

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

from idea to impact



ILLINOIS SCIENCE &  
TECHNOLOGY COALITION

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Dear ISTC Community,

On behalf of the Illinois Science and Technology Coalition, I'd like to thank our membership, partners, and peers for contributing to a successful 2024 and acknowledge the group effort that has ushered ISTC to a new milestone of 35 years.

Since the organization's inception in 1989, ISTC has continued to evolve in order to serve its mission of convening and connecting Illinois' research, science, and technology communities. This work remains crucial to optimizing STEM education pathways, offering entrepreneurial support, advancing important research, developing economic policies, and fueling other efforts that ultimately lead to a stronger statewide innovation economy.

Changes in government funding, shifts in public opinion, and evolving regulatory landscapes are among the many uncertainties that organizations like ISTC are currently facing. Though it is near impossible to predict how those uncertainties will impact our work, one thing remains constant: there is power in partnerships.

Together, we have the power to shape a future where Illinois stands as a beacon of progress in science, technology, and innovation. A future where groundbreaking discoveries are made, transformative technologies are developed, and innovative solutions are implemented to address the most pressing challenges of our time. A future where every Illinoisian has the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the advancements we achieve.

The 2024 Annual Report summarizes the steps we have taken in this direction during the past year and highlights how collaboration paved the way. We're so proud of what we have accomplished, energized by the opportunities ahead, and thankful for the continued support of our community.

Thank you,



**Kate Calabra**  
Interim CEO  
Illinois Science and Technology Coalition

# ACHIEVEMENTS

## A Year of Transition

2024 was a year of transformation for ISTC, marked by leadership transitions, program expansions, and strengthened partnerships.

With Interim CEO Kate Calabra leading ISTC and Executive Director Becky Goldberg guiding ISTC Education, both divisions advanced their missions with a focus on accessibility, equity, and innovation. To support this evolution, both teams grew strategically, welcoming new staff members dedicated to advancing programs, fostering partnerships, and ensuring long-term sustainability.

One of the year's most significant milestones was the launch of the Illinois Innovation Voucher Program, a groundbreaking initiative in partnership with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). This program awarded \$2.3 million across 34 businesses, helping small and

mid-sized companies access university research expertise. Nearly half of the recipients were minority-, women-, and veteran-owned businesses, reinforcing ISTC's commitment to fostering inclusive economic development and technological advancement across multiple industries...

ISTC Education made remarkable strides in mentorship, STEM learning, and industry engagement. The Mentor Matching Engine (MME) connected over 800 Illinois high school students with industry professionals, helping them develop critical research, communication, and career-readiness skills. The 6th Annual Student Research Showcase, hosted by Google, provided 35 students with a platform to present their findings to peers and members of the Illinois STEM ecosystem.

In its 11th year, the STEM Challenge Program expanded in both scope and accessibility,

engaging students in solving real-world industry challenges in healthcare, sustainability, and technology. The program deepened its equity-focused approach, ensuring broader access for students from historically underrepresented backgrounds.

The Teacher Externship Program also evolved, welcoming its first cohort of middle school teachers and strengthening industry-education partnerships. This strategic growth will continue into the next year thanks to a \$138,000 grant awarded by Google.org with the purpose of increasing access to Teacher Externship experiences across Illinois.

Beyond education, ISTC continued driving entrepreneurship and corporate engagement. The Executive Founders Program facilitated high-impact connections between early-stage founders and corporate executives,

high-impact connections between early-stage founders and corporate executives, accelerating business growth for underrepresented entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, the Industry Showcase Series connected startups with major industry players in manufacturing, med tech, and blue tech, leading to new partnerships and business opportunities.

As ISTC moves forward, its expanded team, deepened collaborations, and commitment to innovation position it for even greater impact. By bridging the gaps between education, industry, and entrepreneurship, ISTC is building a more dynamic and inclusive Illinois innovation ecosystem—one that fosters opportunity for businesses, educators, and students alike.





# INNOVATION

## Illinois Innovation Vouchers Program

"It cannot be overstated how much this program benefited our company! This project got us the data that we needed to close sales and deals with distributors and help take our business to the next level."

In 2024, we launched the Illinois Innovation Voucher Program to help small and mid-sized businesses access university research expertise. These vouchers lower financial barriers, allowing companies to develop new technologies, solve technical challenges, and accelerate commercialization.

In its first year, the program awarded \$2.3 million across 34 vouchers, supporting businesses in manufacturing, agriculture, med tech, and clean energy. Of these, 21 companies identify as Minority-Owned, Women-Owned, or Veteran-Owned businesses. Awardees are spread across Illinois, with 48% in Chicago, 27% in Champaign, and the rest statewide.

These collaborations have already led to measurable success:

- "Receiving the grant allowed us to create a tool no one in the industry could complete." – Ashley S. H. Moy, Cast21
- "This program has been pivotal in the development of our pioneering technology, emphasizing user experience with robust scientific support. This invaluable support equips small startups like ours to innovate and bring better products to market." – Blake Terry, Terry Ventures

With strong early results, the program is proving to be a key driver of innovation and business growth in Illinois, fostering lasting partnerships between businesses and research institutions.

