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# ILLINOIS COMMISSION ON EQUITABLE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY FUNDING

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## **Illinois Commission on Equitable Public University Funding**

February 15, 2024: 9:00am-12:00pm CT

Meeting #14 Notes

### ***Welcome & Introductions***

Executive Director Ginger Ostro opened the meeting with a welcome and shared general announcements that the meeting was being conducted via videoconference pursuant to rules adopted by the Commission at the May 30, 2023 meeting. Notice of the meeting was posted in accordance with Open Meetings Act.

### ***Action: Approval of minutes from January 23, 2024 Commission Meeting***

Katie Lynne Morton called the roll to approve the minutes from the January 23, 2024 meeting. Co-Chair Leader Kimberly Lightford motioned to approve the minutes. Commissioner Cheryl Green seconded. The roll was called and twenty-four commissioners approved.

Executive Director Ostro reviewed the agenda.

### ***Process & Timeline***

Executive Director Ostro reviewed the timeline and process for closing out the Commission's work.

#### Timeline

- Feb 13: Draft report sent to Commission for review
- Feb 15: Commission meeting
  - Overview of output of the model and report
  - Discuss outstanding issues
- Feb 20: Comments on report due
- Feb 27: Commission meeting
  - Review comments and resulting changes made to report
- Mar 1: Submit final report

Co-Chair Pranav Kothari shared his agreement to the timeline that Executive Director Ostro outlined, and shared with the Commission that it would be helpful to get through a number of outstanding issues during the meeting so that folks are aware how they'll land in the report.

#### Remaining Issues

Martha Snyder walked through the issues that remain for the Commission to discuss, including:

##### Calculation of Adequacy Gap

- Research
- Medical cost factor
- Other Resources

##### Distribution of New State Investment

##### Allocation Formula Implementation

- Formula Upkeep Process
- Target Investment Level and Timeframe for Full Funding

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## **Discussion of Draft Report**

### Report Overview

Will Carroll walked through an overview of the draft final report, as follows:

#### Outline

- Introduction
- Context for the Commission's work: *Thriving Illinois*, current funding system & historical and existing inequities
- Commission overview: Charge, membership & process
- Formula Framework: Adequacy Target, Resource Profile & Adequacy Gap
- Implementation: Allocation Formula, Formula Upkeep, Accountability & Transparency
- Outstanding Issues: Medical Programs & Other Resources *[tbd]*

### Commission Report Content

#### Additional Commission recommendations

- Faculty diversity investment
- Hospitals & Athletics
- Deferred Maintenance
- Addressing non-tuition and fee costs
- Additional student populations
- IBHE capacity
- Data

#### Appendices

- Commission Membership
- Crosswalk of Formula to Legislative Charges
- Comparison Matrix of State Funding Formulas
- Enrollment of Various Student Populations by University
- Technical Appendix – Data Sources and Methodology
- Possible Metrics to Inform Accountability and Transparency

## **Discussion of Outstanding Issues**

### *Research - Revised Proposal*

In the initial approach, the base Research cost was intended to increase funding for Masters, while matching the current average institutional spending on research at the R2 and R3 levels. For R1s, the TWG decided to bring down from their average in recognition of the additional grant revenue. The revised proposal uses the same "match current spending" principles, but disaggregates between R2 and R3.

The Commissioners raised the following questions/discussion points:

- Question about how does this translate to fostering equity and the direct connection between the institutions receiving funding for this and serving students? Particularly, the students we're trying to drive better outcomes for. Underlying idea is that one of the high-impact practices for serving students is access to undergraduate research and how we are subsidizing it.
- Raised concern that there may be a little bit of a disconnect between best practices and driving towards the students in need.
- Echo comments on moving towards equity.
- A thought was raised to consider as the conversation evolves: Incentivizing institutions to provide more research opportunities could be done more effectively, outside the model?

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- Would be helpful to look at the cost and impact on the formula and everyone's adequacy target. Can be circulated, total cost is maybe \$2M as a result of this change.
- Commissioners shared agreement to keep it as part of the formula.
- Commissioners shared agreement that the distinction between R2 and R3 makes sense.
- Institutions like NEIU face similar challenges to provide laboratory experiences for our students, especially those from underrepresented groups -- and we rely heavily on grants to support these high-impact activities (e.g., summer research, faculty-student research mentorship).

