

AGENDA ITEM 1.

ANNOUCEMENTS

**MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN
DONALD J. McNEIL**

It is with mixed emotions that I announce that Larry Matejka will be retiring from Illinois state government at the close of this calendar year, concluding a record 26-year career as Executive Director of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC). Mr. Matejka is widely recognized as one of the nation's leading authorities on student financial aid issues and strongest voices for making college affordable for everyone.

In addition to Mr. Matejka's illustrious tenure at ISAC, he also has served at the campus level (as Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Director of Financial Aid at the University of Illinois in Urbana and as Director of Financial Aid at Illinois State University), as well as at the federal level as a student financial aid administrator, policymaker and financial aid industry negotiator. He was a trailblazer in simplifying the college application process and removing application fees. He is currently the longest-serving state agency director in Illinois.

He also has become my friend, colleague and trusted advisor during my first year as Chairman of ISAC. Consequently, although I have reluctantly accepted his resignation, I am pleased to announce that Mr. Matejka will continue to provide expertise to ISAC as a consultant, beginning in January of next year.

I offer Larry Matejka my hearty congratulations on a job well done over a period of time rivaling Lou Gehrig or Cal Ripken. I commend him for the talent, wisdom and commitment that he brings to his work, and look forward to our continued association in the future.

They say one person really can't make a difference, but Larry Matejka is living proof to the contrary. He will be greatly missed by the ISAC commissioners, staff and the countless people he has touched during 40 years of public service. The people of the State of Illinois and the millions of students served by ISAC since 1981 owe a debt of gratitude to Larry Matejka for his dedicated service on their behalf. And we are genuinely thrilled for the Matejka family, who will finally get some quality time with this extraordinary gentleman.



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ISAC EXEC DIRECTOR TO RETIRE AFTER 26 YEARS

Under Matejka, agency had unmatched growth, aided millions of Illinois college students

DEERFIELD, IL -- Larry E. Matejka today announced plans to retire after 26 years as Executive Director of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC).

As Executive Director since July 1980, Matejka has served longer than any current Illinois state agency director, during which the agency has enjoyed enormous growth. Since 1981, ISAC has awarded \$5.7 billion in Monetary Award Program (MAP) awards to 3.1 million students while guaranteeing 4.2 million in loans valued at \$14 billion. The MAP grant has grown from \$85.1 million in 1981 to \$347.4 million this year, serving nearly double the number of students. Last year, ISAC guaranteed \$1.24 billion in loans to 232,631 students and issued another 185,000 grants totaling \$400 million.

"Larry Matejka personifies the ideal public servant," said ISAC Chairman Don McNeil. "He is absolutely dedicated to the students we serve, and a man of vision and unquestioned integrity. The people of Illinois and generations of college students owe Larry an enormous debt of gratitude for his 26 years of service to ISAC and four decades of service in the education field."

Matejka announced his plans during his annual "State of the Agency" address to staff. "I am excited about the next steps and what lies ahead for this agency," Matejka said. "The strength of ISAC is its people. The programs we administer are tremendous but what makes programs work are the hundreds of dedicated staff and their commitment to service."

Matejka is a nationally-recognized advocate of simplifying the student financial aid process and eliminating application fees. He is a past president of the Illinois Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (ILASFAA) and National Council of Higher Education Loan Programs (NCHELP), the only person ever to be re-elected to that post. He served twice as Chairman of the federal Higher Education Reauthorization Committee and was a founding leader of the Guarantee Agency CEO Caucus. Prior to joining ISAC, he was Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Director of Financial Aid at the University of Illinois in Champaign, and Director of Financial Aid at Illinois State University.

Under Matejka's leadership, Illinois became the first state to eliminate its own separate application for financial assistance and instead award aid using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form at no cost to applicants. During his tenure, the agency has become a national leader in making college affordable with the MAP grant. The *College Illinois!* prepaid tuition program, started in 1998 to help families save for college, now has 53,000 contracts. The College Zone Web site and its free, innovative "IllinoisMentor" college and career counseling program receives tens of thousands of visitors annually.

The change comes as ISAC enters its 50th year of helping Illinois college students receive financial assistance. Legislation creating the agency – previously known as the Illinois State Scholarship Commission – was approved by the Illinois General Assembly and signed into law by Governor William Stratton in 1957.

"Larry Matejka has played an instrumental role in the development and growth of nearly every federal and state grant and loan program a typical Illinois college student can benefit from," McNeil added. "He has truly made a difference in the lives of millions." Only the third Executive Director in the agency's history, Matejka will leave at the end of the year. The ISAC board plans to have a replacement chosen and in place by then, McNeil said.

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