The program issued over

**\$2.3**  
million

in vouchers through the program's inaugural year



34 transformative  
SME-led projects  
received up to  
\$75,000 in funding

### SOME OF OUR AWARDED VISIONARIES



## Industry Showcase Series

The Industry Showcase Series was designed to connect emerging startups with corporate partners in key sectors, fostering collaboration and innovation. In 2024, the program focused on three core industries:

- Manufacturing
- Med Tech
- Blue Tech (Water Technology)

Each showcase featured 5-7 high-potential startups, carefully selected for their innovative solutions and industry impact. Over the year, a total of 18 startups participated, engaging directly with executives and industry leaders.

Corporate engagement was a key highlight, with representatives from Bank of America, Current, Innovation Dupage, USG, Caddi, and HCSC attending the showcases. These partners provided valuable insights, explored collaboration opportunities, and helped startups navigate industry challenges.

Each event featured curated networking sessions, startup pitches, and roundtable discussions, offering founders direct access to decision-makers. This structure enabled meaningful dialogue, opening doors to new business relationships, pilot programs, and potential investments.

Beyond corporate connections, the showcase also fostered peer learning, allowing startups within the same industry to exchange ideas and strategies.

Feedback from both startups and corporate partners has been overwhelmingly positive, with multiple participants securing follow-up meetings, partnerships, and new business opportunities.

With its strong engagement and tangible outcomes, the Industry Showcase Series continues to play a crucial role in bridging the gap between startups and established industry leaders, driving innovation and economic growth in Illinois.



## Executive Founder Program

The Executive Founders Program was designed to foster connections between underrepresented founders and corporate leaders to accelerate business growth and innovation. In 2024, the program focused on engaging diverse, early-stage founders in a range of industries. These founders participated in executive dinners, where they had the opportunity to network with senior executives, exchange ideas, and explore potential collaborations.

This year, six companies participated in the program:

- Partum Health – Meghan Doyle
- HACKERverse – Mariana Padilla
- Perforator Inc. – Olga Burdukovskaya
- Clever Carnivore – Kaitlin Grady
- CoderHeroes / Code Your Dreams – Brianne Caplan
- Mercurial AI – Sarah Blythe

Each founder brought a unique vision, creating a dynamic and diverse group. Throughout the year, the program provided these founders with tailored strategic guidance, corporate introductions, and the tools needed to scale their businesses.

The outreach focused on industries such as healthcare, AI, education, and food tech, attracting corporate executives from top-tier companies like Verizon, Portal Innovations, ADM, Inflect Health, and 2Flo Ventures who participated in the dinners and offered valuable insights. These

collaborations helped bridge gaps in innovation and enabled founders to connect with decision-makers who could support their growth.

Beyond the networking dinners, the program emphasized collaboration and community building, ensuring founders could connect with peers facing similar challenges. Participants received personalized mentorship, focusing on topics like market growth, funding, and partnerships.

The outreach was particularly strong, targeting a variety of industries and ensuring the inclusion of companies from different sectors. The results have been promising, with several participants securing new partnerships and expanding their business reach.

The program is making a notable impact on underrepresented founders by offering them opportunities to elevate their businesses, build relationships with key corporate players, and access resources they may otherwise have struggled to secure.

Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive:

"The Executive Founders Program helped us gain new insights and strategies, along with a network of invaluable corporate partners. This program has been pivotal in our growth journey." – Meghan Doyle, Partum Health

## Partners 2024

Innovation thrives through collaboration, and we are deeply grateful for the support of our partners in 2024. Through the Illinois Innovation Voucher Program, the Executive Founders Program, and the Industry Showcase Series, we have connected businesses, entrepreneurs, and researchers, fostering groundbreaking ideas and driving economic growth.



## Illinois Innovation Index

Historically, the Illinois Innovation Index includes new editions of the STEM Talent report, Research and Development Report, and the University Entrepreneurship Report. Collectively, these publications provide a snapshot of Illinois's innovation economy and serve as a resource to our membership. Each report is well adapted to contribute to data-informed decisions for new policies or programs and can also provide supplementary information for other research efforts, grant applications, and/or publications.

The STEM Talent Report was released in March 2024. This edition of the STEM Talent Report explored supply and demand trends within STEM education and the STEM workforce from 2013-2022. In terms of STEM talent supply, the findings showed that while overall four-year degree completions in Illinois declined during the reporting period, STEM degree completion increased. In fact, in 2022, the number of STEM degrees awarded in Illinois reached a new record high of nearly 30,000 allowing Illinois to rank 7th in the nation for this metric.

Illinois neared a record high for employment in STEM fields during the reporting period as well with 350,380 STEM employees. The record remains at 352,280, which was achieved in 2019. The fastest growing STEM occupations include Aerospace Engineering and Operations Technicians, Animal Scientists, Statisticians, Drafters, Life Scientists, Psychologists, and Physicists.

The R&D Report was released in December 2024. The data within the report suggests the state is underperforming relative to its economic size. While Illinois ranks 10th nationally in Total R&D with \$21.6B spent in 2021, the state's 4.43% five-year growth rate ranks 41st among all states (and D.C.) and falls significantly below the national average of 9.55%. Additionally, Illinois' R&D intensity of 2.28% lags behind the national average

lags behind the national average of 3.4%.

