

# **GAME CHANGERS**

**Innovative Practices in Illinois Higher Education**

**Illinois Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon**

**February 2013**

# CONTENTS

Introduction . . . . .	1
Illinois Public Higher Education: The Affordability Landscape . . . . .	2
Lieutenant Governor Simon’s Affordability Summits - Fall 2012 . . . . .	8
Findings . . . . .	9
Innovative Practices I: “Game Changers” . . . . .	12
Innovative Practices II: “Low-Hanging Fruit” . . . . .	16
Next Steps . . . . .	18

## INTRODUCTION

Education policymakers in Illinois recognize that in order for the state to remain globally competitive and to improve the quality of life for its residents, a higher percentage of working adults will need post-secondary credentials: college degrees and high-quality certifications. According to a 2012 Lumina Foundation report, 41.3% of Illinois' working-age adults (ages 25-64) had an associate or bachelor's degree. The state has joined forces with several national organizations, including the Lumina Foundation and Complete College America, to adopt a **post-secondary completion goal of 60% by the year 2025**.

For the "60 x 2025" goal to become a reality, students must be ready for advanced study, must have access to high-quality post-secondary programs, must be able to afford college costs, and must persist through those programs to completion and credential attainment. These factors can be combined in a simple equation:

### **Readiness + Access + Affordability + Persistence = Completion**

To date, Illinois has put in place several state initiatives to address the "60 x 2025" goal. Some examples include:

- ◆ Adopting new, more rigorous K-12 Common Core Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics;
- ◆ Developing model mathematics curriculum guidelines aligned to the Common Core;
- ◆ Strengthening K-12 educator preparation and evaluations;
- ◆ Adopting performance funding metrics based on progress and completion for awarding a portion of state appropriations to higher education institutions;
- ◆ Establishing career preparation "pathways" spanning K-12 and higher education in nine high-demand career fields;
- ◆ Maintaining a large state-funded college financial aid program for needy students; and
- ◆ Building a longitudinal data system to track student progress from preschool into the workforce.

In the fall of 2012, Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon toured all 12 Illinois public university campuses to investigate affordability issues and how institutions and students are addressing the challenges of high college costs. This report focuses on the affordability factor in the completion equation and a variety of effective campus-based projects, programs, and practices that can help to ease cost burdens for students.

# ILLINOIS PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION: THE AFFORDABILITY LANDSCAPE

## Three main factors influence affordability in Illinois' public higher education institutions: state appropriations, tuition rates, and financial aid.

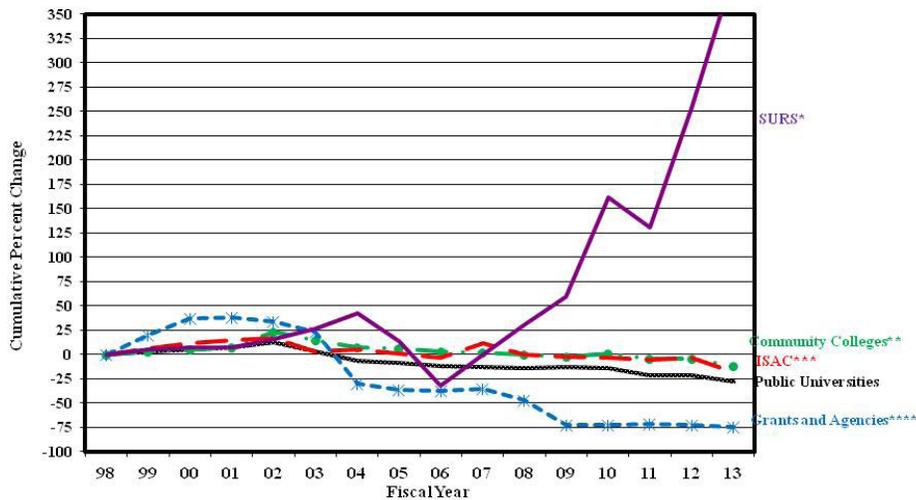
These factors interact in predictable ways. For example, when state appropriations decline, institutions compensate by raising tuition. When financial aid is readily available, it compensates for higher tuition rates. And when both state appropriations decline and financial aid dollars are scarce, high tuition costs can be a serious barrier to affordability for many students.

### State Appropriations

The state allocates funds to public education institutions based on annual budget requests submitted through the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). Historically, the state has provided fairly generous support to higher education; however, as seen in Figure 1, in recent years this support has been mostly directed to bolstering the underfunded State University Retirement System (SURS).

**Figure 1**

**Percent Change in State Appropriations for Higher Education by Sector FY 1998-2013**  
(in FY 2013 dollars)



\* Includes State General Funds and State Pension Fund.  
 \*\* Includes Adult Ed beginning FY02 and Career & Tech. Ed beginning FY 2004. Grants to colleges have declined since FY 2002.  
 \*\*\* Includes Student Loan Operating Fund appropriations for MAP (FY 07 and FY 12 and MAP Plus in FY 2007 only).  
 \*\*\*\* Includes Budget Relief Fund (FY 2009 only). Beginning in FY 2009, Medical Scholarships transferred to IDPH and beginning in FY 2011 Grow Your Own Teach program transferred to IBHE from ISBE.

