



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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***(Updated to reflect Governor's Proclamation issued on 10/2/2019)***

**OCTOBER IS COLLEGE CHANGES EVERYTHING MONTH® IN ILLINOIS**

**ISAC and Statewide Partners to Offer Free Support Throughout the Fall to Students and Families Navigating the College Application and Financial Aid Process**

CHICAGO – (Updated) Governor Pritzker has proclaimed October College Changes Everything® (CCE) Month in Illinois, encouraging students and families to take full advantage of the financial aid and postsecondary planning resources available in their communities. Launched by the [Illinois Student Assistance Commission](#) (ISAC) four years ago to support students and families who are completing their college applications and financial aid forms at the same time, ISAC is extending support for the CCE campaign to provide, with its partners, free workshops and activities ***throughout the entire fall***.

“The fall is a busy and stressful time for students and families as they embark on a new school year, explore options for education and training after high school, and navigate the financial aid process all at once,” said Eric Zarnikow, executive director of ISAC. “What many families might not know is that there is free, expert support available throughout the state from high schools, ISAC, and community partners to help students make more informed postsecondary choices and access the financial aid for which they might be eligible. Whether a student is considering vocational training or is interested in a two or a four-year degree, there is free assistance available to help them.”

The [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA®\)](#), the form that determines eligibility for federal and some state and institutional financial aid, becomes available on October 1st for the 2020-21 school year. Because some state aid, such as the [Monetary Award Program](#) (MAP grant) is awarded on a first come, first-served basis, students are encouraged to complete the FAFSA as soon as possible to have the opportunity to receive all the financial aid for which they might be eligible.

Between Labor Day and Thanksgiving, CCE activities will include free FAFSA completion and college application workshops, where students and families can fill out college applications and/or complete their FAFSAs right then and there, with direct assistance from college and financial aid experts. Almost 300 high schools in 215 towns and cities in Illinois have scheduled a college application and/or FAFSA Completion Workshop this fall, with more being scheduled every week. Students and parents can check

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directly with their high schools for events within their own school. Workshops will also be offered at public locations throughout Illinois, supported by the college and financial aid experts at ISAC and their partners. Visit [studentportal.isac.org/events](https://studentportal.isac.org/events) to search by zip code for a free public event near you.

Those planning to attend a FAFSA Completion Workshop can check out this handy list of what to bring to the event <https://studentportal.isac.org/student-resources/Bring-to-FAFSA-Completion.pdf>.

Many statewide workshops are hosted or supported by the ISACorps, recent college graduates who are extensively trained to serve as near peer mentors to high school students navigating the college and financial aid process. The ISACorps also provide free one-on-one assistance to students and families. To find your local ISACorps member, visit [studentportal.isac.org/isacorps](https://studentportal.isac.org/isacorps).

Additionally, ISAC will be hosting and providing answers to college-going and financial aid questions during [Facebook Live](#) (@ILStudentAssistance) events every Wednesday from Sept. 11 - Oct. 9 and every Thursday from Oct. 3 - Nov. 21 from 7-7:30 pm CST. Personalized assistance is also available through [ISAC College Q&A](#) ([isac.org/collegeqa](https://isac.org/collegeqa)), a free 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](#) ([isac.org/studentportal](https://isac.org/studentportal)) offers free online tools and resources for students, as well as short videos about college and financial aid. ISAC also offers assistance through the agency's call center, 1-800-899-4722 (ISAC), and its Online Chat service.

ISAC supports high schools and counselors who would like to participate in CCE fall activities with a downloadable toolkit, materials and event support. Find out more at [collegechangeseverything.org/ccemonth](https://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. Find us at [isac.org](https://isac.org) and follow us on [Facebook](#) @ILStudentAssistance, [Twitter](#) and on Instagram @ISACfinaid.

#### About College Changes Everything

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. CCE is an essential part of helping Illinois reach its goal of increasing the proportion of adults in the state with high quality degrees or credentials to 60% by 2025. Find out more and join the conversation at [collegechangeseverything.org](https://collegechangeseverything.org).

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