### *Formula Upkeep Process*

#### Funding Formula Review Committee

A Funding Formula Review Committee should be charged with submitting recommended updates to the General Assembly every five years.

- Consist of a mix of current Commission members and new members.
- Include representatives from universities and other key stakeholders.
- A technical subcommittee working with IBHE can develop initial recommendations for the Committee's consideration.

Discussion: How soon should the committee meet and how frequently?

It can be helpful for the agency to have some authority to make technical changes or determinations in implementing the formula.

- Example: Data definitions

Policy changes should be made through legislation.

Current draft: "Provide IBHE administrative authority to make technical changes to the formula on an annual basis to address issues that arise before the Review Committee convenes. Only major policy changes should require statutory changes."

Discussion: How should the report delineate administrative authority for IBHE?

The Commissioners raised the following questions/discussion points:

- Should start as soon as possible
- Agreement was shared that it should be a standing committee in the first few years. Some issues that will come up unexpectedly and it's too important not to have this in place.
- Established with interim, ongoing reviews.
- Important as data is received, and data can be improved overtime.
- Opportunity for every campus to be involved in this would be important to have every voice at the table.
- Agreement was shared for the need for a review committee and frequency of meeting. Question regarding process: wouldn't have statutory ability to make changes? Would still have to go through the legislature. What is the line here? Better data that could be updated – can that bypass the legislative process? But larger changes would need to, yes? What's the line between maintenance and substantial change?

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- Conversation that statute would lay out everything re: rulemaking. Just “updating the data” may impact adequacy numbers, etc. so there is hesitation that something like updating the data wouldn’t need to go back to the General Assembly.
- What would trigger the review committee to come back to the legislative body?
- Important to remember that the appropriation of the dollars is an ask of the general assembly. It will be tough for a group that’s not elected to get approval for changes.
- Concurrence that the ultimate decision comes down to General Assembly. Trigger mechanisms are the difficult part. As a larger group, the committee can get to the point but the final decision has to go through the General Assembly.
- Can the review committee go back to the General Assembly in a shorter time to recommend changes to the formula? Legislatively-required five years formula review, but standing committee that is changed with looking at specific components and broad integrity. Unintended consequences would be raised when they come up (doesn’t have to wait five years).

### *Allocation Formula*

Proposal: Guardrail with remaining increase split 50/50 between the share of adequacy gap percentage and the share of adequacy gap dollars.

- Guardrail: Provide the same percent increase to all institutions
- Share of adequacy gap percentage: The percent “fully funded” an institution is divided by the sum of all institutions’ percentages.
- Share of adequacy gap dollars: A university’s total dollar gap divided by the statewide total dollar gap

### Key Questions:

- What share of new funding should go out across-the-board vs based on adequacy gaps?
- What should the target increase be every year?
- How should cuts be allocated?

The guardrail is equal to the lesser of inflation or half of the state appropriation increase.

The Commissioners raised the following questions/discussion points:

- Concern was raised that the guardrail increase seems to be counterintuitive to the Commission’s work. If guardrail increases, adequacy amount decreases. Seems difficult to embrace.
- If this is about equity, it needs to be about equity. The larger the guardrail is, the further we get from equity. We need a formula that doesn’t harm anyone. This entire process is about equity and we need to move forward in equity and not half do it.
- The guardrail factor of 50% seems excessively high. Would like to see different iterations with lower percentages.
- Fixed percentage of statute, not one that floats so that we know X amount goes to equity and adequacy each year.
- Agreement to expand chart with lower percentages.
- Scenario in which the 50% guardrail triggers? Policy choice, could be stated in statute. Twice inflation or less.
- What is the policy priority of the state? Driving of new money should be the equity and the adequacy.
- There is a difference between K12 EBF and how their formula works.
- Concern was raised regarding acting on something that doesn’t recognize the basic fact that inflation happens and costs go up. Don’t want institutions to be “behind” to just keep up with inflation.

