



Contact: IBHE [Melissa Hahn](#) 217-557-7354
ISAC [Lynne Baker](#) 847/831-8024
ICCB [Matt Berry](#) 217/785-7411

February 20, 2020

HIGHER EDUCATION AGENCIES FIND ANOTHER YEAR OF RECORD INVESTMENT IN GOVERNOR'S BUDGET PROPOSAL

SPRINGFIELD—Higher education funding for public universities and community colleges in Illinois would gain a \$109.7 million increase according to Gov. JB Pritzker's budget proposal for fiscal year 2021.

This includes dedicated financial support through the state's need-based Monetary Award Program (MAP) grant program to make community college tuition-free for eligible students whose families make less than \$45,000 per year.

The three higher education boards say students will benefit from the governor's proposed investment through greater access, equity, and attainment.

"This is outstanding news for students across the state as well as our colleges and universities that serve them," said Ginger Ostro, executive director, IBHE. "This second year of increased investment signals that we have a champion who understands how important higher education is to students, families, employers, and the state as a whole."

In addition, the governor's proposal to bring each of Illinois' public universities into the national Common Application would allow students to fill out one application for 12 universities, eliminating one barrier to access.

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The overall higher education budget proposal totals \$2.178 billion, which would reflect a 5.4 percent increase over the current year's budget.

Increases would include:

- \$55.6 million (5 percent) for public universities
- \$14.9 million (5 percent) for community colleges and adult education
- \$50 million for MAP
- \$1 million to convert all Illinois public universities to the national Common Application

"The governor's commitment to an additional \$50 million for MAP can truly change the trajectory for college access in Illinois," said Eric Zarnikow, executive director of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), the state's college access and financial aid agency. "An appropriation of \$501 million for MAP in FY 2021 will, for the first time in decades, allow us to provide a MAP award to nearly all MAP-eligible students. Expanded funding for MAP is critical as Illinois invests in low-income students."

A MAP set aside for community college students will mean that 15 percent (\$75 million) of MAP dollars will be used specifically for that group of learners. "The investment in a MAP set aside for community college students is a commitment to equity, access and attainment for working families in Illinois," said Brian Durham, executive director of the Illinois Community College Board. "This set aside will allow community college students to make decisions knowing they will have the support of the state."

The governor's suggested increase in MAP would make community college tuition-free for all MAP-eligible students with family income under \$45,000 who also receive a federal Pell Grant. Overall, increased MAP funding will extend assistance to an additional 20,000 students, which is over and above the 10,000 additional MAP and AIM HIGH students who are being funded in this fiscal year.

His budget also provides funding for statewide implementation of the national Common Application. Streamlining the application process for the state's public, four-year universities will allow students to use just one form to apply to all. "It's a way to make the application process simpler for students," said Ostro.

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The Common App provision would make Illinois the first state with all public four-year universities using one application. Currently, students from Illinois were the fifth largest group that used the Common App, but they were using it to apply to out-of-state schools.

Highlights of the proposed budget:

Illinois Student Assistance Commission

- A \$50 million increase in MAP funding to \$501 million, an historic high for the annual appropriation for a statewide grant program that helps make college possible for low-income students
- Continued funding for the AIM HIGH Grant pilot program, through which public universities offer means-tested, merit-based aid to attract and support Illinois students
- The proposed 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 \$14.9 million (5 percent) for the community college operating grants and the adult education system
- \$5 million to create a new grant program to expand community college apprenticeship programs
- 15 percent set-aside of MAP grants for community college students, which along with federal assistance will lead to tuition-free community college for students with family incomes under \$45,000.

Illinois Board of Higher Education:

- A 5 percent funding bump (\$55.6 million) for state universities
- \$1 million to expand use of the Common Application to public universities. Currently, only two universities—the University of Illinois Chicago and Chicago State University—use the Common Application.
- A 5 percent increase (\$947,000) for the Illinois Math and Science Academy.

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