This edition highlighted impressive efforts underway with potential to better position Illinois. Some of those stories included [choose two or three cover story examples]. Additionally, ISTC recognizes that these datapoints further support initiatives like the Illinois Innovation Voucher Program that can both incentivize R&D while making the process more accessible and collaborative.

ISTC will be releasing the latest edition of the University Entrepreneurship in Spring of 2025, which we're certain will further amplify the important role that Illinois institutions of higher education play in advancing new innovations and technologies across the state.

### Emerging Talent

During the summer of 2024, ISTC participated in the Summer Tech Intern program facilitated by Discovery Partners Institute (DPI) and supported by ASPIRA of Illinois, Parker Dewey, and One Summer Chicago. This program offered micro-internships as an approach for college freshmen and sophomores to build their resumes and explore their interests. A majority of the student participants majored in Computer and Data Science.

ISTC hosted four micro-interns who each contributed to the development of the Illinois Innovation Index reports as well as Index Insights pieces. This program was a great example of leveraging partnerships to further shared missions and invest in the next generation of changemakers through experiential learning. We're looking forward to joining DPI again and hosting a 2025 cohort.



## Researchers to Know

Each year, ISTC recognizes the brilliant minds shaping Illinois' innovation landscape through the Researchers to Know list. In 2024, 31 distinguished researchers from 10 leading institutions were honored for their groundbreaking work across disciplines that advanced scientific discovery, drove economic growth, and tackled global challenges.

These researchers pushed boundaries in biotechnology, sustainability, mental health, AI, quantum computing, physics, and materials science. Their research paved the way for new medical treatments, sustainable design practices, advanced analytics, and pioneering engineering solutions. By recognizing their contributions, ISTC underscored the vital role that academic research played in fostering technological advancements, industry collaboration, and economic resilience. Their work not only benefited Illinois but had far-reaching global implications, impacting industries, healthcare, and sustainability.

Illinois' research institutions continued to serve as key drivers of innovation, fueling discoveries that shaped the future of healthcare, engineering, and emerging technologies. Through this initiative, ISTC bridged the gap between research and real-world impact, fostering connections between academia, industry, and policymakers. As demand for cutting-edge solutions grew, these researchers led transformative technologies that enhanced quality of life, strengthened industries, and drove sustainability.

By amplifying the contributions of Illinois' leading researchers, ISTC reinforced the state's position as a national leader in science and technology. These researchers enriched our understanding and helped shape solutions to pressing challenges. We are proud to have recognized their dedication to solving complex problems, improving lives, and fostering a more sustainable and inclusive future.

### The 2024 Researchers to Know are:

- **Michelle Stuhlmacher**  
DePaul University
- **Heather Quinn**  
DePaul University
- **Jacob Furst**  
DePaul University
- **Weslynn Ashton**  
Illinois Institute of Technology
- **Ruth Schmidt**  
Illinois Institute of Technology
- **Philip R. Troyk**  
Illinois Institute of Technology
- **Igor Cialenco**  
Illinois Institute of Technology
- **Pranshu Solanki**  
Illinois State University
- **Wolfgang Stein**  
Illinois State University
- **Isaac Chang**  
Illinois State University
- **Jennifer Koop**  
Northern Illinois University
- **Andreas Glatz**  
Northern Illinois University
- **Jonathan Rivnay**  
Northwestern University
- **Jaehyuk Choi**  
Northwestern University
- **Yevgenia Kozorovitskiy**  
Northwestern University
- **Mercouri Kanatzidis**  
Northwestern University
- **Neelam Sharma-Walia**  
Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science
- **Robert A. Marr**  
Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science
- **Brian A. Feinstein**  
Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science
- **Scott Hamilton-Brehm**  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
- **Jie Dong**  
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
- **Fred Chong**  
University of Chicago
- **Olufunmilayo I. Olopade**  
University of Chicago
- **Jeff Hubbell**  
University of Chicago
- **Deepak Shukla**  
University of Chicago
- **Ramille Shah**  
University of Chicago
- **Alex Leow**  
University of Chicago
- **Viktor Gruiev**  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- **Erik Nelson**  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- **Laura Rice**  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- **Ying Diao**  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign





# EDUCATION

ISTC Community,

As we reflect on another impactful year at ISTC Education, I feel a deep pride and gratitude for the strides we have made together. Our work to build a more inclusive talent pipeline has never been more critical, nor more achievable through the collective efforts of our generous partners, dedicated supporters, and ambitious team.

This year marked the expansion of our Teacher Externship program, the reimagination of our STEM Challenge Program, and a new focus on development and stewardship. With the support of industry leaders we've launched initiatives that not only prepare students for the workforce but also inspire them to envision a future where they are the architects of innovation. Whether it's through cutting-edge AI challenges or mentorship opportunities powered by our enhanced Mentor Matching Engine, these collaborations are shaping the next generation of thinkers, doers, and leaders.

We've also celebrated milestones that strengthen our ability to deliver on our mission. From onboarding new team members dedicated to advancement and stewardship, to refining our organizational strategy for long-term sustainability, we are building a foundation for even greater impact in the years to come.