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- Suggestion to look at models with lower guardrail factor percentages.
- Emphasize that having a guardrail wasn't a charge of the Commission; direct tradeoff. Holding tuition flat is different from holding costs equitable.
- Without a guardrail, do all institutions still get a piece of the funding? Yes, all institutions still have a level of adequacy gap.
- If state appropriations are not doubled, the guardrail is the lesser of the two?
- Pace of progress would be incredibly helpful.
- Appreciation was raised for the entire conversation.
- Is the assumption that all institutions have equal pressure to raise tuition? The adequacy gaps seem to suggest those furthest from adequacy have the most pressure to raise tuition.
- Our formula, no matter where we land, will be better than not having a formula.

A guardrail factor – or a weight applied to the guardrail – can further adjust how much funding goes out across-the-board versus based on adequacy. As the guardrail factor increases, fewer funds are allocated based on adequacy and equity. In many funding situations, the guardrail will allocate between 25%-50% of the funds.

Will Carroll walked through a table shared on screen that shows each institution's allocation at different guardrail factors: 50%, 67%, and 100%. As the guardrail factor increases, SIUC, UIC, and UIUC receive larger allocations, while the remaining institutions receive smaller allocations.

As the guardrail factor increases, UI-UC (and others closer to fully funded) makes more progress on its adequacy gap, while Governor's State (and others farthest from fully funded) sees less progress in closing its gap.

As the guardrail factor increases, UI-UC (and others closer to fully funded) receive increases to their state appropriation closer to or above inflation (3%), while Governor's State (and others farthest from fully funded) see smaller increases.

### Summary of Guardrail Factors

- The higher the guardrail factor:
  - Institutions with the largest gaps close their gaps more slowly.
  - More funding is distributed in an across the board manner, ensuring some minimal increase for all institutions.
- The higher the state appropriation, the lower the factor would need to be for all institutions see a reduction in their gap.
  - At a 9% increase in state funding, all institutions reduce their gaps at a guardrail factor of 64%.
  - At 4%, two institutions still have small increases (0.2%) in their gaps with a 100% guardrail factor.
- There is no way to calculate the "right" guardrail factor – it is a decision that weighs the following factors:
  - The likelihood of large state increases in funding
  - A trade-off between funding adequacy/equity (lower guardrail) and stability (higher guardrail)

Discussion: Does the Commission want to include a specific guardrail recommendation? Does a guardrail factor of 67% strike the right balance?

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The Commissioners raised the following questions/discussion points:

- Would be helpful to see the actual numbers (dollar value), how they break out and impact the institutions.
- Confusion was raised on the guardrail conversation and inability to follow. Will walked through an overview.
- Concept of a guardrail: does it have to be across the board? Can we set a rule for those who aren't at a certain % of adequacy. Once other institutions "catch up" then the institutions over the X% threshold can be brought into the conversation.
- Those schools furthest away from adequacy should have the support to help them get closer to adequacy.

### *Setting an Annual Target Increase*

The Commission can recommend a target annual increase for the General Assembly to appropriate each year (similar to EBF).

- The target increase would be intended to:
  - Close the adequacy gap within a certain timeframe
  - Use state funds to close the inflation-adjusted gap
  - Increase the likelihood of larger appropriations than in years past
- The target increase would not be intended to:
  - Eliminate all future needs to increase tuition
  - Fully cover all cost increases at universities

\$135m per year (12%): fully funds all institutions within 10 years

\$100m per year (9%): fully funds all institutions in 15 years

\$60m per year (5%): In year 15, the state gap is 21% down (down from 32%); institutions' gaps range from 11%-31%.

Discussion: Does the Commission want to include a recommended timeframe and/or annual funding level in the report?

The Commissioners raised the following questions/discussion points:

- Crucial to have a target amount that's expressed as a dollar amount that moves the ball forward. The target also needs to be realistic and achievable.
- Important to think about how this is the "unfinished business" in the education system.
- Faculty asking state to be ambitious to meet the goals set forth. We don't accomplish as much when we only aim for what's realistic and achievable. Always advocate to push higher, further, faster.
- Support for putting a dollar amount in the target increase, without affecting MAP.
- The target amount also needs to be ambitious and reflect the need at hand. And to be paired with other efforts to address and redress funding inequities and gaps.
- The formula funded at any level would be more equitable than the state's current approach to funding.
- The need to keep increasing MAP is so important for the students we want to get on to, and through, our campus programs.

