The Board of Higher Education, created in 1961, is a planning and coordinating agency for all sectors of Illinois higher education. The board’s major statutory responsibilities include continually analyzing the aims, needs and requirements of Illinois higher education; making budget recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly for higher education operations, grants and capital improvements; approving proposals for new units of instruction; collecting, maintaining and reporting demographic information about enrolled students and degree recipients, faculty and staff, and characteristics of individual colleges and universities; approving operating and degree-granting authority for independent and out-of-state institutions; administering designated state and federal grant programs; and other responsibilities specified in the Illinois Compiled Statutes.

In December 2008, the board approved the Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success as the blueprint for higher education over the next decade. The agenda focuses on four goals:

1) Increase educational attainment to match the best-performing states and countries.
2) Ensure college affordability for students, families and taxpayers.
3) Increase production of high-quality, post-secondary credentials to meet the demands of the economy and an increasingly global society.
4) Integrate Illinois’ educational, research and innovation assets to meet the economic needs of the state and its regions.

The board consists of 16 members, including 10 members appointed for six-year terms, the respective chairs of the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, a member of a public university governing board, a member of an independent college or university board of trustees, and two student members elected by the recognized Student Advisory Committee to the Board.

Board Members: Tom Cross, chair; Lazaro Lopez, ex-officio member, Illinois Community College Board; Kevin Huber, ex-officio member, Illinois Student Assistance Commission; Jay D. Bergman; Max Coffey; Meredith Daw; Sherry Eagle; Alice Marie Jacobs; Santos Rivera; Darlene Ruscitti; Jack Thomas; Emily Buice, student representative; and Truong “Jack” Luu, nontraditional student representative (three vacancies).