Our work is brought to life by our community. Together, we are not just preparing students for the future; we are empowering them to shape it. Thank you for being an integral part of our journey thus far and I can not wait to continue this work alongside you.

Thank you,



**Becky Goldberg**  
Executive Director

Illinois Science and Technology | Education  
(Illinois Science and Technology Institute)

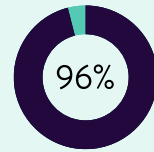


# The Mentor Matching Engine®

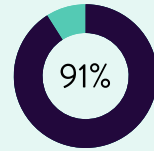
The Mentor Matching Engine (MME) program continued its mission of eliminating barriers to mentorship, connecting over 800 Illinois high school students with industry professionals and scholars from across the country in a wide variety of expertise areas. Throughout the academic year, students cultivated critical professional skills, strengthened their confidence, and conducted independent research projects under the guidance of their mentors.

Students, teachers, and mentors utilized MME to build lasting professional relationships and additionally leveraged several new platform enhancements to streamline communication and project management. Through these platform improvements, MME came closer to an execution that matches its long-standing revolutionary role in education and mentorship.

The 6th Annual Student Research Showcase, hosted at Google, provided 35 students with the opportunity to present their findings to a panel of esteemed judges representing the Illinois STEM and research ecosystems. This event celebrated students' dedication to engaging the community with their research, and their commitment to the research process itself, rather than just the outcomes. A select group of students also participated in a moderated panel, where they shared key learnings from their research and mentorship. Each participant selected to present at the showcase received a \$100 scholarship in recognition of their hard work and achievement.



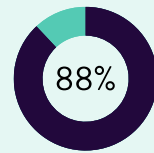
of students reported improved confidence in STEM or research skills.



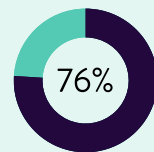
of teachers reported that their students improved their overall research skills.



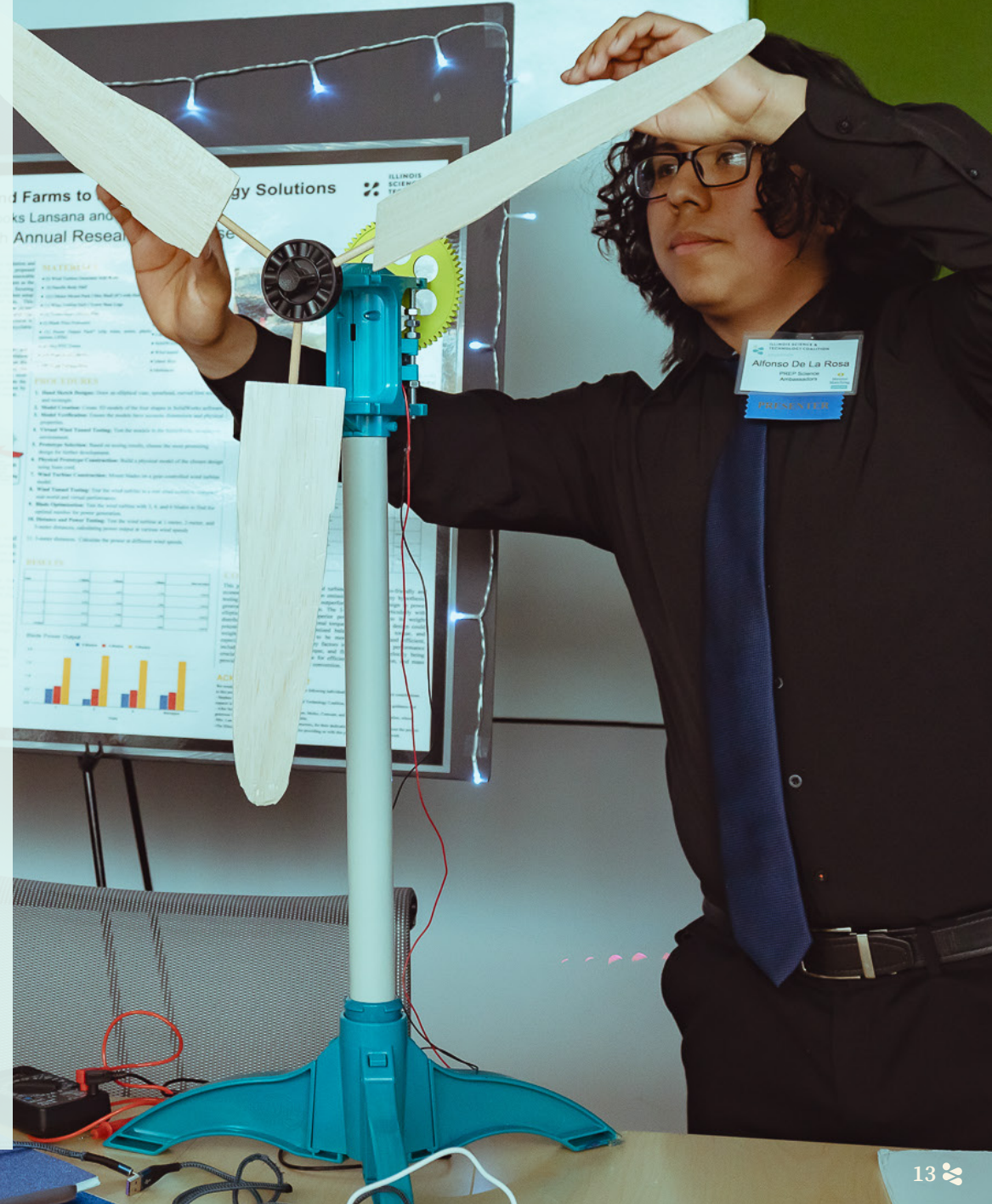
of mentors reported that they were able to use their skills to support students in their work.



