

# Improving and Accelerating Access to Credentials and Degrees for Working Adults in the Early Childhood Field

## Presented by:

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# Presentation Objectives

- Participants will walk away with a better understanding of:
  - The Early Childhood Education and Care workforce
  - The Early Childhood Access for Equity (ECACE) Consortium
  - Critical ECACE program features - and why it has made the program successful

# Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce



# About the ECEC Workforce

- **The child care workforce is comprised of predominantly women**
  - Women made up of nearly 96% of those working in licensed child care settings.
- **The child care workforce is racially diverse**
  - 47% of teaching staff in licensed child care settings are persons of color compared to 16% of teachers in public schools. There are notable geographical and role-based differences in race.
- **There is a growing number of bilingual members of the child care workforce**
  - Younger (under age 35) workforce members are more likely to be bilingual

Whitehead, J. (2021). Illinois' Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Report. Bloomington, IL: INCCRRA. [https://www.inccrra.org/images/datareports/Illinois\\_Early\\_Childhood\\_Education\\_Workforce\\_2020\\_Report.pdf](https://www.inccrra.org/images/datareports/Illinois_Early_Childhood_Education_Workforce_2020_Report.pdf)

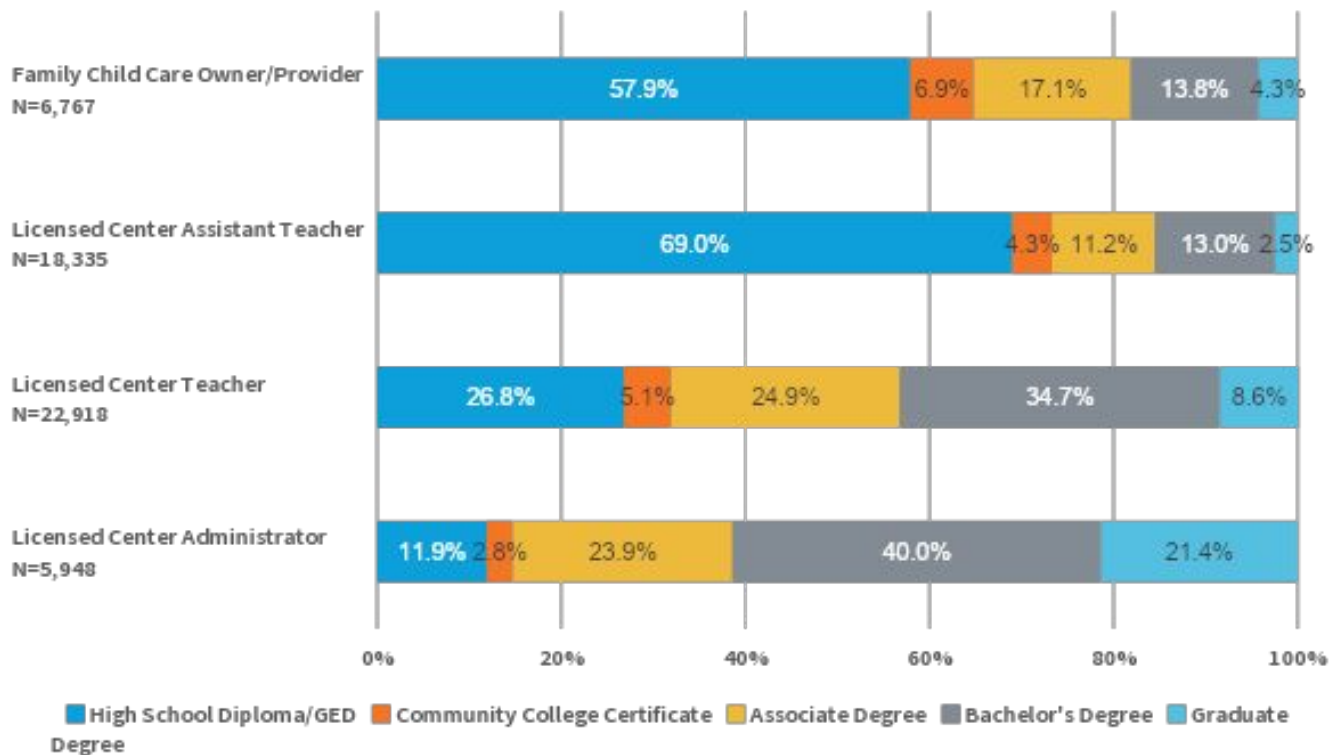


# There is a growing need for ECE educators and administrators in Illinois

| Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) | Base Year Employment | Projected Year Employment | Employment Change 2022-2032 |         |
|--|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|
|  |                      |                           | Number                      | Percent |
| Title                                      | 2022                 | 2032                      |                             |         |
| Ed & Childcare Admin, Preschool & Daycare  | 2,737                | 2,844                     | 107                         | 3.91    |
| Preschool Teachers, Except Special Ed.     | 19,808               | 22,140                    | 2,332                       | 11.77   |
| Special Education Teachers, Preschool      | 709                  | 726                       | 17                          | 2.40    |
| Child Care Workers                         | 36,236               | 36,517                    | 281                         | 0.78    |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>59,490</b>        | <b>62,227</b>             | <b>2,737</b>                |         |

# Child Care Workforce Credentials Snapshot

## Highest Level of Education by Setting and Role



# ECACE Address Barriers Early Childhood Workforce Members Face to Completing or Returning to Higher Education

A [2022 Illinois Action for Children survey](#) found that those seeking early childhood degrees frequently face competing priorities and need greater flexibility in hours and educational pathways to pursue their degrees while they balance family responsibilities and sustain their employment.

- Overall, almost 1/3 (28%) of respondents enrolled in higher education had discontinued their college programs
  - The primary reasons cited were financial constraints, familial duties, and work commitments – with cost-prohibitive tuition being the most common reason students left their program (44%)
  - Black students reported having to leave their program at the highest rate of all racial/ethnic groups (48%)