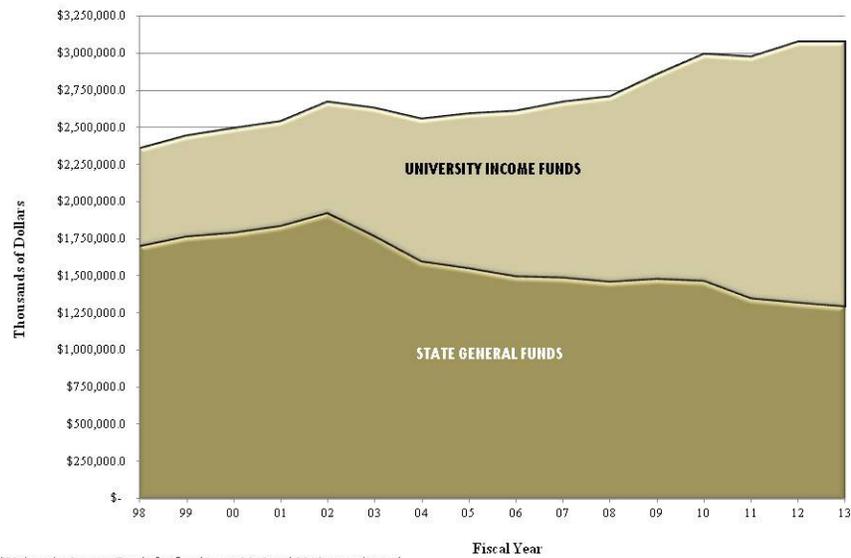
Source: IBHE records.

Source: IBHE December 2012 Board Item

According to IBHE records, from 1998 to 2013, after adjusting for inflation and excluding programs transferred among state agencies, actual appropriations for public higher education have declined considerably: universities by 27.6% and community colleges by 24.9%. The graphs in Figure 2 show the relative shifts in state and local funds for universities and colleges since 1998:

**Figure 2: State and Local Revenue Trends**

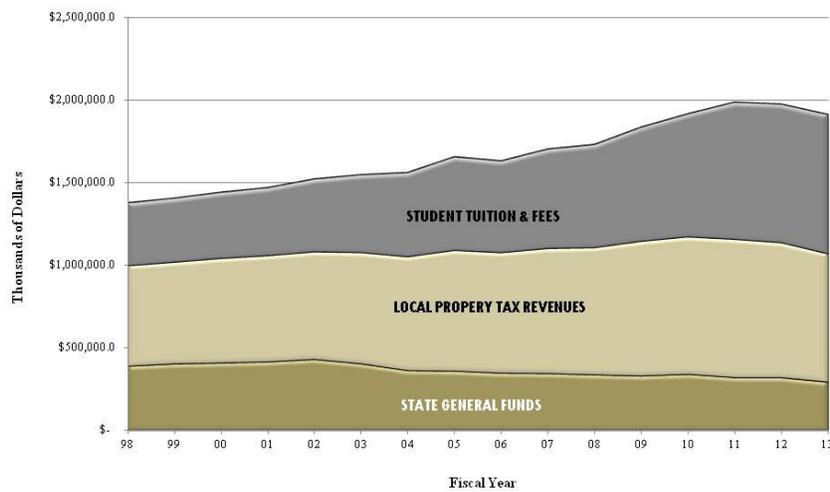
**Trends in Educational and Related Revenues at Illinois Public Universities  
Fiscal Years 1998 to 2013\* (in FY 2013 dollars)**



\* University Income Funds for fiscal years 2012 and 2013 are estimated.

Source: IBHE records.

**Trends in Educational and Related Revenues at Illinois Community Colleges  
Fiscal Years 1998 to 2013\* (in FY 2013 dollars)**



\* Local Property Tax Revenues and Student Tuition and Fees amounts for fiscal years 2012 and 2013 are estimated.

Source: IBHE records.

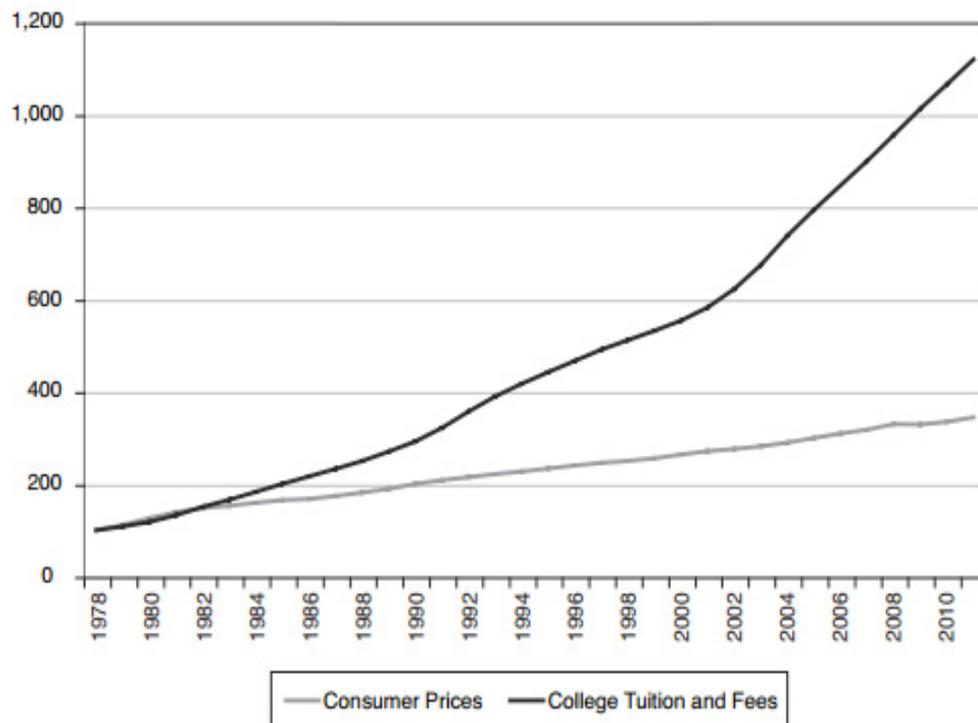
The state did provide some funding increases in FY 2007-2009; however, in 2010, funding was cut back to 2006 levels, and according to IBHE, in FY2013 state support was at its lowest level in over ten years.

