

Internet Essentials, Comcast's High-Speed Internet Program for Low-Income Families, to Be Extended to Community College Students in Illinois
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Pilot Program Will Help more than 90,000 Illinois Community College Students Cross the Digital Divide

Chicago Still #1 in the Country in Internet Essentials Enrollment, Connecting Nearly 120,000 Low-Income Residents to High-Speed Internet Service at Home

[Comcast Corporation](#) announced a pilot program today that will extend [Internet Essentials](#), the nation's largest and most comprehensive high-speed Internet adoption program for low-income families, to more than 90,000 low-income community college students who are Federal Pell Grant recipients in Illinois.

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Comcast Corporation announced a pilot program today that will extend Internet Essentials, the nation's largest and most comprehensive high-speed Internet adoption program for low-income families, to more than 90,000 low-income community college students who are Federal Pell Grant recipients in Illinois. (Photo: Business Wire)

According to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), community colleges enroll as many as 40 percent of all college students each year. As low-cost, open-access institutions, community colleges serve a high percentage of non-traditional students, including those who are low-income, are financially independent, have dependents, are first generation, and are older.

"For millions of Americans,

community college is one of the most accessible paths to a post-secondary education and a brighter future," said David L. Cohen, Comcast Corporation Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer. "By offering an affordable Internet connection and computer, Internet Essentials will enable low-income community college students to access educational resources not just at school but also at home. In addition, Internet Essentials will link these students to crucial digital literacy training programs that will help them as they complete their studies and continue to have a positive impact after graduation. Students need support at every level of their education, and extending Internet Essentials to community college students highlights our commitment to providing them the support they need, whether in elementary, middle, or high school or pursuing post-secondary education."

According to [research](#), an associate degree increases the chance of being employed by 12 to 15 percent for men and 20 percent for women. In addition, according to the [Community College Resource Center](#), an associate degree increases average earnings compared to a high school diploma by 13 percent for men and 21 percent for women. In 2012, the [American Association of Community Colleges](#) estimated community college graduates added \$809 billion in income to the U.S. economy in higher wages, increased productivity, and multiplier effects. Additionally, according to an Illinois Community College Board [report](#), completing a community college program increases lifetime earnings by 44%, or over \$570,000, compared to those who do not complete a program.

"In Chicago, we are closing the digital divide to open more doors of opportunity for our students to get an education and for our residents to get a good paying job. Internet Essentials is an important part of that effort," said Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "I want to thank Comcast for extending Internet Essentials to ensure that more of our community college students have high speed Internet access. By putting 21st century technology in hands of more City College students, we will help them succeed in their careers and keep Chicago's economy growing."

Since its inception in 2011, Internet Essentials has been available to eligible primary and secondary school students and their families. In Chicago, more than 30,000 households have been connected to the Internet, benefitting 120,000 residents, which is more than in any other city in the country. More than 55,000 families in the Chicago metro area and 65,000 families across the state of Illinois have been connected. Nationally, Internet Essentials has connected more than 500,000 households, giving 2 million low-income Americans access to the power of the Internet in their homes.

The Illinois community college pilot will expand on the work Comcast has done in Chicago and Illinois to enroll eligible families in the program. Since its inception in 2011, Comcast has worked with more than 2,000 school districts and community- and faith-based organizations, ranging from Chicago Public Schools, Big Brother Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs, Centro Romero, to the Chicago Urban League and the United Way, all in an effort to spread the word to families with school-aged children that could benefit from the program.

"The Internet helps Illinois community colleges deliver coursework and support and communicate with students," said Dr. Karen Hunter Anderson, executive director of the Illinois Community College Board. "Having technology on-site and Internet service at home removes barriers to online learning, giving students greater access to the schools, the faculty, and a host of additional resources that are crucial for their success."

Comcast also announced a similar community college pilot in the state of Colorado today. Low-income community college students in Illinois and Colorado must be recipients of [Federal Pell Grants](#), the nation's largest need-based grant program, in order to qualify for Internet Essentials. According to the most recent data on community colleges from the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), nearly 40 percent of students attending two-year community colleges receive Federal Pell Grants—the nation's largest need-based grant program. In Illinois, an estimated 90,000 community college students attending schools within Comcast's service area receive Pell Grants, and would be eligible to apply for Internet Essentials.

[Last month](#), Comcast doubled Internet Essentials' download speed to up to 10 Mbps, which is the third time in four years the speed of Internet Essentials service has been increased at no additional charge to customers. Comcast also announced that it is offering program participants free Wi-Fi routers that will allow them to connect any Internet-enabled device, such as a tablet, laptop or smartphone, to their home service.

About Internet Essentials

[Internet Essentials](#) from Comcast is the nation's largest and most comprehensive high-speed Internet adoption program. It provides low-cost high-speed Internet service for \$9.95 a month plus tax; the option to purchase an Internet-ready computer for under \$150; and multiple options to access free digital literacy training in print, online and in-person. Eligible families must have at least one child eligible to participate in the National School Lunch Program, including public, parochial, private, charter, and homeschooled students. For more information or to apply for the program, visit www.InternetEssentials.com or call 1-855-846-8376, or for Spanish, call 1-855-765-6995.

About Comcast Corporation

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