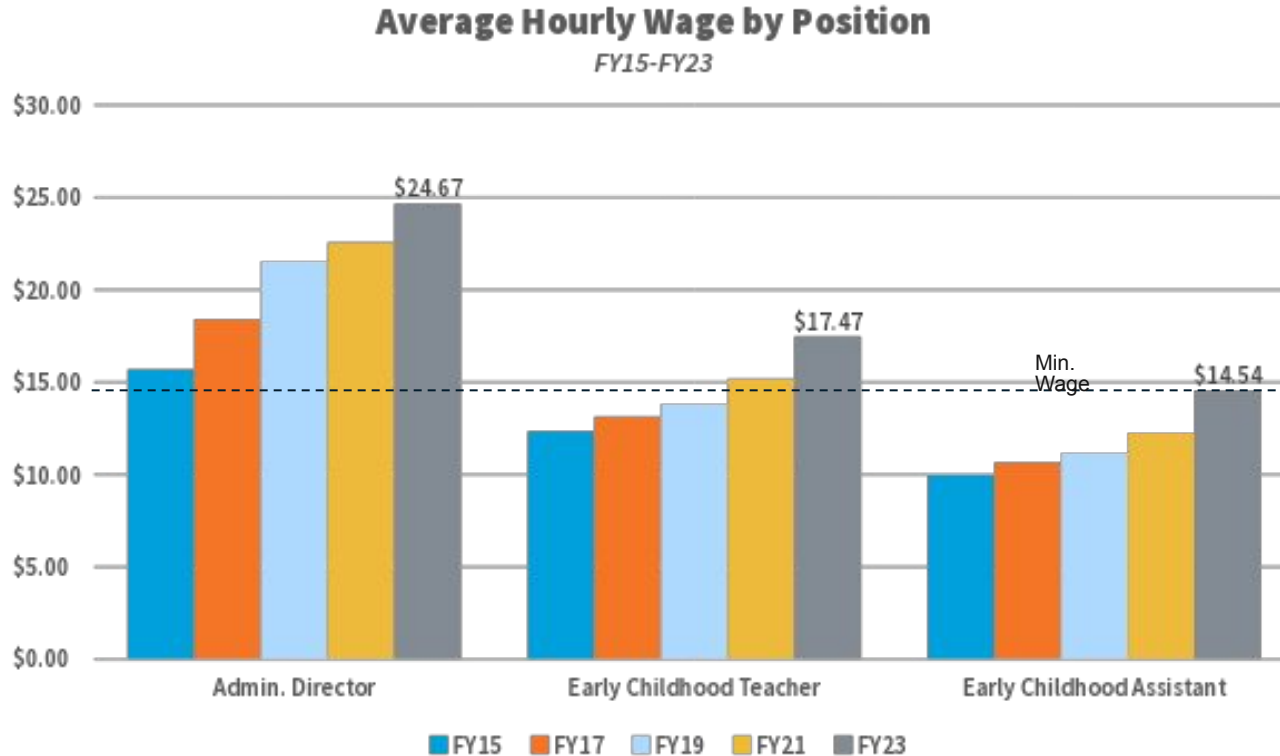


## Strengthening the Early Childhood Workforce in Illinois: A Policy Guide

June 2022

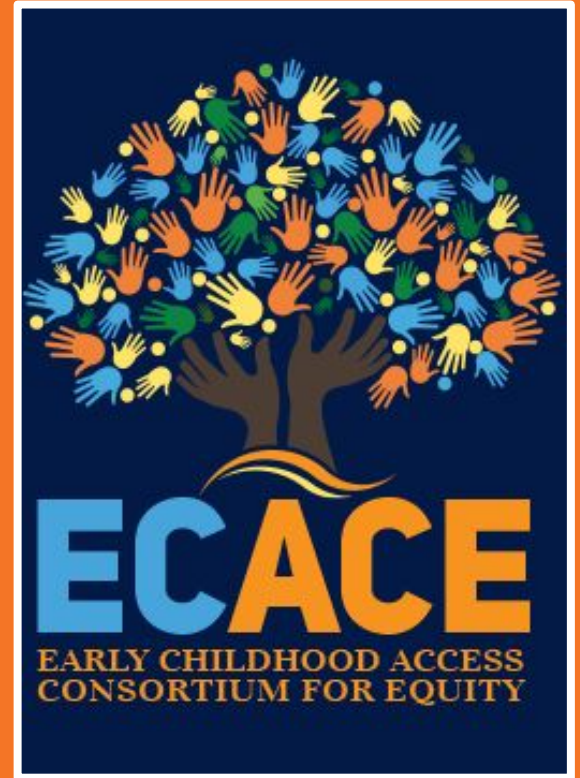
**“Too expensive. I don’t make enough money at work to cover college and other expenses at the same time.”**

# The ECEC workforce is not compensated fairly





# What is ECACE?



# ECACE Act

- In 2021, the **Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE)** was created by Illinois Public Act 102-0174 to address the shortage of early educators and address the need for equitable access to seamless higher education pathways designed to support working adults in the field of early childhood education and care

# ECACE Components

1

## Long-Term Infrastructure

The ECACE Consortium is made up of 62 higher education institutions, including 2 and 4-years, public and private institutions, working together to remove barriers for early childhood workers to enroll, persist, and complete credentials and degrees.

2

## Institutional Program Features

Programs and offerings to support equitable access to higher education, through seamless pathways, flexible formats and modalities, recognition of prior learning, and cross-institutional access to coursework at community colleges

3

## Student Supports

Student support services, including financial assistance (e.g., scholarships and debt relief); mentors and navigators for ECEC professionals, providing guidance and support to and within institutions; and academic and other wraparound supports to ensure persistence and completion

# ECACE Accomplishments

Adjusted programming to meet incumbent workforce needs, including clarifying transfer pathways and recognizing prior learning.

Removed financial barriers to enrollment through scholarships and debt relief.

Increased collaboration within and across institutions to better serve incumbent workers.

Conducted outreach to incumbent workers and early childhood employers, becoming more responsive to their needs.

Provided academic and wrap around supports such as mentors to ensure student persistence and completion.