With the state currently grappling with a massive underfunded pension liability, the outlook for larger state appropriations for public higher education is bleak.

## Tuition

Predictably, given declining state appropriations, public higher education tuition rates have risen markedly over the past few decades. As seen in Figure 3, this is a national trend.

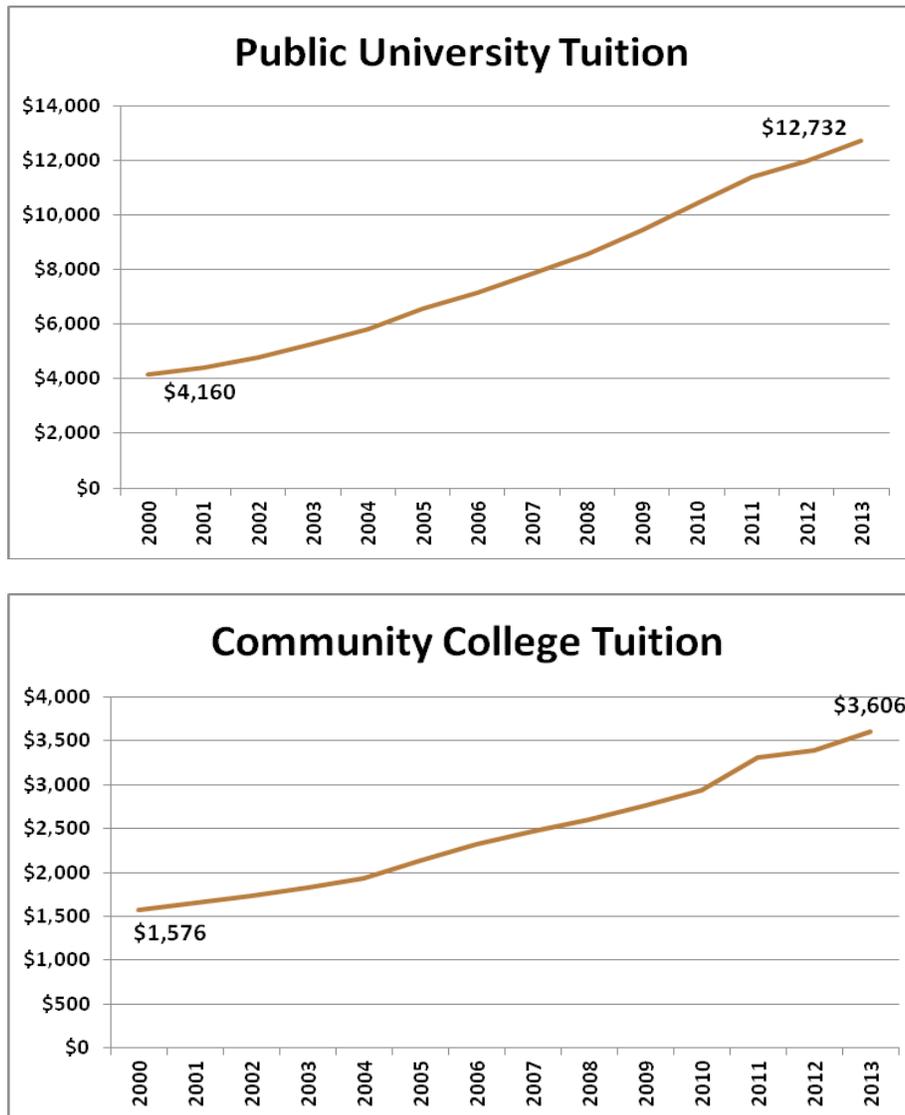
**Figure 3. Consumer Price Inflation compared to Tuition and Fee Increases (1978 = 100)**



Source: Center for College Affordability 2012 and U.S. Department of Labor Statistics

As shown in Figure 4, Illinois public university tuition rate increases mirror this national trend, and while community college tuition remains much lower than that for public universities, tuition costs are also rising in reaction to declining state appropriations.

