

Illinois explores partnerships to support college and career readiness

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CHICAGO – Why do students choose not to pursue college, or drop out of college, even when they are provided with significant college counseling, external encouragement, and assistance in accessing financial aid? [Mandy Savitz-Romer, Ph.D.](#), director of the [Harvard Graduate School of Education](#) master's program in Prevention Science and Practice and senior lecturer in education, provided some crucial answers to that question in her keynote to 500 educators, government, business and non-profit leaders attending the [College Changes Everything \(CCE\) Conference](#) on July 19th in Tinley Park.



The answers, said Savitz-Romer, are not necessarily to be found in more of the same—traditional college counseling, college fairs, FAFSA help—all of which are important but not necessarily sufficient to get students, particularly first generation students, to college.

“If we can’t do more, we may have to do different,” said Savitz-Romer, who has focused her research on adolescent development to understand the “constellation of obstacles” that keep students from attending or persisting in college, even when they have been offered a host of external supports.

Dr. Savitz-Romer highlighted some of the the essential skills students need to pursue and succeed in college—from developing a growth mindset and self-efficacy, to self-regulation, including planning and delayed gratification—many of which are covered in

detail in the book she co-authored, *Ready, Willing and Able: A Developmental Approach to College Access and Success* (Harvard Education Press 2012).

“There is a big difference between wanting to go to college, believing you deserve to be there and can succeed, and someone telling you that *they want you to go to college*,” said Savitz-Romer.

A luncheon panel discussion with two recent college graduates and a high school student, all of whom overcame significant obstacles to get to college, highlighted not only some of the topics Savitz-Romer covered, but also the crucial business, education, and nonprofit partnerships that helped build pathways to success for these students.



Exemplifying the success of college and career readiness partnerships is [Vermilion Advantage](#), the 2018 recipient of the College Changes Everything Champion Award. The award is presented each year to a person or an organization that has made significant contributions to help the state improve college access and completion efforts for Illinois students. Vermilion Advantage provides workforce development, career awareness, and educational programs through its 60-plus business workforce cluster members, the county K-12 education systems, and Danville Area Community College. Thousands of students in the area are sponsored by local businesses to help ensure that the region retains a qualified workforce.

Conference breakout sessions, presented by state and local experts and practitioners, covered a range of college and career readiness programs and partnerships. Visit collegechageseverything.org/2018conference for more information; conference presentations will be posted to the site shortly.

Sponsored by the [Illinois Student Assistance Commission \(ISAC\)](#) in collaboration with partner agencies and organizations, the annual CCE Conference is the state's premier higher education conference focused on improving efforts to make college possible for all Illinois students.