

## AGENDA ITEM 8A.

### MONETARY AWARD PROGRAM (MAP) TASK FORCE SUMMARY

**Submitted for:** Information

**Summary:** The MAP Task Force concluded its work in December and filed a report with the legislature on December 31. The report completes the requirements set forth by Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 69, (adopted by both houses in May of 2012) that created the task force. Commissioners have received a copy of the report and accompanying appendices. The report was the culmination of an intensive six month investigation of the effectiveness of the Monetary Award Program (MAP). The task force was charged with determining if new rules for MAP “could improve outcomes for students receiving these awards.” The task force defined improved outcomes as those furthering the state goals of increasing the percentage of Illinois workers with a postsecondary credential to 60 percent by 2025, and reducing the academic achievement gap between students from lower income families and students from higher income families to less than 10 percent. The task force was to make recommendations for change to the Commission through the report.

The members of the task force were selected in accordance with the criteria set forth in SJR 69 that required a minimum of eleven members representing all higher education sectors and relevant agencies. Ultimately 18 members were selected, including two MAP recipients, who agreed to meet for six days over six months to evaluate the fairness, efficiency and effectiveness of MAP. The process was data driven, with over 100 explicitly modeled scenarios evaluated and compared to the existing methodology of administering MAP. The process was essentially a zero-sum game. Any changes to the existing MAP allocation mechanism that added new recipients to the program had to be “paid” for in some fashion by either removing or reducing aid to other students.

It was a difficult process, as it quickly became apparent that there were no easy solutions. The task force could agree on some critical improvements to MAP but could not agree on how those improvements were to be funded. In particular, a later application deadline for independent students and students applying to college for the first time, was desired by nearly all task force members. But there was no agreement on where the dollars needed to extend the deadline would be obtained. Some task force members wanted to exclude students from relatively higher income families; others wanted to reduce awards to community college students who receive federal Pell grants large enough to cover tuition and fees. These students however, are in need of funds and fully eligible for MAP. Furthermore, the scenarios that extended the deadline did provide aid to more students by making smaller awards to others, but did not increase the expected number of graduates. Many task force members could not support an outcome that provided aid to more students but ultimately was expected to produce fewer graduates and to lower graduation rates.

The inherent tension between access to higher education and incenting completion was present in many of the options considered. For example, merit components, designed to enhance completion, that would ration aid to better prepared but often higher income students could harm progress toward the second state goal of reducing the achievement gap experienced by students from lower income families. Ultimately, the task force determined it to be too hard to justify removing aid from one group of needy, eligible students to give to another group of the same.

Although the task force could not agree on many recommendations for change, it did affirm the success of the program and many of the basic principles guiding the allocation of MAP:

- MAP is a very successful program. It provides sufficient resources to make a difference for about 140,000 students who receive it each year. It serves low-income dependent and independent students who attend both full- and part-time. It provides access to college for many students. Students who receive MAP can surmount their financial hurdles and graduate at about the same rate as other students who attend the same schools.
- MAP is a good value for the state. Despite the current shortfalls in the program, MAP contributes to Illinois still being in the top 10 states for workforce credential development. The single biggest problem for MAP is insufficient funding to meet demand.
- MAP is better as one large program. Small programs may be at enhanced risk of being defunded in tough economic times. The idea that all sectors participate in the same program with the same parameters was generally perceived as fair. Small programs can be difficult and costly to administer, and can be harder to coordinate into a sensible set of options that is easy for students to understand.
- Facilitating access should be MAP's primary goal. Many other programs are being implemented in Illinois to bolster completion rates for all students, such as performance funding, dual enrollment between community colleges and four-year institutions, intensive advising, freshman support programs, and transfer articulation. If the completion equation is Access + Support = Completion, then MAP's role is providing the access component. Additional merit components on MAP were found to be detrimental to access, to penalize very low-income students from poor schools, and to be discriminatory.

There were recommendations for the Commission upon which the Task Force could agree. These are recommendations that will be discussed in detail with the Commission in an agenda action item at a later date:

- The task force looked at many “efficiency” improvements to MAP, such as not paying for remedial courses or courses withdrawn or failed; requiring a

certain number of credit hours be completed each semester and other types of restrictions. In the end, one change was recommended: Students who flunk out of a school should wait a year before receiving MAP at another institution. The attendance pattern where a student attends one institution, generally a four-year institution, for one year, flunks out and then immediately enrolls at a community college the following year is an attendance pattern that rarely leads to any type of credential attainment. The task force felt that a one-year “time out” would help students determine what they really wanted to do and preserve their MAP eligibility for them.

- SJR 69 suggested that the task force examine possible school-state partnerships. One possible partnership that the task force felt was worth pursuing was developing or strengthening advising for MAP recipients. The task force recommended that ISAC consider convening a committee of experts in this area to examine the possibility of requiring some type of school advising for MAP recipients. Some schools already have programs for at least a portion of their MAP recipients, and the task force felt that these programs and others should be examined to see if there was merit in expanding them to all MAP recipients.

- The final recommendation was to require the ILASFAA formula committee to examine the formula to determine if it could be updated or replaced with a simpler payment table. Although the formula does drive aid to the neediest students, the components of the formula have not been updated since FY2004 because of budget concerns, and the process looks outdated and complicated. The task force felt this task of modifying the formula should be left to the financial professionals who are the members of the formula committee.

**Action requested:**

None