of students reported that MME was their first time working with a professional mentor.



of students reported an increased confidence in their communication skills.







## The STEM Challenge

Entering its 11th year, the STEM Challenge program continued its mission to bridge the gap between education and real-world STEM innovation by connecting students with industry experts. This year's challenge invited student teams to analyze, design, and test solutions to authentic industry problems, fostering an environment that emphasized creativity, collaboration, and resilience. Through these experiences, students not only learned technical skills but also gained valuable insights into teamwork and the iterative design process.

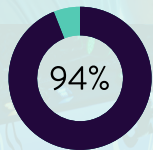
The 2024 program saw exciting reimagining and expansion, both in the scope of industry challenges and in efforts to broaden access. By partnering with new organizations and refining its equity-focused approach, the STEM Challenge advanced its mission like never before—reaching a wider and more diverse range of students, ensuring that more learners could experience high-impact, real-world STEM opportunities.

The STEM Challenge Showcase, hosted by Google, highlighted the final projects of 19 student teams, each presenting their journey

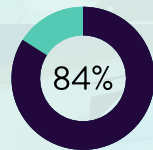
from concept to prototype. Attendees were captivated by the diverse range of innovative solutions that addressed critical challenges in fields such as healthcare, sustainability, and technology. The showcase was structured to prioritize the students' innovation process over the final product, reinforcing the program's focus on experiential learning and problem-solving.

Participating mentors from industry partners played a key role in guiding student teams, offering real-world insights, and fostering professional development. The program also reinforced the importance of skills-based volunteering as mentors contributed not only to students' success but also deepened their own sense of community impact.

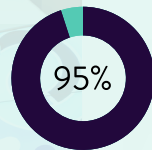
The STEM Challenge continues to evolve, embracing feedback and remaining committed to providing equitable and accessible STEM opportunities for students across the state. With support from our partners and community stakeholders, the program is poised for an even greater impact in the coming years.



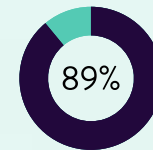
94% of students reported that they felt more confident in their STEM or research skills.



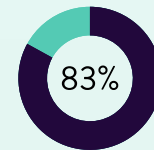
84% of students reported an enhanced ability to approach complex problem-solving.



95% of mentors expressed that they valued the opportunity to engage in skills-based volunteering through their companies.



89% of students reported an increase in skills and/or confidence in their collaboration abilities.



83% of participants indicated that the STEM Challenge was their first experience working with a professional mentor.





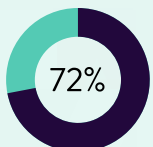
## The 6×3 Project® Series

The 6×3 Project® series maintained its commitment to interdisciplinary innovation and mentorship through an accelerated, high-impact program model. Structured as an intensive six-week exploration, the series guided students through pathways focused on real-world problem-solving in collaboration with industry experts. Participants were challenged to think critically, engage with mentors, and refine their innovative ideas through hands-on experiences and pitch presentations.

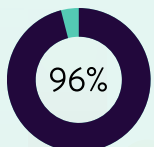
In 2024, the program remained consistent with previous years, continuing to prioritize meaningful mentor-student interactions and

interdisciplinary learning. While planning for a program evaluation in 2025, ISTC Education has made the decision to sunset the 6×3 Project® as part of an intentional effort to refocus on its core mission and prioritize staff capacity. This change reflects a commitment to delivering quality programming that aligns with organizational strengths and resources.

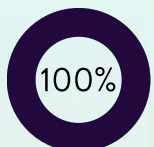
While the 6×3 Project® is concluding, its legacy of fostering curiosity, confidence, and mentorship in STEM will continue to inform future ISTC Education initiatives. The program's impact will remain a testament to the power of interdisciplinary learning and community collaboration.



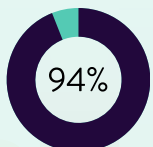
of participants reported that this was their first experience working with a professional mentor.



of participants shared that their ability to envision themselves in a STEM role has increased or remained the same after the program.



of students recommended the program to a friend or classmate.



of students noted significant improvement in their communication, collaboration, and presentation skills.

## Teacher Externships

**“This was a very dynamic PD as it helped us to see what students will actually need to do on the job. The time spent was helpful because it lent itself to deeper explorations and questions that developed over time.”**

This summer marked the fourth year of our Teacher Externship program welcoming 21 Illinois public school teachers and 19 employee mentors. CDK Global and Google each hosted a Teacher Externship pairing employee mentors with local teachers.