### *Allocating State Funding Cuts*

Proposal: Ratio of the statewide adequacy gap to each institutional adequacy gap, plus a guardrail

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- Allocates cuts using the same principle as the formula for increases: prioritizing state resources for those farthest from adequacy.
- Does not solve the issue that universities more reliant on state appropriations receive larger cuts to their overall revenue, but reduces that impact compared to across-the-board.

Members of the TWG were supportive of this general concept. However, some wanted an option that would narrow the range of impacts across institutions, such that no single institution would take a much larger cut than others. A guardrail factor greater than 100% can limit that range.

Discussion: Does the Commission want to recommend a specific guardrail factor to use in the formula for allocating cuts?

The Commissioners raised the following questions/discussion points:

- Cuts across the board aren't equitable.
- Either "do the equity" or not. Can't decide to be equitable in one area, and not in another.
- Commissioners shared that it may be best to stick with the original proposal.

### *Medical Programs*

#### Separating Out Schools of Medicine

- This approach treats the Schools of Medicine at SIU, UI-C, and UI-UC as separate institutions, calculating their own adequacy targets, resource profiles, and adequacy gaps.
- SIU-Carbondale, UI-C, and UI-UC are split into two institutions each, one with college of medicine students and one with all other students.
- Data are not ready for full implementation
  - Required a number of assumptions that have not been fully pressure tested (e.g., what portion of state appropriations are used for schools of medicine)

Nate Johnson walked through the draft output chart with separate Schools of Medicine.

### *Other Resources - Endowment*

#### Commission Discussion and Context:

- Some stated that counting a portion of the endowment will disincentivize future philanthropy and that a substantial portion of the funds are restricted.
- Others voiced that the state must account for these resources in the formula given their scale, inequitable distribution, and impact on student outcomes.
- Estimated annual endowment revenue in the current model ranges from \$95,000 to \$80,000,000.
- Endowment revenue currently provides \$119.6 million towards adequacy costs.
- A \$1 million gift changes an adequacy gap by \$10,500, based on using a 4-year average and 4.2% spend-down rate. This changes the average adequacy gap by 0.01% and the allocation by less than \$100.

Alternative: A Commission member suggested counting endowment revenue only from endowments above a certain value. Endowments should be large enough before they must contribute those resources towards adequacy.



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Proposal: Base the minimum for an endowment on its ability to generate funds that support continued fundraising activities. Include 4.2% of the total endowment value, but exempt the first \$1 million in revenue from the formula.

Rationale: This ensures institutions have sufficient resources to support fundraising activities. \$1 million is derived from the overhead spending by the universities' endowment foundations; most lower-resourced institutions spend less than this, while larger endowed institutions spend \$5+ million.

The Commissioners raised the following questions/discussion points:

- Endowment dollars are not all the same. Some are earmarked for specific usage. Important to remember/reflect on this.

### **Public Comment**

Toya Barnes-Teamer reminded members of the public that they have up to three minutes to provide public comment.

- Aaron Arnold, Executive Director of Waukegan to College, a nonprofit organization that supports first-generation students to and through college. Mr. Arnold shared that he would like to compel the commission to continue pursuing equitable funding for students for whom access to a college education is essential to following their dreams. The students he serves approach their postsecondary education possibilities at a disadvantage in many ways. They come from under-resourced school districts, lack the experience and support of parents or caregivers who know and understand the path to college, and belong to social identity groups that have been historically marginalized. While many are able to overcome these barriers to getting to college, the number one reason they are not able to persist is due to financial hardship. This is not due to a lack of effort on their part as our students do what they can to minimize the cost of college, such as commuting or attending community college as a first step toward a four-year degree. The vast majority of the scholars work while they study, not only to cover their costs but also to fulfill their role as financial providers for their families. This demanding reality is a difficult challenge to overcome, and also a reason that many students and families are deterred from even exploring the option of a college education. The sticker shock is too much and they see it as an insurmountable obstacle to a brighter future. The ability to afford a college education is not the only issue that needs to be addressed in order for Illinois to say that we have an equitable post-secondary educational system. Students, like the ones Mr. Arnold serves, need and deserve unique supports as first-generation and low income students. As we face a mental health crisis among our youth, resources and services are essential for college students who bring with them the weight of trauma, which can be exacerbated by their striving to succeed and find their place in a new environment. They also need more guidance and support as they explore career paths and pursue career building opportunities like internships. They need to see representation among faculty and administration that encourages them and demonstrates that they can pursue similar opportunities. Mr. Arnold shared his belief in the potential of the students that he serves. He believes in their potential to excel as college students, and to mature into citizens who contribute to the betterment of their communities. They don't need sympathy, they need to be afforded the same opportunities and resources that for so long have been allocated, intentionally or out of inaction, to those who come from certain zip codes or identity groups. Mr. Arnold urged the commission to put forth recommendations that address



