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Contact: IBHE: [José García](#)

ICCB: [Matt Berry](#)

ISAC: [Lynne Baker](#)

Governor Pritzker's Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Continues to Improve College Affordability

44% of Illinois In-State Public University Undergraduates pay zero out-of-pocket for tuition and fees thanks to sustained investments

SPRINGFIELD – Earlier this week, Governor JB Pritzker presented to the General Assembly his proposed fiscal year 2027 budget for the state, which includes a higher education budget of \$2.7 billion. The higher education budget includes a one percent increase in operating funding for public universities (\$13 million) and community colleges (\$3 million).

The fiscal year 2027 proposed budget also supports ongoing affordability initiatives by investing \$721.6 million to maintain the Monetary Award Program (MAP) grants and \$50 million in AIM HIGH grants, bringing total funding to \$771.6 million to support a projected 158,700 students annually. With these investments, nearly every MAP recipient at or below the median income level can attend community college tuition-free through a combination of MAP and federal financial aid.

“While federal funding cuts have put a strain on the state’s budget for the next fiscal year, the governor is still proposing funding increases for the state’s higher education institutions and continued funding for the MAP and AIM HIGH grant programs, demonstrating commitment to the progress we have made toward making higher education in Illinois more equitable, accessible and affordable,” **said Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) Executive Director Ginger Ostro**. “The proposed increase in funding for student success efforts and new funding for deferred maintenance at state higher education institutions will further ensure students have access to an affordable and quality education.”

“In a challenging budget year, Governor Pritzker’s sustained investments in affordability and MAP grant support ensure community college remains accessible, strengthens our talent pipeline, and keeps opportunity within reach for communities across Illinois,” **said Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) Executive Director Brian Durham**. “Preserving that commitment allows more students, particularly those with limited financial means, to balance work, family, and school while preparing for in-demand careers.”

“By maintaining the largest MAP appropriation in the state’s history, Governor Pritzker renews his commitment to increasing access to higher education and advancing a brighter future for students with limited financial means,” **said Executive Director of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) Eric Zarnikow**. “From FY19 to FY26, a \$320 million increase in MAP has allowed us to improve affordability by increasing the maximum MAP award from \$4,869 in FY19 to \$8,064 in FY26, covering more of students’ tuition and fees. We have also been able to improve access to higher education: MAP is expected to serve more than 21,000 additional students this year than it did in FY19. ISAC projects that

in FY26, more than 150,000 students will begin or continue their higher education journey to meet their career goals, with help from MAP funding.”

While the Trump Administration attacks higher education, reduces federal financial aid options, and drives up costs for students and families, Illinois is putting students first and reducing the price families have to pay to send their child to college. The increases in MAP and operations for colleges and universities over the last several years have made significant progress in affordability. Forty-four percent of in-state undergraduates attending a public university paid no tuition and fees out-of-pocket in fiscal year 2025 compared to 25 percent in 2019, according to a [recent report](#) by the IBHE. More than half, 52 percent, of in-state undergraduates paid 25 percent or less of the sticker price for tuition and fees after financial aid. At the same time, more than 78 percent of Pell Grant-eligible undergraduate students paid zero out-of-pocket for tuition and fees – a remarkable increase from 45 percent in 2018.

Building on historic increases for higher education, the governor’s proposed fiscal year 2027 budget for higher education includes:

- \$721.6 million to maintain MAP
- \$50 million to maintain AIM HIGH
- \$13 million (1%) increase in operating funding for public universities
- \$3 million (1%) increase in funding for community colleges, adult education, and career and technical education
- \$500,000 increase in student success grants
- Continued funding to support community college investments in dual-credit and non-credit workforce grant programs.
- \$2 million to continue funding the Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois (DFI) program
- \$8 million to fund the Teachers of Illinois Scholarship Program
- \$3 million to support Common App simplified admissions
- \$7 million to support the Prepare for Illinois’ Future Program, which provides free test preparation materials for various professional programs
- \$5 million to continue Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity scholarships
- \$10.75 million for Golden Apple Scholars and \$2.5 million for Golden Apple Accelerators

The governor’s detailed higher education budget can be accessed [here](#).

The governor’s budget goes to the Illinois General Assembly for consideration.

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