



Executive Director
Partnership for College Completion
Chicago, IL

THE OPPORTUNITY

The [Partnership for College Completion](#) (PCC) seeks an innovative, strategic, and dynamic leader to serve as the next Executive Director (ED) of the organization. Reporting to the Board of Directors, the ED will lead the organization at a pivotal time for higher education in Illinois and across the country and will build upon the organization's past success to propel PCC into its critical next chapter.

Based in Chicago, PCC was launched in 2016 to address disparities in college access and completion that impact a broad segment of first-generation, low-income, and students of color in Illinois. Since its launch, PCC has helped lead new and urgent conversations for higher education equity through its three-part strategy, including college and university partnerships, public policy, and research and data. Today, due in large part to PCC's work, there is greater awareness and more nuanced discussion about college access and completion in the state; a community of institutional leaders and practitioners committed to ensuring equitable student outcomes continues to grow; and, increasingly, lawmakers in Illinois are focused on addressing the complex needs of low-income, first-generation college students, including students of color, in the policies they introduce and champion. These are exciting and needed developments, and yet these are extraordinarily challenging times that will require PCC to redouble its efforts and navigate the nuances involved in addressing equity-related disparities in college completion.

As the chief executive of a relatively young organization, the successful candidate will be an established education leader with experience leading teams to deliver on ambitious goals and a commitment and connection to PCC's mission. The ideal candidate is both a thought leader and a convener, is creative and entrepreneurial, brings experience with strategy and solutions development, and has a proven ability to effectively communicate and execute initiatives from start to finish. The next ED will shape the vision and strategy for the organization; significantly grow and steward PCC's financial resources as the organization's chief fundraiser; expand PCC's visibility with policymakers and other key stakeholders across Illinois and nationally; support and grow a high-performing, mission-driven, and diverse team; and work closely with the Board of Directors as meaningful partners in the organization's success. This leader will be driven by a passion for developing strategies to overcome disparities in college completion and inspired by the possibility of

leading an organization that has achieved significant results but must strategically adapt for the future and seize opportunities to have an outsized impact.

The Partnership for College Completion has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be submitted as indicated at the end of this document. All such outreach shall be treated confidentially.

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP FOR COLLEGE COMPLETION

PCC was founded in 2016 to champion policies and practices that increase college completion and eliminate degree completion disparities for low-income, first-generation, and students of color in Illinois. As the only organization of its kind in Illinois, and a unique organizational model in the national context, PCC is dedicated to providing leadership for a system-level approach to support college completion and eliminate institutional inequities in higher education outcomes. Since its founding, the organization has played a central role in initiating a new, urgent conversation and catalyzing action on higher education equity in the state.

PCC envisions a state where equitable opportunities to access and complete a college education lead to greater degree attainment and socioeconomic mobility for Illinoisans. With a steadfast focus on system-level reform and institutional change, PCC executes a three-part strategy in pursuit of its goals. The strength of PCC's approach—and what makes it unique—is the complementarity and interconnectedness of these three parts:

- [College and University Partnerships](#): PCC provides support to Illinois colleges and universities that are working to eliminate disparities in degree completion on their campuses. This work includes coaching and individual support, virtual and in-person conferences, webinars and workshops, building capacity to utilize campus-level data, and helping institutions develop and implement campus-based plans that promote the success of students who have not been well served by higher education in the past.
- [Public Policy](#): PCC's policy work follows principles of action that spark and accelerate the pace of transformation within Illinois' higher education system. The policies associated with each can work in concert to not only increase fairness in access, affordability, and accountability but also focus Illinois' higher education system on serving the evolving needs of its students. PCC has advanced state policy to reform developmental education and launched an effort to develop an equity-centered funding formula for public universities.
- [Research and Data](#): PCC's Research and Data team uses a growing knowledge base of original reports, briefs, one-pagers, blog analyses, and more — created in collaboration with PCC's Public Policy and College and University Partnerships teams — to increase the public's awareness of the systemic challenges that underrepresented students face in Illinois' higher education system that can be addressed through key actions by state elected officials and by public and private nonprofit two- and four-year colleges and universities.

ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the next Executive Director will embrace the organization's mission and core beliefs but must also have the ability to critically evaluate the path forward. The ED, in partnership with the Board and the senior leadership team, will work with focus and urgency to expand the organization's impact and profile while building broader awareness around inequities within higher education and PCC's proposed solutions. With a focus on high-quality execution, sustainable growth, and innovation, the ED will establish an effective strategy and prioritize collaboration and transparent decision-making to lead the organization's work in its second decade.

The ED will be an inspirational leader, internally and externally, and will manage the organization's \$2.7 million budget and lead a staff of 16 individuals, including several direct reports who oversee public policy, programs, and operations. The ED also maintains key relationships with the PCC Investors Council (composed of an engaged group of PCC's institutional funders), donors, elected officials, institutional leaders, and research and advocacy partners.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The next leader of the Partnership for College Completion will be charged with addressing the following opportunities and challenges:

Shape the vision and strategy for PCC's next chapter.