In preparation for 2024, it was imperative that we solicited feedback from partners and participants to evolve the program with a clear and intentional equity lens. To ensure that we recruited equitably, we worked closely with Chicago Public School and other district leaders to promote the experience, with an emphasis on inviting teachers from diverse learning backgrounds. We wanted to ensure our cohorts welcomed teachers who reached students who have been historically excluded from STEM pathways such as special education, ESL, and BIPOC

students. We also welcomed our first cohort of middle school teachers!

To enhance the program experience, ISTC Education introduced weekly cohort sessions at partner company sites to explore employee resource groups (ERGs) and discuss topics such as company culture, onboarding, and professional development. These sessions fostered meaningful conversations about the intersection of personal and professional identities and how organizations can support and value diverse perspectives.

ISTC Education was thrilled to receive a generous, capacity building grant from Google, which allowed us to hire a Senior Strategy Lead for Teacher Externships, create a new video asset, and launch a 5 year impact report.

# 100%

of teachers and mentors would recommend the experience to a colleague.





## Partners 2024

In our mission of bridging the gap between the classroom and the real world, it is crucial to work alongside industry leaders and modern innovators. We are sincerely grateful for the support and perspective that our corporate partners offer ISTC Education and the students in our programs. Together, with mentorship and real-world experiences as guiding touchpoints, we are building a stronger, more accessible talent pipeline for our Illinois students.



## Event Fundraisers & Donors

2024 set our fundraising goals in motion! Thanks to the collective support of our donor community, we were able to continue to offer scholarships to school partners and evolve our programs, ensuring a lasting impact on workforce readiness and STEM education across Illinois.

Charlie Abrams

Senyo Ador

Manjushree Aithal

Nikhil Ambha Madhusudhana

Allie Appel

Hannah Ashby

Catherine Bates

Jennifer Beltran

Ryan Bertram

Sara Block

Korie Booker

Jim Bray

Lucy Brennan

Sylvia Bridges

Jonathan Brown

Kate Brownson

Natalie Bueno

Collin Butler

Karen and Tony Cacich

Kate Calabra

Alexandra Carrillo

Adam Chrusciel

Swade Cirata

Tamara Coleman

Azurii Collier

Morgan Collier

Emily Cooper

Linnea Coulter  
 Kenya Dantzler  
 Lyndsay Deckert  
 Yujia Ding  
 Shonali Ditz  
 Mona Dugo  
 Colleen Egan  
 Jack Feldman  
 Mireya Flores  
 Jason Forbrook  
 Jay Fox  
 Jay Fulgencio  
 Kevin Gates  
 Gina Gerace  
 Mike Gissler  
 Jenny Gitelson  
 Debra Giunta  
 Jamie Gladfelter  
 Laura Gladfelter  
 Jorie Goins  
 Jay and Susie Goldberg  
 Troy Goldenberg  
 Gillian Gordy  
 Jared Grambier  
 Andy Hartman  
 Kris and Andy Hartmen  
 Aubrie Hattendorf  
 Hannah Henderson  
 Sarah Hesse  
 Cormac Hesselbach  
 Griffin Hogle  
 Drew Hopson

Alix Katznelson  
 Alyssa Kelly  
 Kevin Kenny  
 Melissa Kessler  
 Quentin Klingler  
 Jennifer Kopach  
 Keertana Kota  
 Larry Kuhn  
 Lisa Levens  
 Nathan Levens  
 Isaac Lytle  
 Steve Mac  
 Adriana Martinez  
 Katherine Maskel  
 Sam Maxey  
 Joey McCall  
 Maribel Melanson  
 Paige Michals  
 Jacob Milgrim  
 Catherine Mini  
 Peter Moi  
 Jonathan Morley  
 Lindsay Moulton  
 Kumar Natesaiyer  
 Jacqueline Navigato  
 John Navigato  
 Billy Ndizeye  
 David Nelson  
 Kelly O'Neill  
 Summer O'Gradney  
 Ari Officer  
 Jenny Officer

Mackenzie Organ  
 Sivaraman Pachaippan  
 Demi Palecek  
 Michelle Papanicolaou  
 Bill Payne  
 Nancy Payne  
 Lauren Porcase  
 Meredith Rawling  
 E.J. Reedy  
 Hanna Ricketson  
 Jessica Robinson  
 Silvia Rogel  
 Jasmin Rosales Montas  
 Reggie Rush  
 Tope Sadiku  
 Mallorie Sanders  
 Ben Schatzel  
 Josh Schatzel  
 Michelle Schmidt  
 Michael Schultz  
 Molly Seedhouse  
 Matthew Serafin  
 Sam Shabsin  
 Rachel Sheinkop  
 Diana Silvas  
 Alex Silverberg  
 Mark Smithivas  
 Jackson Stalowir  
 Emma Stanfield  
 Marci Steinberg  
 Douglas Strain  
 Tyler Sweeney

Patrick Thomas  
 Mara Timmeney  
 Shalom Torres  
 Lance Trares  
 Sarah Tuohy  
 Christian Vandever  
 Abril Vela  
 Rosaura Vidal  
 Jack von Albade  
 Amy Wilke  
 Allison Winstel  
 Stephen Wisniewski  
 Elisabeth Wright  
 Kristine Yim  
 Ava Zandieh







# ADVOCACY

## What Happened in Illinois?

ISTC has seen the impact of advocacy through the implementation of the Illinois Innovation Voucher Program. Beginning in 2019, ISTC worked diligently with partners to help create the legislation that codified this program into the State budget (HB1855 & SB2290) and eventually led to being named the administrator of the program. In the program's first year, ISTC awarded \$2.3 million to over 30 small- and mid-sized companies to advance research and development activities in partnership with Illinois' institutions of higher education.

