



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OCTOBER IS COLLEGE CHANGES EVERYTHING® MONTH IN ILLINOIS
Illinois Student Assistance Commission and Partners Offer Statewide Free Assistance with College Applications and FAFSA® Completion

CHICAGO – For a second year, Governor Rauner has [proclaimed](#) October *College Changes Everything® Month* (CCE Month), when the state’s college access and financial aid agency, the [Illinois Student Assistance Commission](#) (ISAC) and partners will be helping students get on track for college by assisting them with college applications and putting them in the best position possible to receive the funding they need to attend. It’s a particularly important effort as the state, now with a budget in place, must address the impact of a two-year budget delay that left some students with little choice but to drop out of college or leave Illinois—frustrating personal goals and hampering the state’s efforts to increase its skilled workforce.

“This is a time to not only rebuild confidence in Illinois colleges and grant programs, but also to remind our students of the value of a college degree or postsecondary certificate,” said Eric Zarnikow, executive director of ISAC. “Particularly for high school seniors and those considering going back to school, we want them to know that postsecondary education can boost their career and long-term earning potential, and can also positively impact their health and their community. And we want them to know that there is a lot of free assistance to help them make smart choices about school, apply, and get the money they need to pursue a degree or certificate.”

ISAC developed CCE Month as a statewide effort to assist students who, as a result of changes made by the U.S. Department of Education last year, now file both college and financial aid applications in the fall. While ISAC provides free assistance to students and families year round, during CCE Month in October ISAC and partners support well over a thousand workshops that assist students with finding the college that is right for them, completing college applications, and filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®), the application for all federal financial aid and some state aid, including the Illinois Monetary Award Program (MAP) grant. Because there is more demand than funding for grants like MAP, students will want to complete the 2018-19 FAFSA as soon as possible after October 1st in order to have the best chance of getting funding.

Many CCE Month workshops are supported 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. To find your local ISACorps member, visit studentportal/isac.org/isacorps. To search by zip code for a free public event near you, visit studentportal/isac.org/events. Students and parents should also check directly with their high schools for events within their own school.

ISAC will also be providing answers to financial aid questions during [Facebook Live](#) (@ILStudentAssistance) events from 7-7:30 pm CST on October 3, 11, 16, 23, and 30th, and personalized assistance is also available through [ISAC College Q&A](http://isac.org/qa) (isac.org/qa) a text messaging service where students can get answers to their college and financial aid questions sent directly to their phones. The award-winning [ISAC Student Portal](http://isac.org/studentportal) (isac.org/studentportal) offers free online tools and resources for students. 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

College Changes Everything® 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. Join the conversation and help make college relevant and possible for everyone by sharing your story about how college changed, is changing or can change everything for you. Find out more and share your story at www.collegechangeseverything.org.

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