AGENDA ITEM 11.

COLLEGE ILLINOIS!® PREPAID TUITION PROGRAM PREVIEW OF 2009-2010 ENROLLMENT PERIOD

Submitted for: Information

Summary: Enrollment for the 2009-2010 enrollment period will involve some changes with two primary goals in mind - increasing the number of contracts sold and ensuring the financial health of the program. There are three major components planned for attaining those goals:

- Year-round enrollment;
- New marketing cost efficiencies and strategies; and
- Third-party agents to sell contracts on our behalf.

Action requested: None

Item 11.
6/26/09

ILLINOIS STUDENT ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

***COLLEGE ILLINOIS!*® PREPAID TUITION PROGRAM**
PREVIEW OF 2009-2010 ENROLLMENT PERIOD

As the 2008-2009 *College Illinois!* enrollment period approaches its final month of the newborn and infant enrollment period, work has already begun for 2009-2010. Enrollment this fall will involve some major changes with two primary goals in mind - increasing the number of contracts sold and ensuring the financial health of the program.

Year-Round Enrollment

The 2009-2010 enrollment period will begin in October 2009 with contract prices based on tuition and fee data collected from Illinois public institutions for the 2009-2010 school year. The program will continue to offer its three-tiered SmartChoice pricing plans [Choice 1: Community College, Choice 2: University and Choice 3: University + for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign] and its many payment options (lump sum and monthly).

The specific changes being made for 2009-2010 include the following:

- This will mark the beginning of year-round enrollment for the program which means families will have an opportunity to purchase contracts throughout the year rather than during a specified six to eight month time frame.

- Contract prices will be determined for a 12-month period beginning October 2009.

- Contract prices will be discounted each month for purchases made prior to September 30, 2010. The price will increase at the beginning of each month so the earlier the contract is purchased, the lower the price will be. Submission of an application (paper or online) during the month will lock in contract prices for that month.

- The first payment will be due closer to the time the application is submitted rather than after the enrollment period has ended. Online payment options will be offered through the web site.

Recognizing the many changes that need to be implemented, a project team representing applicable areas of the agency has been assembled to ensure a successful implementation of the 2009-2010 enrollment period.

New Marketing Cost Efficiencies and Strategies

After an exhaustive review of the costs associated with engaging an outside vendor to provide all the marketing and communications functions associated with the selling of *College Illinois!* contracts, enrollment period 2009-2010 will be supported by the in-house marketing and communications team augmented by a writer, graphic artist, public relations specialist and web content manager.

With these additions, the following responsibilities will be performed in-house:

- Marketing thought leadership on the strategy and tactics of contract sales and all aspects of messaging and communication;

- Technical assistance for website creation/maintenance, and design/production of printed materials, direct mailing and direct e-mailing tasks;

- Direct contact to media to place unpaid editorial stories, and to place paid advertisements; and

- Manpower to staff all promotional activities such as Baby Fairs, open houses, workshops, presentations, etc.

The associated marketing dollars will be brought into the State of Illinois, and invested in human capital that will work in service of ISAC's mission of making college accessible and affordable for the families of Illinois' youngest students.

Once that team is in place, a redesign of all printed and electronic marketing materials will be undertaken to:

- Simplify the communication of the product's main benefits and features through the use of easy-to-understand, conversational language with strong calls to action;

- Drive home the fact that *College Illinois!* benefits can be used at any accredited, non-profit institution of higher learning in the United States, as well as, Illinois for-profits approved for MAP; and

- Make it easier to learn about all program details via a simple, easy-to-navigate web site and multiple internet presences.

In addition to realizing cost savings in professional-rate marketing services, this year *College Illinois!* will be far more "green" than in years' past and will put an emphasis on an appropriate mix of electronic and printed materials that are easy to access, navigate, and cheaper to print and mail.

The extension of the enrollment period to twelve months will also coincide with the re-direction of advertising dollars – which will be supplemented by costs savings realized in the provider changes.

Advertising and media changes will move from a mass-media orientation to a highly-targeted electronic media and radio/broadcast media model which will give the program a consistent message in consistent venues over a sustained period of time.

Third-Party Agents to Sell Contracts on Our Behalf

College Illinois! will be putting forth a Request for Proposal in the next month to procure the services of qualified and reputable financial institutions to sell *College Illinois!* 529 prepaid college tuition contracts as an agent for the Commission.

College Illinois! wants to enter into non-exclusive agreements with different financial institutions, such as banks or stock brokerages, to act as our agents to sell *College Illinois!* contracts on our behalf. This would create a second network of paid sales people to be geographically dispersed throughout the state's 102 counties as well and have a commanding presence and expertise in relationships with middle-to-higher income families.