**Figure 4: Average Illinois Public Institution Tuition (weighted by previous year's FTE enrollment)**



Source: Illinois Student Assistance Commission

## Financial Aid

Students can typically seek several sources of financial assistance for college attendance: their families, grants, loans, scholarships and work income. If eligible by virtue of income status, students can access federal Pell grants, which can be used for tuition, fees, and other expenses and do not have to be repaid. Using the same Pell-eligibility criteria, Illinois provides tuition and fee grants through the Monetary Assistance Program (MAP).

The state's MAP grants can be considered highly successful: they provide access to college for students who otherwise could not afford to attend, and low-income MAP recipients historically graduate at the same rate as non-low-income students. In other words, MAP grants contribute to raising the college completion rate, in support of the "60 x 2025" goal.

However, according to a very recent task force report, MAP's potential impact has diminished in recent years. Increased student demand, coupled with rapidly increasing tuition and flat or declining appropriations, have reduced MAP's ability to provide sufficient grant aid to eligible students. According to the report:

"In 2002, the maximum award covered the average cost of tuition and fees at an Illinois public university; today, in FY2013, it covers about 37 percent of the cost. In 2002, MAP completely covered the cost of community college tuition and fees. Today, the maximum award paid, which is based on community college costs in FY2004, covers about 51 percent of the cost. A substantial part of the tuition increase for public colleges and universities has been driven by declining state appropriations to those sectors.

Ten years ago, the program had sufficient funds to offer awards to all eligible students who applied. Today about half the applications received are "suspended" – the [eligible] applicant fails to receive a grant due to lack of funding."

*Source: Monetary Award Program Task Force Report, December 2012*

In summary, the MAP program is now meeting roughly half the cost of tuition and fees for half of the eligible students, leaving about 75% of financial need unmet among potential future graduates.

In addition, changes to the federal Pell program and questions about rising student loan debt make it increasingly difficult to chart a predictable financial path to a college credential.

Along with grants and loans, students also mitigate college costs through paid work on or off campus. Federal work-study programs subsidize campus jobs, and some institutions also hire student workers from local funds. Many programs of study also partner with private business to offer students paid internships. With the help of campus financial aid staff, many students "package" multiple aid sources to make attendance affordable.



## ***Higher Education Affordability: A National Concern***

In January 2013, Moody's Investor Service, Inc. announced a negative outlook for the entire U.S. higher education sector, citing diminishing prospects for revenue growth or even stability. The rating agency predicted that, in order to remain viable, universities will have to contain costs even more than they did after the 2008 economic downturn.

The Moody's report goes on to cite declining state appropriations, rising student loan debt, flat or declining research funding, and diminished returns on endowment investments as factors that will threaten higher education's market strength. Students who fear incurring excessive loan debt are questioning the value of a college degree. Yet we know that the economic marketplace will demand ever more skilled workers.

**Against this state and national backdrop, Lt. Governor Simon set out to investigate affordability issues on the state's public university campuses.**

## Lieutenant Governor Simon's "Affordability Summits" - Fall 2012

**After completing her 2011 tour of Illinois' 48 community colleges, in 2012 Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon turned her attention to affordability issues at the state's 12 public university campuses.**

### **Summit Goals**

The goals for the summits were fourfold:

- ◆ To hear directly from students about college affordability issues and concerns
- ◆ To urge state, federal and higher education leaders to work together to on affordability issues so that more students can earn credentials needed for good-paying jobs
- ◆ To endorse three key reforms for state, federal and higher education leaders to rally around to control costs: the use of College Choice Reports for all degree-granting institutions in Illinois, the continued state funding of MAP grants, and the extension of American Opportunity Tax Credits for middle class families and students.
- ◆ To seek additional innovative programs and practices that can reduce costs and bolster completion rates

### **Summit Process and Schedule**

During each visit, the Lieutenant Governor met with campus administrators and faculty, and met specifically with students to hear how they were addressing college costs. She job-shadowed work-study students on each campus to learn not only how these jobs were helping them to afford college, but also how students were able to juggle academic and work demands.

Oct. 11	University of Illinois Chicago
Oct. 15	Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Oct. 18	Illinois State University
Oct. 18	Western Illinois University
Oct. 19	Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
Oct. 23	University of Illinois Springfield
Oct. 24	University of Illinois Urbana Champaign
Oct. 29	Eastern Illinois University
Nov. 13	Governors State University
Nov. 15	Chicago State University
Nov. 16	Northern Illinois University
Dec. 12	Northeastern Illinois University

## FINDINGS

Lieutenant Governor Simon gathered findings on affordability challenges and cost-saving/completion practices. She observed first-hand how state-level policy and budget decisions affected campus-level affordability and degree completion. She also noted that many campuses have implemented innovative ways to contain costs for students while supporting their paths to college degrees. However, she also found that these effective practices were often being “reinvented” in isolation, without a state-level strategy to share good ideas and take them to scale.

### *Affordability Challenges: A Campus Perspective*

Campus officials, faculty and students raised a variety of issues in regard to college affordability and completion. These can be grouped into several general categories related to changing student demographics, diminishing and delayed state payments, rising costs of doing business, and limited financial aid options.

#### **A Changing Student Population**

Most campuses are facing a rise in numbers of first-generation and non-traditional students. Helping these students to attain college credentials is essential to the state’s “60 x 2025” goal. However, they often enter college with little or no college-going family experience and many face daunting economic burdens.

