



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OCTOBER IS COLLEGE CHANGES EVERYTHING® MONTH IN ILLINOIS
Illinois Student Assistance Commission and Partners Support Students in Filing College Applications and FAFSA Completion

CHICAGO – In Illinois, October is [College Changes Everything® \(CCE\) Month](#), a campaign launched by the [Illinois Student Assistance Commission](#) (ISAC) to address the change to “early FAFSA” and assist students who will be completing college applications at the same time they are filing financial aid forms. The [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) (FAFSA) is the form used to apply for all federal and some state financial aid; filing it is an important first step to maximizing financial aid. This year, students will be able to file their 2017-18 beginning October 1, 2016, instead of having to wait until January, as in previous years.

Because some financial aid programs—including the state's [Monetary Award Program](#) (MAP grant)—are awarded on a first-come first-served basis, eligible students should file their FAFSAs **as soon as possible after October 1st** in order to have the best chance of receiving funding. Students should check with their college for all school-specific deadlines.

During CCE Month, ISAC will partner with schools and communities to help students navigate these changes, and will offer support for students and families with both college application and FAFSA completion.

“The college application and financial aid process can be overwhelming, particularly for first-generation students who don’t have an immediate family member who attended college,” said Eric Zarnikow, ISAC executive director.

“Now that all of these activities are taking place in the fall, it’s even more important that students have access to free services that will help them apply to colleges that fit their needs and goals, and access all the financial aid for which they are eligible. Providing students with the information and assistance they need to make more informed choices about college and financial aid can help minimize their student debt, and maximize their chances for completing a degree or certificate program.”

Many of the college application activities and FAFSA completion workshops are supported and/or conducted by the [ISACorps](#), a group of recent college graduates working statewide who are extensively

trained in assisting students with planning, applying, and paying for college. At free workshops in high schools and communities throughout the state, students will get hands-on assistance in filing college applications and the FAFSA. They can also get one-on-one help from their local ISACorps member. For a list of events, visit isac.org/calendar; find your local ISACorps member at isac.org/isacorps.

ISAC also offers additional resources to assist students, including [ISAC College Q&A](#), a text messaging service where students can get answers to their college and financial aid questions sent directly to their phones, and the award-winning [ISAC Student Portal](#), which offers free online tools and resources for college and scholarship search, money management and financial aid planning, and career and job search. ISAC also offers assistance through the agency's call center, 1-800-899-4722 (ISAC).

High schools and counselors who would like to participate in College Changes Everything Month can find information and a downloadable toolkit at collegechangeseverything.org/ccemonth.

About ISAC

The mission of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) is to help make college accessible and affordable for students throughout Illinois. ISAC provides comprehensive, objective, and timely information on education and financial aid for students and their families--giving them access to the tools they need to make the educational choices that are right for them. Then, through the state scholarship and grant programs ISAC administers, ISAC can help students make those choices a reality. www.isac.org

About College Changes Everything

Sponsored by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission and its partners, College Changes Everything® (CCE) is a college access movement that recognizes that college can be a life changing experience not only for students, but also for families and communities. In Illinois and across the nation, those who obtain education beyond high school not only see a significant impact on their potential career prospects and future salary, but also change levels of poverty, life expectancy, crime and obesity rates in their communities. The CCE movement supports the Illinois goal of increasing the proportion of adults in Illinois with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60% by the year 2025. Find out more at www.collegechangeseverything.org.

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