We're looking forward to continuing this partnership with the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to create more impact in 2025. Additionally, we hope to leverage data from the Illinois Innovation Index to identify and advocate for additional policies that can similarly be put into action.

The organization's advocacy goals continue to be:

- ✦ Increasing capacity for scientific research
- ✦ Strengthening innovation districts and regional technology clusters
- ✦ Promoting a technically skilled workforce
- ✦ Improving the transfer of research to new products and business

Throughout 2024, ISTC closely tracked state bills related to these advocacy goals, including:

1. [HB 4472](#) - Introduces Inflation Reduction Act's price caps on certain prescription drugs for non-Medicare purchasers.
2. [HB 5621](#) - Increases Build Illinois Act small business loan cap from \$400K to \$2M for underrepresented founders, allows loan proceeds for debt refinancing. Passed the House unanimously but stalled in the Senate.
3. [SB 2075](#) - Establishes Illinois Legacy tax credit of \$100 per year, plus \$100 per regular employee and \$25 per union contractor. Failed to reach the Senate floor.
4. [HB 3752](#) - Creates Illinois Robotics Day
5. [SB 3325](#) - Adds 'artificial intelligence' definition to Illinois Right of Publicity Act and enhances recording artist IP protections.
6. [HB 5856](#) and [SB 3959](#) - Creates Office of Interconnection and Renewable Development at the Illinois Commerce Commission, mandates utilities purchase peak-period energy storage credits via tariffs to compensate storage facility aggregators.

As we move into 2025, we anticipate policy shifts that could impact the organization's advocacy goals. However, we remain optimistic. We believe that, by continuing to work in concert with our partners and by providing research-based support, we can continue to advance Illinois' innovation ecosystem.



# LEADERSHIP & STAFF

## Board of Directors

ISTC's Board of Directors provides strategic leadership, guiding our mission to drive innovation, collaboration, and economic growth in Illinois. Their expertise and dedication ensure that ISTC continues to create opportunities for businesses, researchers, and entrepreneurs statewide.

**Laura Appenzeller**  
University of Illinois

**TJ Augustine**  
University of Illinois at Chicago

**Jim Bray**  
Northwestern University

**Joe Cassidy**  
College of DuPage

**Azurii Collier**  
Abbie

**Jess Goode**  
Illinois Institute of Technology

**Bob Greenlee**  
Tusk Strategies

**Yvonne Harris**  
Northern Illinois Univeristy

**Larry Kuhn**  
Microsoft

**Jose Leboreiro**  
ADM

**Vivek Mehta**  
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**Kumar Natesaiyer**  
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**Deepali Palta**  
Kellanova

**Robert Patino**  
Southern Illinois University

**Bill Payne**  
University of Chicago

**EJ Reedy**  
Intentional Gravity

**Temitope Sadiku**  
Kraft Heinz

**Somali Tomczak**  
NICOR

**Colleen Wright**  
Constellation Energy

**Colleen D. Egan**  
President Emeritus, ISTC

TJ Augustine, Azurii Collier, Yvonne Harris & Temitope Sadiku retired from the Board in 2024. Their thoughtful leadership and expertise will be missed, and we extend them both a heartfelt thank you for their service.

## Education's Associate Board

**Kate Brownson**  
Baxter Center for Science Education

**Yujia Ding**  
Educator

**Deanna Emery**  
Aon

**Ben Schatzel**  
Stannum Core Solutions

**Melissa Kessler**  
ADM

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P33

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**Jonathan Brown**  
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**Nikhil Ambha Madhusudhana**  
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**Jenny Officer**  
Studio Stylist

**Billy Ndizeye**  
1871

**Patrick Thomas**  
Milwaukee Tool

**Paige Michals**  
Microsoft

**Allison Winstel**  
mHub

## Administrative Staff



**Becky Goldberg**  
Executive Director,  
Education



**Kate Calabra**  
Interim CEO



**Colleen D. Egan**  
Strategic Advisor &  
President Emeritus



**Jackie Navigato**  
Program Manager  
of STEM Experiences



**Tanvi Dharap**  
Program Manager  
of Mentorship



**Briana Wilson**  
Senior Strategic Lead of  
Teacher Externships



**Blaise Stephens**  
Manager of Advancement  
& Stewardship



**Jacob Barry**  
Innovation  
Program Manager



**Valentina Pulla**  
Communications  
Manager



**Jozie Crouch**  
Communications  
Coordinator



**Austin Green**  
Research &  
Policy Associate

We extend our deepest gratitude to Colleen D. Egan for her exceptional leadership as President and CEO of the Coalition. Over four years, Colleen's dedication to innovation, equity, and collaboration advanced our mission and strengthened Illinois' science and technology ecosystem. Her efforts fostered partnerships, expanded opportunities, and championed equitable growth. We thank her for her lasting impact, continued support as President Emeritus, and wish her success in her next chapter.