The incoming ED will work collaboratively to develop the organization's next multi-year strategic plan, building on the successes of the founding and current leadership, staff, Board, and funders to increase the organization's impact and reputation in Illinois and nationally. The ED will set, execute, and deliver on ambitious long-term goals and targets across its three focus areas (college and university partnerships, public policy, and research and data), although it's possible these areas may be refined or modified by the strategic planning process. It will also be critically important for the ED to ensure that resource allocation closely aligns with organizational strategy. These goals and strategies will take into consideration the strengths of PCC and the current moment in higher education nationally, in the state, and in cities and towns across Illinois.

Grow and expertly steward the organization's financial resources.

The Partnership for College Completion has established a track record of impact and success in its first decade. Financial resources will be paramount to the continued growth and success in the coming years, and the next Executive Director will be the organization's primary fundraiser. The ED will be responsible for engaging current funders and maintaining existing grants while also successfully seeking and securing new philanthropic grant funding, building an individual giving program—particularly among high-net-worth individuals, and exploring new and innovative approaches to revenue in alignment with the organization's strategic priorities.

Strengthen and expand PCC's visibility and thought leadership within Illinois and nationally.

The next Executive Director will build on PCC's strong reputation to further elevate and strengthen its role as the go-to expert in identifying and promoting solutions that lead to successful higher education outcomes for low-income, first-generation and students of color in Illinois. The ED will be highly visible in the Chicago area, Springfield, and across the state to bring attention to the organization's work—including its research, analysis, and evaluation of programming—and the policies it promotes. This individual will serve as PCC's primary champion and ambassador, building strong, effective relationships with key players in the Illinois political, policy, research, and higher education landscapes while connecting with critical national players as well.

Support, grow, and nurture a high-performing, mission-driven, and diverse team.

Since its inception, PCC has attracted and retained high-performing individuals due in part to its strong organizational culture and commitment to living its core values, including a demonstrated commitment to equity and diverse college experiences. The successful ED will place a high priority on continuing to develop and motivate its staff.

In addition, as PCC develops its next strategic plan, the organizational structure might need to shift to position it to best respond to emerging opportunities and threats in the funding and political environments. The next ED will skillfully manage that process, ensuring the organization's mission, culture, and core values remain its north star.

Work closely with the Board of Directors as meaningful partners in PCC's success.

The 15 members of PCC's Board of Directors are highly committed to its mission and engaged in its governance. The Board ensures the fiscal integrity of PCC and effectively manages the organizational finances and financial processes in a way that generally anticipates operating within the approved budget, optimizes resource utilization, and maintains the organization in a positive financial position. The Executive Director is responsible for collaborating with and leading the Board in a manner that supports the mission of PCC while communicating effectively to provide all necessary information for proper functioning and informed decision-making. The Executive Director will possess a commitment to further increasing the diverse expertise, skills, and lived experiences of the Board of Directors.

PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS

While no one person will embody all of the following, the successful Executive Director candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications, skills, experiences, and personal qualities:

- A deep understanding and aptitude for working on policy issues surrounding college access, persistence, affordability, accountability, and completion.
- High-level strategic thinking and planning. Ability to envision and convey the organization's strategic future to the staff, board, donors, higher education leaders, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

- Strong fundraising abilities and a successful history of growing and sustaining funding in a nonprofit organization. A history of successfully generating new revenue streams, excellent donor relations skills, and an understanding of the local and national funding community.
- Strong financial management skills, including budget preparation, management, analysis, decision-making, and reporting.
- A transparent and high-integrity leadership style that allows staff members to showcase skills and expertise; at least six years of experience managing diverse people/teams and a demonstrated ability to lead high-performing teams, support staff development, prepare team members for increased responsibility and promotion, and effectively address issues of performance improvement.
- Experience and skill in successfully building, maintaining, and working with a diverse Board of Directors.
- Strong public speaking skills; an excellent communicator who is able to be the public face and voice of the organization.
- A minimum of ten years of full-time work experience, with at least three years spent in an executive leadership role.
- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree preferred.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The expected salary range for this role is \$180,000 to \$240,000. Based in Chicago, PCC currently maintains a flexible, hybrid work environment.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/partnership-college-completion/executive-director>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

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The Partnership for College Completion is an equal opportunity employer with a commitment to building a diverse team and to engaging the skills and leadership of people of color, individuals from low-income households, LGBTQ+ persons, differently-abled people, and others that hold identities that represent the significant diversity of college students in Illinois. People from these and other historically marginalized backgrounds and communities are strongly encouraged to apply. We look forward to hearing from you!