The traditional image of college freshmen being first-time, full-time 18-year-olds entering college straight from high school and living on campus is rapidly changing. At Chicago State University, for example, the average freshman enrolls at age 22. State universities are also admitting rising numbers of transfer students who start their post-secondary work at community colleges.

Non-traditional students are often independent and therefore do not have family resources to support their college attendance. Many must work at least part-time and some full-time, making full-time college attendance difficult or impossible. They often decide late about whether, when and where to attend college and thus miss out on financial aid counseling and application deadlines. The University of Illinois Chicago indicated that even completing the federal Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which is also required for state MAP grant applications, is a personal and cultural barrier for some students.

At the same time campuses are welcoming a changing student population, they are also concerned about maintaining this diversity given rising costs and limited financial aid options.

## **Effects of Diminished and Delayed State Funding**

Declining state appropriations have far-reaching effects on the public universities. In addition to causing them to hike tuition rates, they are often forced to delay scheduled maintenance and capital projects. For example, Western Illinois University cited its aging facilities and the financial inefficiency of spending money to maintain increasingly dysfunctional buildings.

Other effects include difficulty in recruiting and retaining quality faculty, especially in light of potentially diminished pension benefits; delaying potential cost-saving projects such as technology upgrades; inability to pay bills on time due to delayed state payments, and reduced capacity to compete for external grant funds due to a lack of matching funds.

## **Rising Costs**

Campus officials cited several examples of rising costs of doing business. In addition to general inflation for costs of goods and services, universities face other rising costs: being required to provide tuition waivers for veterans, installing necessary technology enhancements, and providing support services to at-risk students in order to enhance persistence and completion. Several campuses cited struggles with onerous state procurement rules that have the effect of limiting the numbers of vendors wanting to do business with them and thus reducing competitive bidding options.

Students cited rising costs as well: ever-increasing textbook prices, living costs, and of course, tuition and fees. They were also concerned about whether interest rates on student loans would rise, adding to their already daunting repayment burdens.

## **Limited Financial Aid**

With state and federal grants only partially meeting college costs, students are turning increasingly to federal and private student loans. For example, Eastern Illinois University indicated that its average student loan debt is \$24,000 upon graduation.

While campuses do not share a unified system to record the reasons students leave before completion, some institutions conduct exit interviews with students who drop out. Western Illinois University indicated that students participating in exit interviews largely indicate that they are leaving because of affordability issues.

Large numbers of students indicate that they would like to work while attending the universities; however, federal work-study jobs are limited and smaller communities, such as Macomb (WIU), do not have enough private jobs to accommodate all students who would like to work. The recent economic downturn made job-hunting even more difficult for many students. Those students who did have jobs were very grateful and worked hard to maintain their employment.



All of the campuses indicated that MAP grants are an essential source of student aid, and if the program is stretched any further, that could limit many more students from being able to attend a public university.

Limits on financial aid options also create a losing record in the competition for students between the state's public universities and private and out-of-state institutions that can offer more attractive aid packages.

Universities have stepped up to boost their endowment funds in order to establish and maintain institutional scholarships. They have made considerable contributions to boost student aid and thus improve affordability. The University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) provided \$27 million last year in institutional aid. For many UIC students, receiving a Pell grant, a MAP grant and a UIC grant covered all their costs. Illinois State University provides \$9 million annually to supplement insufficient funds for MAP grant recipients, and Eastern offers campus-paid "Panther Promise" scholarships for low-income students. While these are impressive efforts, they may not be sustainable over the long run.

Students at Northern Illinois University described a "vicious cycle" of financial need, work, and scholarships: those with the most need have to work more, therefore can't get involved in community and extra-curricular activities and so are not eligible for many scholarships, thus creating more need.

## INNOVATIVE PRACTICES I: "GAME CHANGERS"

While Lieutenant Governor Simon and her staff found many innovative affordability and completion initiatives in practice on the 12 university campuses, three of those practices stood out as being potential "game-changers;" that is, they fundamentally redesign key elements of the traditional college-going experience to make it more affordable and more likely to lead to completion. The three practices are:

1. Awarding the most credit and credentials for time and money spent,
2. Streamlining time to degree, and
3. Providing student support programs with intensive academic and financial advisement.

### ***Awarding the Most Credit and Credentials for Time and Money Spent***

#### **Dual Degrees**

Dual degree programs (DDPs) are established through partnerships between a university and participating community colleges. Students enrolled in the program complete an associate degree at their community college, then transfer "seamlessly" to a baccalaureate program at the university, earning both degrees within four years.

Students save money by attending the lower-cost community college for two years. In addition, they can "lock in" the four-year university tuition rate while at their community college, under Illinois' Truth in Tuition law. Thus, their third and fourth years are also less costly. Credits are guaranteed to transfer, thereby limiting the need for additional course-taking. And, the universities have a better handle on future enrollment projections.

#### **Governors State University (GSU)**

The Dual Degree Program (DDP) allows students to concurrently enroll at both their community college and GSU. They complete an associate degree in the first two years at the community college and then transfer seamlessly to GSU for the bachelor's degree. Under the state's Truth in Tuition law, students "lock in" their public university tuition cost as freshmen at the community colleges. Thus the program saves significant costs (two years community college, two years of tuition at the university locked in at freshman rates), courses are guaranteed to transfer, and students earn two credentials. Pell-eligible DDP students can compete for 50 GSU Promise scholarships; high achieving DDP students who are not Pell-eligible can compete for 13 Honors scholarships.

#### **"Reverse Transfer"**

Reverse transfer can be considered as attaining a "retroactive" associate degree while completing a bachelor's degree at a university.

Many students begin their studies at a community college but transfer to a university prior to completing an associate degree. By utilizing reverse transfer agreements, universities and community colleges can agree to review student transcripts and award an associate degree from the transferring college when the student has attained the appropriate credits at the university. The students garner an additional valued credential, and community colleges can take credit for awarding additional associate degrees.

#### **Northern Illinois University (NIU)**

In fall 2012, NIU piloted a "reverse transfer" program with Waubensee Community College. Students who transfer from Waubensee to NIU prior to receiving their associate degree can attain the degree retroactively, using credits earned at NIU. Careful transcript examination results in agreement between the institutions that the students have actually earned the appropriate credits for the associate degree. In this way, students earn both credentials while completing the bachelor's degree. NIU plans to extend this option to community college students across their region.

## Ensure smooth transfer/articulation so courses count

Dual admission/dual enrollment programs are partnerships between universities and community colleges. Students simultaneously apply/enroll at both institutions. Advisors and course audit systems track credits and monitor how they will transfer to the university. The model is similar to the Dual Degree Program described above, but students are allowed to transfer prior to attaining an associate degree. This close monitoring limits lost credits and wasted financial aid.

## Streamlining Time to Degree

### Reduce required credits for degree and limit extraneous course-taking

Except for some specialized degrees (such as teaching and nursing), most bachelor's programs should be limited to requiring 120 hours. When students declare a major, they receive a "default" plan of study with required courses in sequence. Deviations from the sequence require approval from an advisor. Research shows that students face many course choices and options, and can "wander" through the curriculum, racking up costs and delaying degree attainment.

#### Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC)

SIUC conducted a review of bachelor's degree programs and streamlined some majors down to 120 hours – the number at which students taking 15 hours per semester can graduate within four years. The campus is currently piloting 3-year baccalaureate degree programs in select communications majors, such as Radio/Television, Journalism, and Cinematography. The university is also conducting an intensive review of transfer student transcripts in order to improve transfer course acceptance and thus speed time to degree.

### Embed remediation in credit-bearing or co-requisite courses

Students who start in non-credit remedial courses are much less likely to complete degrees. Students needing additional academic support should be placed in the credit-bearing "gateway" course and then co-enroll in an intensive support course or receive supplemental assistance (such as tutoring and on-line practice) within the credit-bearing course. In this way, students immediately start progress toward their degree even though they need additional support. Traditional non-credit remedial courses use up precious financial aid with no progress toward the degree.

#### University of Illinois Chicago (UIC)

UIC allows students needing mathematics remediation to self-place into credit-bearing courses and simultaneously take their remedial coursework online during the first half of the semester. The new remediation pass rate averages 80-90% (compared to national averages of only 40-50% for stand-alone remedial courses). Another option allows students to simultaneously enroll in "co-requisite" courses: one 3-hour credit-bearing gateway mathematics course (such as college algebra) and one parallel 3-hour math workshop to improve skills.

## Utilize on-line and blended course delivery

Especially for ever-increasing numbers of non-traditional students, traditional teaching methods such as three weekly daytime lectures are not viable options. Creating flexible course designs that combine on-line and in-person instruction has advantages for both students and institutions. Students can study at times and places that fit within their schedules and institutions can accommodate more students, share instructors, and support student learning outside of regular school hours. Some colleges and universities are offering “flipped” course designs: they archive video lectures that can be reviewed off-campus, and class time is spent in engaged learning activities, group projects, and individual student attention from instructors.

### Western Illinois University

Through its WesternOnline course management system, WIU offers not only individual courses, but also online degrees: Bachelor of Arts in General Studies (BGS) and two master’s degrees (Instructional Design and Technology and Elementary Education). The BGS degree is designed for non-traditional adult students, who can work with university advisors to design their own individualized plan of study in an area that fits their career goals. The program accepts transfer credits from other accredited colleges and universities.

## *Providing Student Support Programs with Intensive Financial and Academic Advisement*

### First-year programs for at-risk students

Research has long shown that college students are most likely to drop out during or after their freshman year. Colleges and universities are putting in place robust student support programs, especially for those most likely to struggle, such as first-generation and non-traditional students. These programs include special first-year courses on study skills and time management, tutoring, student cohort support groups, and intensive advising. The institutions closely monitor students’ class attendance and performance and issue “early warnings” to both students and advisors when students go off track. Students receiving these first-year services are much more likely to persist in their studies and complete their degrees.

### University of Illinois Springfield (UIS)

UIS offers the “Necessary Steps” mentoring program to help first-generation students adjust successfully to university life. Mentors help students identify and overcome problems they encounter in their first year, explore career possibilities, and develop skills they will need outside the classroom. Parents can access online classes to show them how to be advocates for their students. The program’s “early alert” system notifies advisors when students miss class or fall behind academically, and provides online “kudos” when students are successful.

