

**IL Funding Commission  
Full Commission meeting  
10/20/2023  
Public Comment  
Jennifer A. Delaney**

Thank you for the opportunity to offer public comment. I am Jennifer Delaney a professor of higher education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. I appreciate the opportunity to offer public comment today.

**Overlap between the Strategic Plan and the Funding Commission Work**

I want to focus my comments on the interaction between the funding commission work and the statewide strategic plan for higher education.

While it is helpful to discuss alternative metrics that can be used and there is value in focusing on metrics like first generation students and income status, I also want to urge the commission to also focus on serving in-state residents (including migrants), which clearly serves a state purpose of producing well-educated residents for a thriving Illinois.

Additionally, accountability is very important in this process and will drive how the formula is actualized. I would like to encourage the group to identify benchmarks as part of this process. Ideally these benchmarks should be tied explicitly to state goals for higher education.

**Recommendations in Related Areas**

The process of this commission has highlighted important overlapping areas in state funding for higher education. I would like to urge the commission to be thoughtful and offer guidance for related areas that are outside the specific scope of the charge of the commission. Specifically, there is the need to reflect on the relationship between state funding for institutions and student financial aid, on the importance of stability in funding, and on providing alternative paths for admissions.

***Monetary Awards Program (MAP) Grants***

The MAP program is one of the largest need-based grant aid programs in the nation. It remains a fairly pure need-based aid program, which results in a powerful tool for addressing inequities by income status. With these strengths, I see three areas where the MAP program could be enhanced:

1. Support increase funding for MAP building on the successes of the Governor in growing this program throughout his time in office.
2. Alter MAP to function more like Pell grants such that it could be used to cover the full cost of attendance, not only tuition and fees.

3. Consider the scope of the MAP program and if for-profit institutions sufficiently serve both state purposes and the public good to warrant their continuation in the MAP program.

### ***Stability in Funding***

Fundamentally, stability in funding is difficult to address solely within the context of a funding formula. However, this issue is vital for the health and functioning of institutions, and for serving students throughout their degree programs that typically last longer than annual state budget cycles.

I encourage the commission to seek funding models that directly address stability in funding, such as dedicated revenue streams, institutional ability to rollover funding year-to-year, moving parts of higher education funding streams to be part of the non-discretionary side of the state budget.

The assumption that there will be ongoing growth in state support indefinitely is not consistent with past patterns and ignores the strong relationship between higher education funding and the business cycle, especially given higher education's status as a large discretionary spending category. The commission should be explicit about how the formula will work during years in which funding levels are decreased or held flat.

Some of my research on stability in state support for higher education may be helpful for the commission to review. One accessible article from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that might be helpful in thinking through the issue of stability and some options for solutions is: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/higher-eds-financial-roller-coaster>

My book on Volatility in State Support for higher education may also provide helpful guidance: <https://www.aera.net/Publications/Volatility-in-State-Spending-for-Higher-Education>

### ***Alternative Pathways for Admissions***

I encourage the group to consider supporting policies such as those outlined in the strategic plan that are race neutral. The primary policy I would like the group to consider is direct admissions programs that are race-blind, but when applied universally capture *all* students. Importantly direct admissions produces more equitable outcomes than alternative admissions models like present plans (such as Texas' 10% plan) that focus only on the highest-achieving students.

### ***IBHE Strategic Plan Reflection***

Finally, I think it is important to potentially reflect if the race-based language in the strategic plan should be altered, since many of the metrics laid out in the strategic plan are state goals related to closing race-specific equity gaps.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these public comments today.