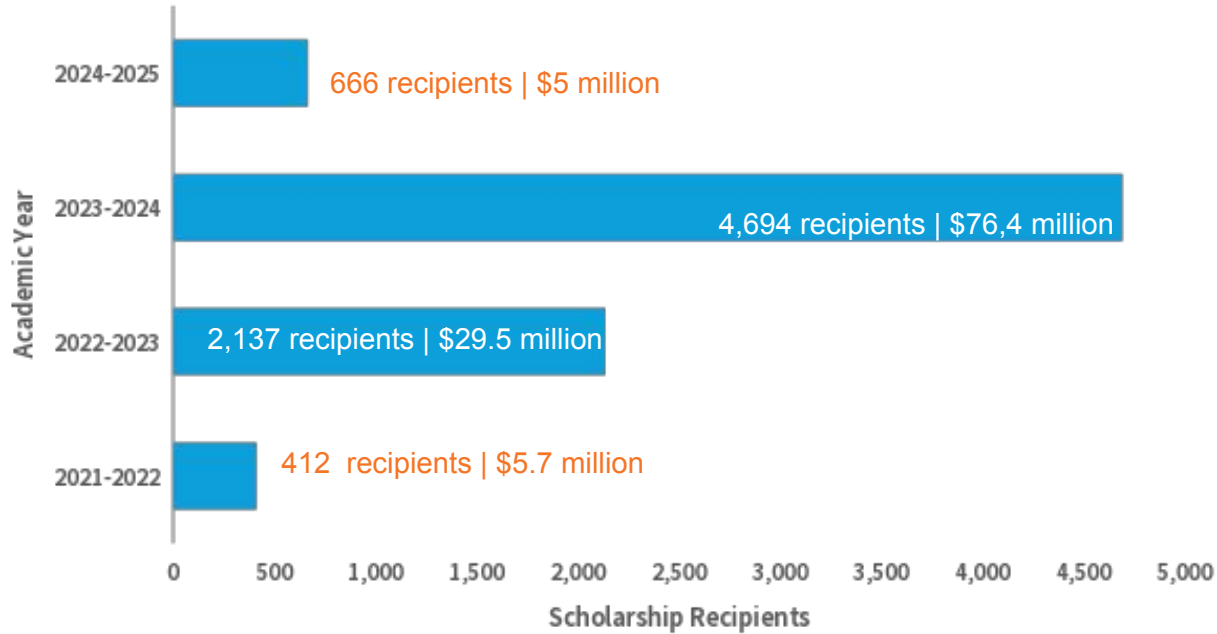
# Scholarships



In AY 2023-24, the ECACE scholarship had nearly 4,700 recipients; this year the scholarship only reaches 666 recipients

### ECACE Scholarship Program Expenditures and Recipients

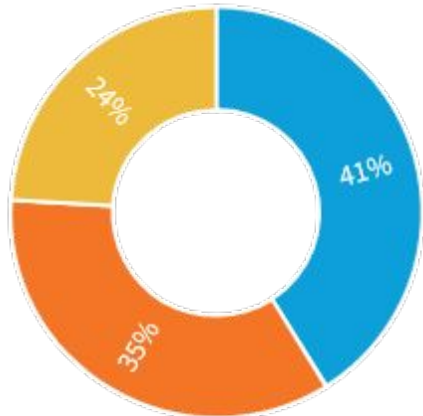
AY21 - 22 to AY24 - 25



# In AY 2023-24, most scholarship recipients were pursuing an Associate's or Bachelor's degree across institution types

## Distribution of ECACE Scholarship by Types of Institutions

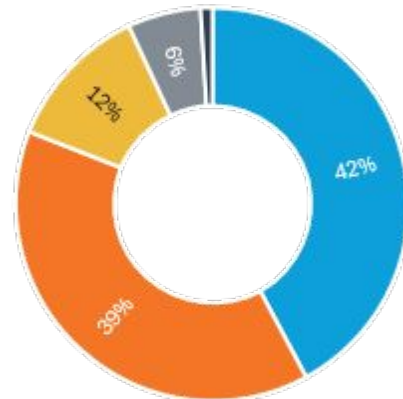
AY23-24



Private 4-Years   Public Universities   Community Colleges

## Distribution of ECACE Scholarship by Program Enrollment

AY23-24



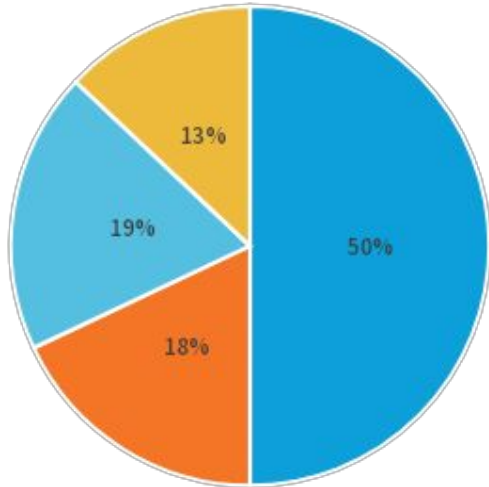
Bachelor's Degree   Associate's Degree  
Master's Degree   Certificate  
Other Post-Baccalaureate Pathway



# In AY23 - 24 the ECACE scholarship served 50% of recipients older than 30 and reflected the racial makeup of ECEC workforce members

## Scholarship Recipients Age

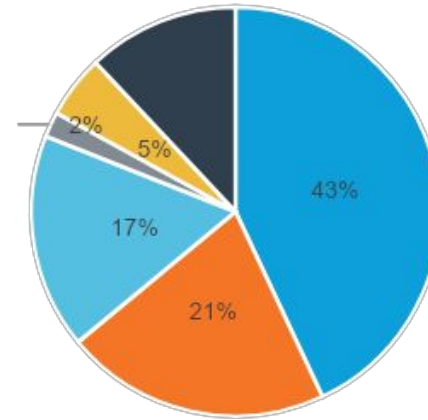
AY23 -24



Older than 30 25-30 21-24 20 or younger

## Scholarship Recipients Race/Ethnicity

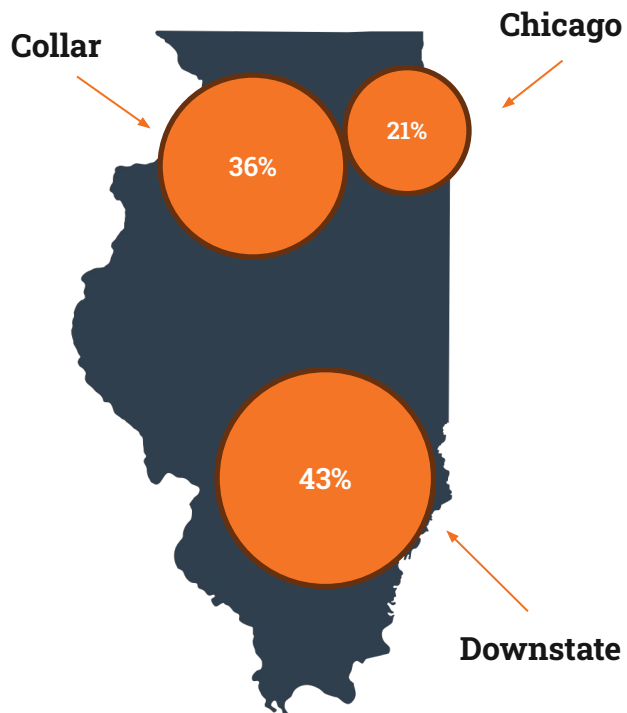
AY23-24



White Black Latinx Asian More than one Unknown



# In AY23 - 24 the ECACE scholarship served incumbent workforce members from across the state



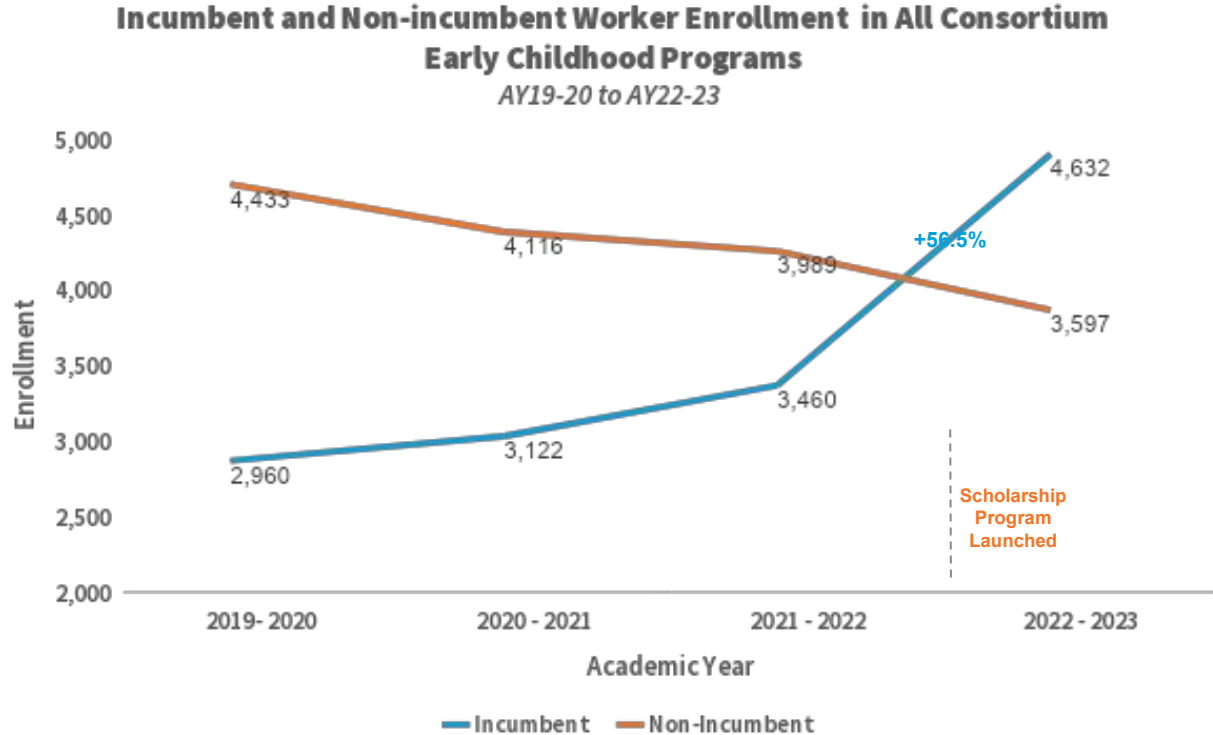
## Income

- 76% of recipients had an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of \$10,000 or less

## Gender

- 89% of recipients identified as female

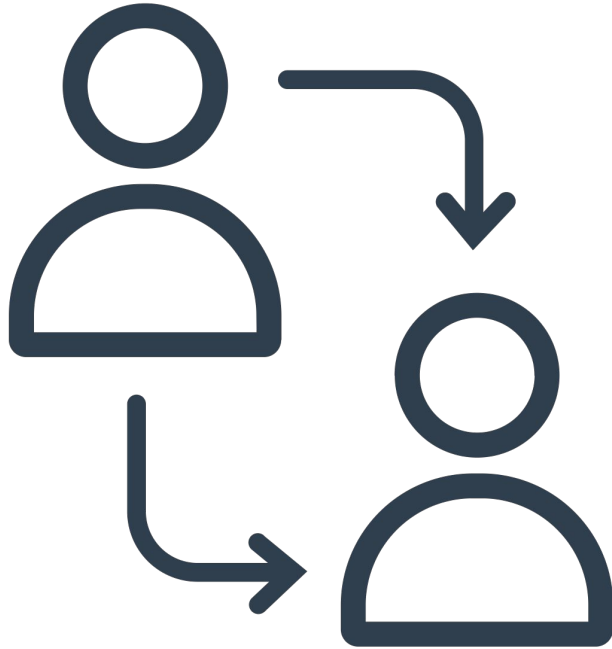
# Consortium institutions saw a 56.5 percentage increase in enrollment of incumbent workforce members in their EC programs



# Student Supports



# Role of the Mentor



- First point of contact for students at institutions
- Helped students navigate to services on campus such as financial aid, tutoring, health and mental health services, etc.
- On average, met with students individually 5x/quarter
- Mentors worked closely with faculty to monitor student progress and intervene if there were concerns

# Role of the Navigator



- Community-facing role designed to recruit and connect incumbent early childhood workforce members to Consortium institutions
- 30 navigators are employed within regionally based Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) across the state
- Provided technical assistance to providers and workforce members to help them navigate ECACE and the higher education system