### Chicago State University (CSU)

CSU operates a “University College” program to help freshmen needing significant remediation to become fully college-ready in one academic year. The curriculum combines basic skill development with general education courses applicable to all academic majors. The program features small class sizes, specialized advising and registration, personalized attention from instructors and counselors, and an option of a “summer bridge” program to further develop basic skills.

## Aggregated and accessible support services

In the past, it was not uncommon for students to have to search for support services, often by word-of-mouth, and to find them scattered across campus. Now several universities are aggregating those services in a common area, making them much more accessible and coordinated. Advising, counseling, tutoring, disability support, and career development are just some of the services located in these “one-stop” support centers. When students have easy access to help, they are much more likely to take advantage of it.

## Ongoing financial advisement (not just for entering freshmen) so students graduate with less debt

Some campuses have boosted their financial advising for all students throughout their degree programs. Each year, students receiving Pell and MAP grants must file new federal FAFSA forms and re-apply for those grants. Some students will be faced with financial shortfalls; campus advisors help them to seek scholarships and other grants, and often advise against excessive loan debt.

The financial aid department becomes a full partner with both academic and support programs on campus, assuring to the extent possible that each student is more likely to complete a degree and do so with the lowest debt levels.

### **Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE)**

SIUE recently established a Student Success Center, attached to the student union, which combines all support services into a “one-stop shop”: counseling, health services, academic advising, financial aid, tutoring, career guidance, and disability services. The Center serves as a hub, bringing together academic and personal supports along with student government and student organizations. In addition to being more convenient for students, university personnel can better coordinate their services and reduce overhead costs.

### **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)**

UIUC’s Financial Wellness program provides ongoing financial guidance and assistance free to students at the main health and fitness center. The program includes one-on-one assistance with budgeting and credit issues, presentations to campus clubs and organizations, a resource center offering financial education materials, and referrals to related financial services within the university and in the broader community. Students can also meet with peer educators for confidential advisement.

## INNOVATIVE PRACTICES II: “LOW-HANGING FRUIT”

Some campus cost-containment practices that the Lieutenant Governor encountered would potentially be helpful to virtually all students, but would not necessarily require a large investment of time and resources to implement. Though not requiring broad program redesign like the “game-changers” described earlier, these practices could make a significant dent in student costs, and for some students, could actually mean the difference between being able to stay in school or having to leave. These practices include:

1. Providing textbook rental programs, on-line e-books, and “book scholarships,”
2. Offering no-interest installment payment plans for tuition and fees,
3. Partnering to create paid internships, and
4. Helping students to plan for costs up from with transparent data.

### *Providing textbook rental programs, on-line e-books, and “book scholarships”*

#### **Textbook rental programs**

Some campuses are addressing exorbitant textbook costs (sometime upwards of \$700 per semester) through campus-wide book rental programs. Faculty members agree to use the same texts for three years or more. The institution purchases the books and rents them to students for a set fee (around \$100 to \$125 per semester, often prorated by credit hour taken). Because the students are charged through a fee, they can use their financial aid funds to cover the cost. When books become outdated, students and others can buy them for their own professional libraries. Undergraduates save thousands of dollars over the course of their studies.

#### **Eastern Illinois University (EIU)**

EIU offers a textbook rental service available to all undergraduates. Texts are adopted by academic departments for a minimum of three semesters and purchased by the university. Students pay a rental fee of \$9.95 per credit hour, charged with their regular tuition and fees. This is a minimal fee compared to other institutions that require students to purchase textbooks, saving EIU students hundreds of dollars each semester. Since book rental is charged as a fee, students can use state student aid grants to cover the cost.

#### **On-line e-books**

While not all textbooks can be found in on-line editions, more and more titles are becoming available in this way. Campuses are examining their capacity to utilize these new media to reduce costs and eliminate students’ need to buy and resell books, often at a significant financial loss.

#### **Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU)**

NEIU was named by Newsweek in 2012 as the sixth “best investment” school in the U.S., based on affordability, low average student debt, and high graduate earnings. As one example of its quest to improve academic resources while keeping costs low, NEIU is expanding its use of e-books as an affordable means to support student learning and faculty research. In 2011 alone, the university expanded its library collection by more than 4,000 e-book monographs.

## **“Book scholarships”**

Some universities solicit specific alumni donations to fund book scholarships: awards to students specifically to cover the cost of their textbooks. Many donors like this opportunity, because they know exactly how their donations are being used. For students at universities that don't offer book rental programs, getting the book scholarship can mean the difference between being able to stay in school or having to leave.

## **Offering no-interest installment payment plans for tuition and fees**

On most campuses, tuition and fees are due in one lump sum shortly after the last date for adding or changing courses each semester. Some campuses are offering the option of no-interest installment payments, spreading the cost throughout the semester and eliminating the need for one large and burdensome payment. This is an especially good option for students not receiving federal Pell or state MAP grants. The cost to the university is minimal, as not all students need this option, and the institution eventually receives the full payment by the end of each semester.