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the issues of inequity in the funding of our public universities and thanked the Commission for consideration of his comments. On behalf of the hundreds of students and families who make up Waukegan to College, he shared they are grateful for the work that the Commission is doing and count on the diligence and forthrightness concerning the inequity which must be confronted.

- Josh Stafford, Vienna High School superintendent. Mr. Stafford shared that it is worthy of a celebratory note that Illinois has achieved major strides in economic growth and stability in recent years. Per Crain's via Capitol Fax "federal data indicates that the size of Illinois' total economy has passed the \$1 trillion mark in annualized GDP. Illinois crossed that threshold in the first quarter of 2022, according to quarterly estimates from the U.S. Department of Commerce, and hit \$1.024 trillion in the second quarter of that year. Illinois is only the fifth state to top \$1 trillion in annualized GDP." The report goes on to explain, "...Illinois' Q2 number was 20% higher than the closest midwest state, which was Ohio at \$818 billion, and Illinois more than double the GDP of Indiana, which was only \$452 billion." The economic stature of Illinois clearly demands that Illinois have a world-class education system to supply and fuel its economy. Adequately funding all schools in a state like Illinois should be a foregone conclusion, and he shared that he is convinced, can be for our institutions of higher education with the work that this group is doing. State economic growth and stability correlate to higher education growth and stability in that respective state. The geography of Illinois allows it to have over 1,200 miles of borders. In Southern Illinois the residents are geographically closer to universities such as Ole Miss, Murray State, Wash U. St. Louis University, UK, Vanderbilt, University of Southern Indiana, and Southeastern Missouri State University than they are to Michigan Avenue. These states and institutions seem to be very hungry to attract our Illinois students. Mr. Stafford shared that he thinks that it is because they know the ROI for their respective economics that results due to attracting great Illinois talent. It is important to note that Illinois universities have been doing great work to ensure that this talent stays in Illinois, and he shared that he was grateful for that! However, the state must adequately and equitably resource these institutions for Illinois to win this battle. Without adequate and equitable funding in the Illinois universities, there will be students that either go out of state, go nowhere, or are buried in insurmountable debt. He shared that he's fearful that statistically the biggest enemy is the go nowhere group. Evidence-based funding has been pivotal in raising up underfunded K12 students in Illinois and Mr. Stafford is confident that a well-developed funding model for Illinois higher education will do the same. The students need to have a system in which they have no reason to consider any of those other out of state second class universities that he mentioned earlier.
- Cheryl Flores, on behalf of Minvera Garcia-Sanchez (DeKalb CUSD 428 Superintendent). Ms. Flores shared a letter written by Dr. Minerva Garcia-Sanchez: "As a leader in Community Unit School District #428 where over 50% of our students live in poverty, we are keenly aware of the critical need for financial support for state universities. Additionally, many of our district and school leaders are alumni of Northern Illinois University (NIU) and several are current doctoral students. We can attest to the significant positive impact this specific institution has had on our lives, careers, and families. We are writing to urge the commission to prioritize equity and center student needs in their funding decisions, recognizing the vital role that state universities like NIU play in providing opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds. We support the work of the commission because we have personally witnessed the barriers to higher education access faced by many students, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The

