

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 22, 2025

### **IBHE Approves Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Recommendations**

*Budget recommendations ensure the continued implementation of the state's higher education strategic plan*

**SPRINGFIELD** – The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) approved a fiscal year 2026 recommended budget that increases funding to continue to support the implementation of the equity-driven higher education strategic plan, *A Thriving Illinois*. The approved budget recommends an overall 4% increase, which represents an increase of \$108.8 million, in higher education funding, excluding the State University Retirement System (SURS).

“The Board takes seriously its charge to put forth budget recommendations that continue to make our higher education system more equitable, and I believe that our strategic recommendations in the fiscal year 2026 budget will continue to remove barriers to access and completion for Illinois students,” **said IBHE Chair Pranav Kothari**. “The state’s forecast budget deficit cannot be ignored, but what also cannot be ignored is that spending on higher education is an investment in the state’s economy, talent, and future for our students. We’re grateful that Governor Pritzker and the General Assembly continue to support meaningful higher education investments.”

“The Board has approved a fiscal year 2026 higher education budget that will allow us to continue the momentum toward an equitable Illinois higher education system while recognizing the state’s looming budget deficit,” **said IBHE Executive Director Ginger Ostro**. “An adequately and equitably funded higher education system means a thriving Illinois economy that benefits everyone, and there’s still a long road to travel until that is achieved.”

IBHE’s recommended budget includes an increase of \$50 million for the Monetary Award Program (MAP), bringing the total MAP appropriation to \$761.6 million. This supports the Board’s target of increasing funding for MAP to \$1 billion within 10 years as set out in the higher education strategic plan in 2021. Additional funding for MAP will help make an Illinois higher education more affordable for many students and families across the state.

The recommended budget also includes a \$24.7 million (2%) increase in operating funding for public universities to continue closing equity gaps in access, persistence, and completion. The Board recommends that the funds be allocated using an equity lens to allow universities to provide the supports students need to ensure their success, particularly for students from low-income households.

Community colleges across the state play a crucial role in meeting the state’s education and workforce needs. To ensure community colleges continue to prepare the workforce of tomorrow, IBHE is also recommending a \$7.2 million (2%) increase in funding for community colleges, adult education, and career and technical education.

Additionally, the budget recommends an increase of \$15 million for scholarships to support the upskilling of the current early childhood workforce and an increase of \$4 million for the Pipeline for Advancement of the Healthcare Workforce (PATH) program to help those in nursing and other healthcare pathways enter or advance their careers in the health care industry.

Highlights include:

- \$50 million increase for MAP
- \$24.7 million (2%) increase in operating funding for public universities
- \$7.2 million (2%) increase in funding for community colleges, adult education, and career and technical education
- \$15 million increase for Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) Scholarships
- \$4 million increase for the Pipeline for Advancement of the Healthcare Workforce (PATH) program
- \$3.5 million in *new* funds for a new Center for Basic Needs at the Illinois Community College Board
- \$1.8 million increase for the state's direct college admissions program

The full fiscal year 2026 recommended budget can be accessed [here](#).

The budget recommendation next goes to Illinois Governor JB Pritzker and the General Assembly for consideration.

# # #

### **About Illinois Board of Higher Education**

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) is the planning and coordinating body for the state's higher education system. In June 2021, IBHE adopted the new strategic plan, "A Thriving Illinois," to accomplish three goals: close the equity gaps for students who have historically been left behind, build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions, and increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth.