serves on Advisory Board
Hispanic Recruitment Committee	Diverse committee to include, faculty, staff, and administrators with a goal to attract and recruit more Latinx students.
Latinx Director	Latinx Director to provide additional support to the Latinx and DACA students.
Retention Taskforce	Diverse team of faculty, staff, and administrators to monitor and recommend retention solutions.
Social Justice Director	Inaugural installation of Social Justice Director

Resources	
ADA compliance	Closed caption implementation to provide additional access. ADA training certificate. Updates and training in marketing and communication.
Advance Illinois Minority Teacher Scholarship	Monthly participation and ongoing advocacy to increase minority teacher scholarships
Childcare Access	Childcare services for qualified students.
Bilingual Open House	Open to family members.
Cultural student organizations	Association of Latin American Students, Black Student Union, Chinese Student Association, International Business Club, LGBTQ+, Muslim Student Association.
Digital Equity	Provide wi-fi to students in need
Early Childhood Initiative and Scholarships	Partnership with community colleges and early childhood community-based organizations
English Language Learning Center	
First Gen Center	Support first generation students.
GSU4U	Connects students facing personal difficulties, such as food and housing insecurity, to campus and community resources.
GEERS and HEERF funds	Bridge students social and economic needs.
Hyperflex Classroom	More flexible opportunities and ADA capabilities.
ISBE Content Licensure Test preparation	Workshops, tutors, and resources to Increase the state content test results for pre-service educators.
Laptop Loan Program	Provide laptops to students in need
Latinx Resource Center	Open to students in November 2023
LivingWell@GSU	Provides 24/7/365 counseling/support services. It is available anytime, anywhere, including off campus.
Online and hybrid courses	More flexible opportunities for students.
Peer Mentoring Program	Designed to assist with student retention and success.
Prior Learning Assessment	Update system and provide more access
Retention Coaches (4)	Designed to assist with student retention and reduce stop outs.
Summer Bridge / Jaguar Leap	Support to help students transition from high school or other campuses.
SEEDS GSU Employee Professional Development	A learning environment where highly qualified and diversified faculty and staff are hired and retained through free courses / credentials.
Starfish platform	Databased designed to track student progress and outreach.
TRIO Educational Opportunity Center	Academic support for adult learners and African American students.
Website with available resources	One-stop site for students to access resources.
Safe-Zone Training	Designed to increase knowledge, awareness, and support for the LGBTQ+ community. Safe-Zone badges provided.
Supplemental instruction in writing and math for lower division student	Programs and services for international students to improve English language skills



Section 5: DEI Procurement Landscape

BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

This amendment to the Equity Plan Framework serves to add language pertaining to the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). The amendment adds to the framework the collection of information from universities and community colleges to address BEP procurement activities that support, promote, and encourage the economic development of minorities, women, and persons with disabilities participating in procurement as prime vendors and subcontractors. The BEP goal for the state is 30%, and the intent of this amendment is to gather information from universities and colleges to help meet this goal. For more information go to: Business Enterprise for Minorities, Women, and Persons with Disabilities Act [30 ILCS 575]. For additional context you can access the most recent BEP report for FY2023.

IBHE CRITERIA

- Offers to wide range of industry specializations to BEP firms.
- Visit and connect with PTAC and SBDC in your area for additional support.
- Use tools to enhance stakeholder operations.
- Develop strategies to cultivate BEP support.

GOVSTATE RESPONSE

GovState is committed to fostering an inclusive, equitable, and competitive business environment that will support underrepresented business through the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) for business owned by minorities, women, veterans, and persons with disabilities. In alignment with the State, GovState has a goal to spend at least 30% of its State appropriated dollars with certified BEP vendors.

GovState utilizes the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) principles of equity-minded spending to develop strategies that cultivate BEP support. The five principles include a sense of responsibility, race consciousness, awareness of systemic national inequities, action to eliminate disparities, and reliance on evidence.

GovState, with a proven track record of commitment to utilizing diverse vendors, achieved a commendable 70% BEP spend in FY22. However, we acknowledge the challenges faced by minority vendors that hinder us from meeting goals. Despite these obstacles, GovState has developed a robust plan aligned with the AACU principles. This plan is designed to seize these opportunities and to ensure that we not only meet but exceed our goals through our BEP strategic plan. Some of the strategies from the plan include:

- **SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY** – retain a new full-time position of a Procurement Specialist. The Procurement Specialist’s primary role is to promote supplier diversity, attend and facilitate diversity vendor events, and ensure we meet our BEP goal. The Procurement Specialist will also work with the Colleges and Departments to ensure that proposals and quotes includes underrepresented vendor groups.
- **RACE CONSCIOUSNESS** – utilize supplier diversity tools and reporting software, such as one created by our College of Business through the use of the DEI mini grant. This software will assist us in identifying and verifying certified minority vendors. In addition, we will utilize tools and services provided through the BEP program.
- **AWARENESS**- we are proactively creating awareness within the University to ensure all programs and departments adopt the principles of diversifying our vendors. We are also reaching out to small minority-owned businesses, educating them about the procurement criteria and certification process through GovState hosted annual vendor supply diversity fairs. We will continue to participate at other public universities/organizations minority events.
- **ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE INEQUITIES** – participate in memberships and networking with minority and community advocacy programs such as the Illinois Business Enterprise Program, Southland Black Chamber Commerce, IPHEC Illinois Public Higher Education Commission, Commission of Equity and Inclusion, Black Contractors, Owners, and Executives, and other state and local organization. Increase accessibility to vendors by providing user-friendly information on the GovState website.
- **RELIANCE ON EVIDENCE** – we are committed to a transparent and accountable process. We are developing a diverse institutional committee responsible for monitoring the plan and progress, providing feedback, and making recommendations for continuous improvement. This committee will provide a detailed report to the GovState Planning and Budget Advisory Council (PBAC) on a biannual basis, ensuring a thorough and comprehensive review of our efforts to increase BEP spending.

ILLINOIS EQUITY PLAN FRAMEWORK - AMENDMENT

Community College / University:	Governors State University
Procurement (BEP) Contact:	Ms. Lannie Brown-Simon
Email:	obrown-simon@govst.edu
Telephone:	708/235-7426

1. Attach copies of your two most recent BEP Compliance Plans and Annual Expenditure Reports.

[GovState BEP FY22 GSU 616 Spend](#)

[GovState 616 FY 23 BEP Annual Report](#)

2. Does your institution do business with firms owned by minorities, women, and persons with disabilities that are not BEP certified? What steps has your institution taken to help get these vendors certified? What impact would certification of these vendors have on meeting your BEP goal?

GovState is committed to fostering an inclusive, equitable, and competitive business environment that will support underrepresented business through the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) for business owned by minorities, women, veterans, and persons with disabilities. While we strive to use vendors who are BEP certified, we do conduct business with those who are not BEP certified. We encourage and provide resources for our non-BEP vendors on how to become certified.

3. Provide a comprehensive description of outreach, training, technical support, and other efforts your institution has instituted or plans to institute to meet the 30% BEP goal. This description should include, at a minimum, a summary of actions, a timeline, and expected outcomes.

Goal	Strategy	Timeline
Retain full-time Procurement Specialist/Diverse Buyer	Post job on GovState employment opportunity site. Advertise through list-serve	Summer 2024
Increase the awareness of BEP compliance with prospective vendors	Host diverse vendor events. Increase our awareness through related professional development opportunities and capacity building initiatives.	Fall 2024
Increase the number of firms owned by minorities, women, and persons with disabilities to become BEP certified and add to GSU vendor database	Host and attend diverse vendor certification events. Partner with other public universities on vendor events. Implement software tools to better identify minority owned vendors. Participate in more vendor fairs. Partner with organizations that support minority vendors.	This will be ongoing as events are scheduled throughout the year.
Increase web access and communication to vendors	Update website to be more vendor friendly	Ongoing
Colleges and department leaders will meet or exceed the 30% BEP goal for their unit.	Implement procedures for colleges and department leaders to implement BEP compliance best practices	Summer 2024
Increase the fairness and accountability of the vendor selection.	Create diverse vendor selection committees that consist of diverse staff, faculty, and administration. Make a good faith effort to obtain quotes from a BEP vendor under the bid limit of \$100,000. Monitor utilization of BEP subcontractors by prime vendors.	Fall 2024
Increase transparency, accountability, and improvement	Present an Annual Report to GovState Planning and Budget Advisory Council (PBAC) and President’s Cabinet.	April 2025

1. Provide a list of challenges that your institution has faced in procuring with BEP certified vendors and meeting the State’s 30% BEP vendor participation goal.

Becoming BEP certified can be a challenging process for minority vendors for several reasons such as: limited resources, rigorous application process, stringent criteria, competitive landscape, access to opportunities, and financial resources. Overall, while BEP certification offers valuable opportunities for minority vendors to access government contracts and resources, the process itself can present significant hurdles that may require dedicated support and advocacy to overcome.

2. Provide any other information that you would like to provide to convey a better understanding of your college or university BEP efforts.

GovState, has a proven track record of commitment to utilizing diverse vendors, achieved a commendable 70% BEP spend in FY21. However, we acknowledge the challenges faced by minority vendors that hinder us from meeting goals. Despite these obstacles, the plan above will allow us to meet our BEP goal.

With the assistance of our new Procurement Specialist position and resources, we will work to advocate and help our current and prospective vendors become BEP certified.



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