

Illinois Board of Higher Education  
Student Advisory Committee (IBHE-SAC)  
Resolution Offered to the IBHE Board  
**March 15, 2023**

WHEREAS, the Illinois Board of Higher Education's (IBHE) Student Advisory Committee (SAC) is committed to advocating for the needs of Illinois students such that all students are provided equal and equitable opportunity to pursue and complete their education in Illinois, while being supported by Illinois' higher education environment. Facilitating a campus culture and climate such that student basic needs, health and wellness, mental health, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) needs are met with the Illinois higher education institutions, agencies, and higher education system, working not only for, but with students as partners, to reach these goals; and

WHEREAS, the IBHE's Strategic Planning initiative, *A Thriving Illinois*, stands on the three pillars of Equity, Sustainability and Growth. These pillars connect to the overarching goal of economic prosperity and growth for the state's higher education system, and reflect challenges identified by SAC members; and

WHEREAS, IBHE-SAC advocates for all students to feel respected, safe, welcome, supported, represented, included, valued, and empowered; and

WHEREAS, IBHE-SAC advocates for student success, efficacy, and wellness to be one of Illinois' foremost priorities when allocating the yearly budget for higher education and higher education plans; and

WHEREAS, IBHE-SAC seeks to champion creation of a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students, faculty, and staff, which is essential to promoting academic excellence and preparing students to live and work in a global society; and

WHEREAS, IBHE-SAC advocates for all student needs, including but not limited to health and mental health, childcare, food insecurity, homelessness, DEI, interfaith, affordability and financial assistance struggles, and resources such as textbooks, school supplies, technology and non-traditional student needs; and

WHEREAS, students of Illinois identified lack of awareness around support resources for basic needs, student health and wellness, and diversity, equity, and inclusion to be most critical at this time; and

WHEREAS, the educational experience of Illinois students reflects the education system, the challenges, and barriers students face, including the supports and resources that have or have not been made available, as well as aspects of the higher education system students seek to change to address these issues; and

WHEREAS, mental health has come to the forefront of student concern in recent years. It is repeatedly stated as a significant unmet basic need on campuses, as well as where diversity,

equity, and inclusion obstacles can result in traumatic experiences and increased mental health necessities; and

WHEREAS, since the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act was signed into law in 2019, supporters have been advocating for funding. About a third of what is needed has been provided in supplemental appropriations to public institutions of higher education for this fiscal year. IBHE-SAC urges the continued, and eventual, full funding of these initiatives to ensure student mental health awareness and resource availability on all campuses; and

WHEREAS, equity gaps in financial aid are a critical issue identified by students in Illinois. The IBHE's Strategic Plan identifies affordability as one of the biggest barriers to higher education access and success, especially for low-income students, students of color, working adults, rural students, and many others who are underserved by the higher education system. Implementing policies and spreading awareness on student support and success resources in alliance with student leaders can increase access to education and retention; and

WHEREAS, the Governor has recommended an additional \$100 million for the state's Monetary Award Program (MAP) for the next fiscal year to help meet the needs of students experiencing financial challenges to attending college; and

WHEREAS, unmet diversity, equity, and inclusion needs, including basic human rights needs as tied to factors of intersectionality such as gender, race, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability status, veteran status, and other identities act as barriers to student success; and

WHEREAS, retention of students, especially underrepresented students, and the strengthening of on-campus opportunities for students to be connected to the campus community and included, as well as enroll, persist, and complete their studies, are areas in need of critical action in collaboration with student leaders to advise initiatives around awareness and support; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the IBHE-SAC urges the Illinois Board of Higher Education to prioritize student success and wellness by allocating adequate resources and funding each year to meet the diverse needs of all students. This includes improving campus inclusivity, providing support for basic needs like healthcare and housing, and addressing systemic barriers to diversity, equity, and inclusion by working closely with student leaders to create and implement initiatives that promote retention and academic success for all students and establishing systems that champion student voices and feedback; and be it further

RESOLVED, that student leaders should be included in the conversation around development and implementation of resources, and to spread awareness and engagement through other community-building means, in collaboration with the IBHE Board and its ongoing Strategic Planning work.

### **Additional Thoughts from Illinois Students:**

*"More funding in this area (basic needs and wellness) to help more people and educate them on wellness topics. I also suggest connecting students to community resources like food stamps, rental assistance, financial assistance, and mental health programs outside of school. Mental health days should also exist, so students can take time off without being penalized for having a mental health emergency or episode."*

*"Interfaith needs are incredibly critical to student safety, success and as a fundamental human right, being able worship and perform ablution, pray and have the facilities and support of the campus community of faculty and staff so that if you're in class accommodations can be made so you can pray at the necessary time as made mandatory by your religion and practice freely and openly with an increased awareness and support around these needs especially where the school is providing space and facilities like an Interfaith Room and ablution room to do so. While some schools already have these resources, there are more that do not."*

*"It has been a widespread theme across Illinois that students state there are information barriers in learning about and connecting to on-campus resources. Almost every person I know is struggling financially while in college or even after graduation. Sometimes, it feels like services aren't openly available for students; it almost feels like a secret, like you need to 'know someone that knows someone' to get the services that you need."*

*"I would like to see the system be more inclusive of people with invisible disabilities or mental health differences. Safe spaces for all people are necessary."*

*"Initiatives that address addiction recovery services, financial and healthcare support, home safety and stigma around BNI, PTSD support, and safe housing are crucial."*

*"Would like to see more on-campus jobs and resources available for international students."*