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June 18, 2019

INCREASE TO ILLINOIS HIGHER EDUCATION IS A MOVE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

SPRINGFIELD—Higher education officials are relieved to see a budget increase for next year, plus a new capital program for repairs and new construction. The FY 2020 state budget includes \$154 million in new dollars for higher education in Illinois, or an 8.2 percent increase over the current fiscal year, for an operations and student assistance total of \$2.05 billion. “It’s definitely good news for colleges and universities,” said Nyle Robinson, interim executive director, Illinois Board of Higher Education.

“We’re especially gratified to see this level of funding for the Monetary Award Program,” said Eric Zarnikow, executive director of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC).

“This is the largest appropriation that the program has ever received for a single year, and it’s going to allow ISAC to serve more students and make up some of the purchasing power that the program has lost over the years. Overall, this budget for higher education is going to make college possible for more Illinois students.”

The \$13.9 million increase for the community college operations and adult education programs represents an increase of 5 percent over this year. “The Illinois Community College System thanks the Illinois General Assembly and Gov. JB Pritzker for recognizing the important role

that community colleges play educating the workforce of the future and growing our economy,” said Brian Durham, executive director, Illinois Community College Board. “Additional operating support and new capital dollars will allow community colleges to continue to offer high quality, affordable programs and services throughout the state.”

“While this is positive movement, we still have a lot of ground to make up,” said Robinson. “Our colleges and universities are still repairing the damage from the budget impasse, and we hope this budget ushers in a new philosophy of stability and recovery,” said Robinson.

Highlights of the budget:

Illinois Student Assistance Commission

- A \$50 million increase in MAP funding to \$451 million, a historic high for the annual appropriation for a statewide grant program that helps make college possible for low income students.
- An increase of \$10 million for AIM HIGH grants, bringing the appropriation to \$35 million to support eligible students attending Illinois public universities.
- The budget also increases state support for ISAC’s college access and outreach services as federal funding for these programs declines, ensuring that students and families statewide will continue to have access to one-on-one mentoring and assistance with the college-going and financial aid process.

Illinois Community College Board:

- An increase of \$13.9 million (5 percent) for the community college operating grants and the adult education system.
- \$1.0 million increase for transitional math and English.
- \$23.8 million in additional dollars for bridge programs and student support services.

Illinois Board of Higher Education:

- A 4.8 percent funding bump (\$53 million) for state universities.
- \$1 million increase for Grow Your Own, which encourages Illinois parents and others connected to schools to become teachers here in the state.

- A 3 percent increase (\$552,000) for the Illinois Math and Science Academy.

Rebuild Illinois, the capital program, includes \$3.2 billion in reappropriated capital, capital renewal funding, and new project dollars. “We anticipate that the funding for this program over the six years of the program will allow dozens of projects at the state’s colleges and universities. Some of these projects have been on the list for a decade,” said Robinson. “This would stop the decay in facilities and allow modernization to prepare students for the economy of the future.”

The program would fund 72 projects at colleges and universities, and 91 at community colleges. Capital Renewal money will help address deferred maintenance projects that were postponed due to diminishing state funding.

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[Editor’s note: A list of capital projects can be found starting at page 21 at

https://www.ibhe.org/board/2019/04June2019/Item_E-1_FY20_Appropriation_General_Assembly_Action.pdf.]