## **Partnering to create paid internships**

Paid internships are a “win-win-win” opportunity for students, institutions, and employers. Students are offered paying jobs in their field of study, which provide not only income, but valuable work experience and professional networking. Institutions strengthen their programs' connections to careers and the community at large, assuring that coursework is relevant and up-to-date. Employers have access to bright and willing students who can perform valuable work for lower starting wages; they also have the opportunity to recruit permanent employees from the intern ranks, knowing that they are already acclimated and capable of doing the job.

### **Illinois State University (ISU)**

ISU's Career Center actively seeks employer partnerships across many career areas, offering public and private sector employers the ability to screen potential entry-level employees, reduce turnover and training costs, and broaden their candidate pools. Every major in ISU's College of Business offers paid internship opportunities for undergraduate students. Each department has a full-time internship coordinator who works with both students and employers to ensure meaningful and relevant work experiences. Over 300 business students per year participate in internship programs with business and government employers, gaining practical experience, networking opportunities, and applied learning related to their academic and career goals.

## **Helping students to plan for costs up front with transparent data**

Some campuses are voluntarily providing prospective students with important and easily accessible information about the real costs of attendance, along with facts about time-to-degree, degree completion rates, job placement rates, and student debt upon graduation. Students can use this information to make key decisions about attending a given institution and plan accordingly. The Lieutenant Governor has proposed that all institutions (public and private) be required to provide this information in a standard format; a bill to that effect is pending in the Illinois General Assembly.

## NEXT STEPS

In order to attain the state's "60 x 2025" post-secondary completion goal, two key efforts are needed:

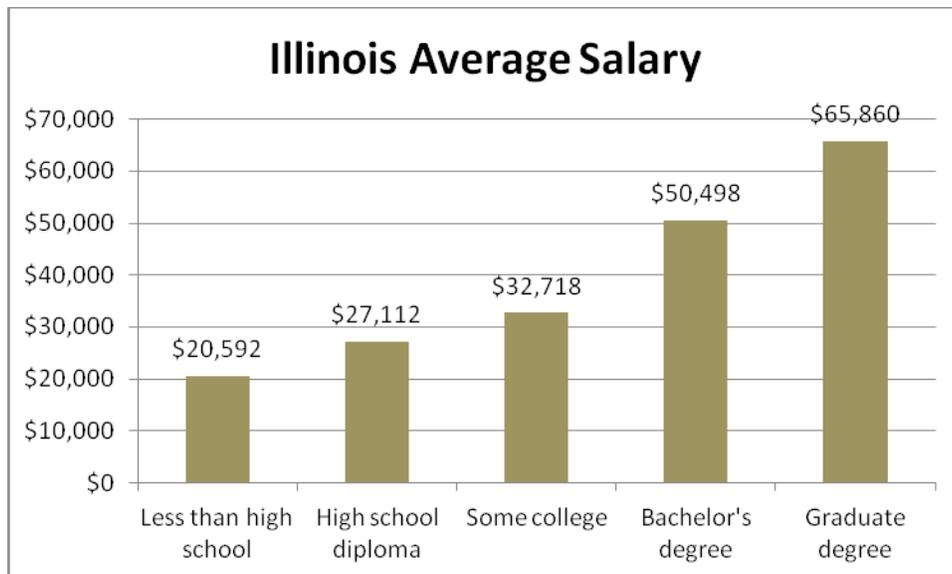
- ◆ Make college readiness, access, affordability and support key priorities for state funding, even in light of current financial constraints; and
- ◆ Find ways to "scale up" effective affordability and completion practices so that more students can attain post-secondary credentials.

### **Higher Education: A Key Funding Priority**

There is plenty of evidence to show that higher education pays off, both for the individual and for the state and nation:

- ◆ During the recent recession, national unemployment rates among adults with only a high school diploma was 13.4%, while for college graduates, the rate was 6.8% (Georgetown University report, August 2012)
- ◆ Average lifetime earnings for bachelors degree holders nationally are 74% higher than for those with only a high school diploma (Georgetown University report, August 2011)

In Illinois, the data mirror these national findings:



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2011 American Community Survey



Businesses and industries locate, grow and thrive in areas where they can find and retain the skilled workers they need. This will become even more the case as the demand for highly-skilled workers grows. Growing the Illinois economy and re-establishing financial stability will primarily depend on the state's capacity to consistently develop its skilled workforce through post-secondary education.

When weighing where to make state funding investments, the state would be hard-pressed to find any investment that pays greater personal and public dividends than higher education.

### ***Scaling Up Effective Practices***

Lieutenant Governor Simon found many examples of effective affordability and completion practices during her public university and community college tours, many of which have been described in this report. She recognized that if these methods could be taken to scale – replicated and adapted at many more institutions—then many more students could benefit and be more likely to gain their valuable post-secondary credentials, bringing the state much closer to its “60 x 2025” goal.

In Fall 2013, the Lieutenant Governor will host a first-of-its-kind “Scaling Up” conference, during which community colleges and state universities will commit to putting these effective practices in place on their campuses. Those who already have experience will serve as guides to others just getting started. No single campus has implemented all these good ideas; each can learn from others without “reinventing the wheel.” In addition, expert assistance will be provided from national organizations and implementation scholars.

Information about the Scaling Up conference will be available on the Lieutenant Governor's website in Fall 2013.