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commission's efforts have the potential to address these barriers by ensuring adequate funding for programs and services that support student success." As school leaders, we have experienced firsthand the transformative power of higher education. Furthermore, NIU has been a longstanding partner of our school district, contributing to continuing education opportunities for educators and higher education opportunities for our students. Through initiatives such as free tutoring, STEAM summer camps, internships for high school students, and scholarly research in education, NIU has demonstrated its commitment to supporting our community. A high-quality and adequate higher education, from our perspective, encompasses access to comprehensive support services such as academic counseling, mental health resources, and retention support. It is crucial to actualize this vision to empower students and communities. The work of the commission can have a profound impact on students and Illinois communities by fostering greater educational attainment and economic opportunity. When considering the cost of attending college, the state should take into account not only tuition and fees but also other expenses such as room and board, transportation, food, and childcare. Affordability plays a crucial role in ensuring equitable access to higher education. In terms of accountability, it is essential for universities to be transparent about how additional funding is spent and its impact on student enrollment and outcomes. Moreover, institutions should be held accountable for prioritizing student-centered and equity-focused initiatives. On behalf of DeKalb CUSD #428, we want to thank the members of the commission for the opportunity to testify and we appreciate the consideration of our recommendations. For the work that we do, it is imperative to keep equity at the forefront of the decision-making processes to ensure that all students, regardless of their backgrounds, have equal opportunities for success. We recommend that institutions prioritize equitable investments in areas such as student support services, financial aid, and faculty diversity to enhance the educational experience for all students."

- Paola Salgado, on behalf of a student who's a member of the Student Advisory Council for the Partnership for College. Ms. Salgado read "To whom it may concern. As the commission on equitable public university funding continues to prepare to release its recommendations for an adequate, equitable and stable public higher education funding formula for the state of Illinois, we urge you to continue advocating for the students of Illinois. Equitable access to funding in the state's higher education system will not only increase access for our students, especially our Black and low-income students, but also provide a pathway to degree completion. When students don't have to worry about funding their higher education, they can focus on what's important to them: their studies, mental health, extracurricular activities, and quality of life on campus. As the commission considers how does affirmative action decision could impact the development of an equitable funding formula in Illinois, we want to remind you of your commitment to equity, which includes funding that offers the best educational experience for our student success and completion. It has been my experience that funding is the end all be all equalizer that can lift disadvantaged students from struggling to thriving in their higher education institutions. I have been privileged enough to not have to worry about funding my education for the past three years and the weight off my shoulders of not worrying about the financial struggle while in school has increased my personal performance. While the funding I have received has covered my tuition, I have been able to take less hours at work, focus more on extracurricular activities and remain engaged on campus. I have watched my peers, who are equally as brilliant and intellectual, struggle in classes because funding for their education was in question.

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When that question gets answered, talented students can strive to be the best students they can be. An equity centered funding formula is crucial and ending inequitable investment and disinvestment that impacts access and degree attainment. We ask you to consider this when determining how the commission will proceed with its equitable funding plan.”

- Jorge Arteaga. Mr. Arteaga spoke on behalf of a young advocate speaking to the issue of establishing an equity funding formula here in Illinois. He read “I first want to say thank you to all commission members and leaders in this commission for coming together to begin to address inequities across public colleges in Illinois. My name is Trevon Bosley. I’m a 25-year-old advocate with Young Invincibles, an advocacy organization empowering adults to take action and issues they face in our higher education workforce and healthcare system. I’m a Southern Illinois University Edwardsville alumni and I’m here in support of an equitable funding formula. I come from a low income, underrepresented, and violence-stricken community on the southside of Chicago. I am one of many youth who saw college as an opportunity to escape the daily dangers and traumatic experiences that occur in our communities every day. I am one of many youth who saw college as a way to finally experience adequate resources, support, and facilities unlike those experienced throughout grade school, high school, and resources directly in my community. Like many of you from the southside of Chicago, I saw college as an opportunity to gain knowledge and tools that we could take back to our community to better the conditions we have once experienced. It wasn’t until I began my search for the best state university for me to explore all of these opportunities, resources and supports that I realized my options were far smaller than I had always been led to believe. These minimum choices are not because I did not have the academic merit to get into my school of choice, but because there were stark differences between the quality and quantity of resources available across universities. Although there were universities that offered appealing culture, staff, and environment, they did not have the necessary funding for the different academic services, resources, or systems in place that I or any young adult from the southside of Chicago would need in order to succeed in higher education. While I enjoyed the resources my alma mater offered for low income youth like the SOAR program and Haley scholarship, I know a lot of students need even more support. Universities could do a better job of offering even more resources that cannot happen if we are not equitably funding our universities and the resources they provide. The current funding strategy creates the problem of having multiple students fighting to enjoy the expansive resources, only one or two public colleges can offer while there are multiple other public colleges in the state of Illinois that should have the funding to offer if not the same level of opportunities and resources. I truly know and believe that the funding formula and Illinois can begin to ensure that all young adults from any community have access to the resources, services, and support they need to succeed at any public institution, not just a few. I would like to once again thank the commission for the opportunity to share my experience and support for an equitable funding formula.”
- Sema Patel, recent STEM graduate at University of Illinois at Chicago. Ms. Patel shared that she is the eldest child of two immigrants. While a student, it was very important for her to attend a university that could provide a learning environment that encompassed cultural competency from professors to peers addressing and accommodating to cultural differences. University of Illinois Chicago had professors and teaching assistants from diverse large diverse backgrounds and various cultural support spaces. Although UIC was able to provide her with some supportive services for young adults coming from a first-generation immigrant household, she came

