
ILLINOIS COMMISSION ON EQUITABLE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Draft Final Report Feedback

Comments from Simón Weffer-Elizondo

General Comments

Topic of Comment	Comment
Equity Adjustments	<p>It is still not clear what research/best practices were used in the creation/calculation of the equity (race, 1st gen, low income, etc.) adjustments. Neither in this draft, nor in the discussions in the technical working group, did we have any citations of books, articles, working papers, etc. showing where the percentages came from. I have asked for this in both the technical working group and larger meetings, and it still has not been provided. I appreciate the work that Ralph and Corey put into this, but I would really like to see how they came to these numbers. It is incredibly problematic to not have some intellectual basis for these adjustments, particularly at a time where anything regarding race and higher education is like touching the 3rd rail given SCOTUS's decision in <i>Grutter v. Bollinger</i></p>
Concentration	<p>I worry that the concentration effects could make racial dynamics on our campus more segregated, not less. I have mentioned Laura Hamilton and Kelly Nielsen's book <i>Broke: The Racial Consequences of Underfunding Public Universities</i>. In it they describe how the University of California system has essentially created the "racial campuses" in UC Merced and UC Riverside, while allowing others, such as Berkeley, UCLA, UC San Diego, to be more homogenous. We could be creating incentives for some campuses to say "we have enough diversity" but not really encourage others to maintain theirs. The research is clear diverse classrooms create thriving learning environments, for historically marginalized groups. If we do not encourage campuses to have a mix of African-America, Latinx, Asian-American and White students, we could end up having students that move from racially and economically segregated high schools, to racially and economically segregated colleges and universities. This would defeat the purpose of equity, which would be to get students from schools on the South and West Side of Chicago, East St. Louis, OR the North Shore and collar counties into campuses that do not look like where they went to school. We want to change the dynamic in higher ed in our state, so we do not look like CPS where the elite selective enrollment schools have relatively small African-American and Latinx populations, while neighborhood high schools are increasingly homogenous for African-American and Latinx students.</p>

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"Equity" in Getting to Adequacy	<p>There is an equity issue that is being underplayed, I think, and that is not the schools at the margins, but those in the middle. Comments from the Deputy Governor made it seem that even getting to \$100 million was unrealistic. If that is the case, while UIUC stated in a legislative hearing during the Rauner budget impasse that it could survive for years without state appropriations, if dollars disproportionately flow to those at the lowest level, it is unclear when those in the middle will have enough new dollars to move closer to equity. I realize this may come off to some as an attack on equity, but with NIU's recent recognition as an HSI, if we are only getting marginally closer to adequacy every year, it is the new to NIU students that will be most vulnerable to shocks to the economic system.</p>
Importance of Increasing and Expanding MAP	<p>I do not think we emphasize enough in the document that in all the working groups--adequacy, resource, and technical--that we stressed a) the need to increase MAP and b) the need for MAP to look like Pell. I referred to this as a "formula adjacent issue," but a commitment by the legislature and the governor to fund Higher Ed must go hand in hand with an increase in MAP.</p>
Process Issue/Modeling Alternatives	<p>A process issue, and one we could have explored but were never given the chance, was to essentially build a multi-tiered model—one that captures undergraduate education, one that captures non-professional Masters education, one that captures PhD education, one that captures professional degrees (MBA, JD, EdD), and one that captures health. This would have prevented much of the criticism around graduate education and the difficulty of medical schools. However, at some point, the one model fundamentally grounded in undergraduates became the model of choice.</p>
Are We Actually Capturing Total Cost for Students?	<p>I hate to pick on the Deputy Governor, but I recall vividly when he said that housing was "off the table" at being included in the model. When we look around at not just housing insecurity, but food insecurity for our students, that meeting made it clear that we might not <i>actually</i> be capturing the actual cost, or interested in the state covering the actual cost, of attendance for our students. For our most economically vulnerable students, which tend to be from our historically marginalized groups and first-generation students, to not be able to include that in the model strikes me as problematic</p>
It is Unclear How We are Dealing with Inflation	<p>The model uses a 3% inflation rate for state funding. The Higher Education Price Index in FY23 was closer to 4%. Discussions with my colleagues in Economics and the College of business said they would be surprised if it came down from that this fiscal year given that labor makes up such a sizable proportion of university budgets.</p> <p>The model assumes that new money can be used to provide the educational experiences needed by students to generate equitable outcomes. If the new money is, instead, used to compensate for</p>

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	<p>inflationary increases in expenses, the formula will not achieve its aims. So, the formula must by necessity account for inflation before it allocates new funding.</p> <p>If we assume that tuition cannot absorb inflation (because one of the overriding principles of this work has been to keep costs down for students), then the state has to absorb inflation on both its spending and on tuition. If funding were split 50-50 (which it is not), that means a 3% inflation rate requires 4.5% in inflationary funding. If that amount is not guaranteed to institutions, then those institutions will be taking a real cut in support, violating the hold harmless provision in reality if not in spirit.</p> <p>This was what HCM/Will was trying to explain during the last meeting, but it was clear by Rep. Ammons' reaction that the explanation was not working, so clearly the messaging/description/presentation needs to be improved. HOWEVER, even if it is, I am not sure we actually said how were dealing with inflation.</p>
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