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## **South Suburban College a Regional Leader for Economic Development and Job Creation According to New Study**

*Illinois Community College system accounts for \$3.5 billion in economic output and more than 43,000 jobs throughout state.*

SOUTH HOLLAND, IL – South Suburban College (SSC) continues to help drive the south suburban area economy and train a skilled workforce for critical industries throughout Illinois, according to a new statewide report analyzing the value of the Illinois community college system. Other data including successful student outcomes were proven through the work of Northern Illinois University’s (NIU) Center for Governmental Studies (CGS), contracted by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) from 2020-21.

Illinois community colleges claim a unique piece of their shared mission to support local workforce and economic development through employer and business engagement. SSC demonstrated its success in this endeavor in 2020, in part by interacting with 45 unique employers. Collaboration ranged from curriculum and apprenticeship development and review, contract training, internships, and professional development to job placement for graduating students. Further economic impact is demonstrated in raw numbers produced by SSC during fiscal year 2020:

- \$31.7 million in operating expenditures
- \$14.4 million in wages and benefits among SSC employees living in the region
- Approximately 427 jobs in SSC District #510 attributed to college operations associated with \$59.4 million in economic output

These direct impacts rippled through the economy creating additional jobs, payrolls, and other economic activity.

"I believe our country has given greater voice in recent years to the significant impact community colleges have educationally and culturally, but often times the least understood and least measured effect is economically," said Frank M. Zuccarelli, Chairman of the SSC Board of Trustees. "The detailed research that was conducted through this study revealed some amazing numbers relating to the positive economic value of community colleges in Illinois, and specifically here in the south suburban region."

The report not only evaluates Illinois community colleges’ ability to meet the needs of business and industry, but also student outcomes and students’ return on investment. South Suburban

College students aged 20 to 29 that completed a two-year program that was not focused on transfer to a 4-year institution are estimated to total nearly \$525,000 in average increased lifetime earnings (compared to someone not attending community college). The study estimated this return on investment was 23.5%.

According to ICCB data, in recent years more than 70% of completers across all demographics of long-term certificate programs or Associate in Applied Science programs at South Suburban College are employed in career jobs within a year of graduation. Career job employment rates also typically improve for SSC completers over time. Among those who completed programs in 2009, 86.6% were employed one year after graduating, and 87.3% were employed in career jobs after 10 years.

“The study confirms what we already know to be true of community colleges – they are an accessible, attainable opportunity to change your life,” said Dr. Lynette Stokes, President of South Suburban College. “The data demonstrates this value everywhere, including within disadvantaged communities. By changing lives community colleges have the power to change communities.”

Statewide, the Illinois Community College System and ICCB are focused on creating, supporting, and expanding workforce training opportunities equitably in high-need communities. In 2019, Illinois started the Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) program, a grant program designed to increase workforce opportunities for African Americans which are severely underrepresented among Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Over the last two years, the WEI program has granted nearly \$40 million to address education and unemployment gaps in the African American and other minority communities throughout Illinois. More information about WEI at South Suburban College can be accessed online from [www.ssc.edu/wei](http://www.ssc.edu/wei).

“It is clear that community colleges remain a solid return on investment for local communities and the students that use them,” said ICCB executive director, Dr. Brian Durham. “Our system plays a vital role in meeting the needs of Illinois’ workforce by providing quality training and education and gives students a greater opportunity to earn higher wages in countless industries throughout the state.”

When examining earnings one year prior to completion compared to three years after completion, African American student earnings increased 47 percent while Latinx students increased their earnings by 57 percent.

To review the full study, please visit <https://bit.ly/iccbEIS>.

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