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across many gaps in cultural competency and resources as she progressed through her academic journey. Cultural and adequate resources were limited to the volume of students that can be supported. Many students like Ms. Patel, who came from cultural backgrounds with various dietary restrictions, face food insecurity as food halls lack nutrient options for diets such as vegetarians, halal, and vegan. Nutrition is a key factor in academic performance. No young adults should face food insecurity or nutritional deficiency caused by the lack of resources and accommodations available at the university impacting their academic performance. This financial burden then falls on students and can become very difficult for low-income students. It is hard for universities to even create a culturally competent and accommodating environment for their students without equitable funding. Ms. Patel shared that she was grateful for UIC's continuous efforts to expand cultural services, but she knows that many young adults attending smaller universities or ones located outside the city face a larger gap in having a culturally competent learning environment and accommodations. Being able to achieve her degree has impacted her positively and it equipped her with skills transferable in the workforce and competencies of various areas of healthcare and research to play a role in improving the quality of life. Ms. Patel has successfully been able to receive a degree through her own personal hardship and perseverance. She shared that she believes that every young adult in Illinois should be able to receive a high-quality education along with supportive services that allows them to just worry about being a student no matter the college they decide to go to without sacrificing their quality of life.

### ***Closing Announcements and Adjournment***

Martha Snyder walked through the next steps for Commissioners to provide comments to the draft report.

- Feedback can be provided as "General Comments" or "Specific Comments"
  - The General Comments section addresses issues that may apply to more than one section of the report or to issues not currently covered in the report.
  - The Specific Comments section should include comments directed at a particular section or wording of the report. For example, these might be suggested line edits or new language.
- Describe in a few words the topic your comment addresses in "Topic of Comment" field.
- Record your comment/feedback in the "Comment" field.
- Directions are included on the form to add additional rows, if needed.
- Save your document and email to Katie Lynne at [katie\\_lynne\\_morton@hcmstrategists.com](mailto:katie_lynne_morton@hcmstrategists.com)

All final comments are due by 5pm CT on February 20, 2024. The next Commission meeting was scheduled for February 27, 2024 at 9am CT.

### ***Commission Members in attendance***

Senate Majority Leader Kimberly Lightford, Co-Chair  
Deputy Governor for Education Martin Torres, Co-Chair  
Representative Carol Ammons, Co-Chair  
Pranav Kothari, Co-Chair  
Representative Dan Swanson  
Representative Katie Stuart  
Sheila Caldwell  
John Coleman

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Lisa Castillo-Richmond  
Dr. Wendi Wills El-Amin  
Cherita Ellens  
Dr. Katrina Bell-Jordan  
Matt Bierman  
Cheryl Green  
Warren Richards  
Guiyou Huang  
Aondover Tarhule  
Dan Mahony  
Ralph Martire  
Dr. Karen Colley  
Zaldwaynaka "Z" Scott  
Robin Steans  
Respicio Vazquez  
Simón Weffer  
Eric Zarnikow

*Commission Members not in attendance*

Senator Mike Halpin  
Senator Dale Fowler  
Representative Mike Marron  
Senator Terri Bryant  
Lisa Freeman  
Brandon Kyle  
Brandon Schwab  
Jack Wuest

*Support Team Members in attendance*

Ginger Ostro  
Jaimee Ray  
David Antonacci  
Martha Snyder  
Will Carroll  
Jimmy Clarke  
Toya Barnes-Teamer  
Nate Johnson  
Katie Lynne Morton  
Brenae Smith