We also want to extend our gratitude to all staff members who contributed to our mission in 2024, including Anne Rzepecki, who transitioned from the organization this year. We wish her success in her future endeavors.



# SUPPORT RECOGNITION

## Thanks To All Of Our Members

We extend our deepest gratitude to our members for their unwavering support, collaboration, and commitment to innovation. Your contributions have strengthened the Coalition's research, entrepreneurship, and STEM ecosystems, driving meaningful progress across industries. Together, we have created a lasting impact, and we look forward to building an even brighter future in 2025.



**ILLINOIS  
SCIENCE &  
TECHNOLOGY  
COALITION**

from idea to impact

**in** ILLINOIS-SCIENCE-AND-TECHNOLOGY-COALITION

**X** ISTCOALITION

**@** ISTCEDUCATION

**f** ISTCEDUCATION

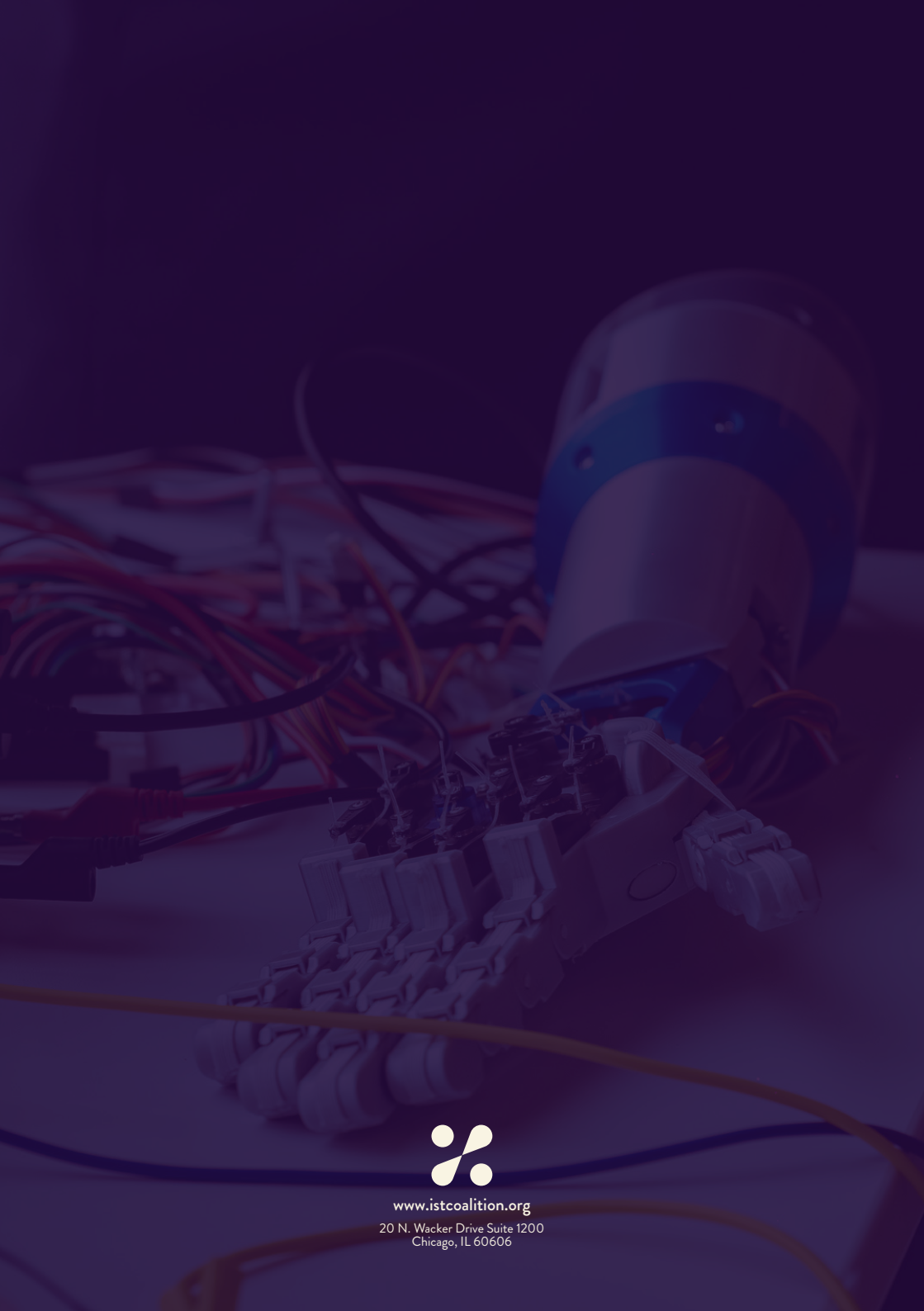
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