|  |  |        |
|--|--|--------|
| <b>Navigator Outreach Activities</b><br><i>July 2022 – December 2023</i> | General Information Sessions                     | 1,580  |
|  | Outreach Meetings                                | 975    |
|  | Mailing Information Materials                    | 2,231  |
|  | Phone Calls to Providers and Incumbent Workforce | 7,279  |
|  | Sending Emails                                   | 29,028 |
|  | Interest Form Requests                           | 4,914  |
| <b>Technical Assistance Provided</b>                                     | Emails   | 39,950 |
|  | In-Person Meetings                               | 2,877  |
|  | Virtual Meetings                                 | 1,874  |
|  | Texts  | 617    |
|  | Phone Calls                                      | 1,063  |
| <b>Workforce Members Served</b>  | # Workforce Members Receiving TA                 | 5,253  |
|  | # Students Connected to Institution by Navigator | 821    |

# Navigator Q&A and Discussion

- Can you tell us about the students you have supported in using ECACE to obtain higher degrees and credentials?
- What impacts have you seen or success stories can you share from ECACE?
- What did you learn over time in your experience as a Navigator?

# Question and Answers



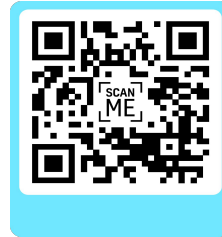


# ECACE Advocacy

Contact Your Legislator:



Social Media Toolkit:



ECACE Budget Factsheet:

