



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GOVERNOR PRITZKER PROCLAIMS OCTOBER COLLEGE CHANGES EVERYTHING® MONTH IN ILLINOIS; ISAC OFFERS STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS FREE RESOURCES AND ASSISTANCE WITH COLLEGE AND FINANCIAL AID APPLICATIONS

Changes for 2023-24 Will Expand Financial Aid Eligibility

CHICAGO – Governor Pritzker has [proclaimed](#) October College Changes Everything® (CCE) Month in Illinois, when the [Illinois Student Assistance Commission \(ISAC\)](#) teams up with high schools and community partners to support students in completing their college and financial aid applications. During CCE Month and the Fall CCE Campaign from Labor Day through Thanksgiving, ISAC and its partners provide an intensive schedule of free college and financial aid application completion workshops available statewide. That’s especially important this year, as students will see changes in the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA®\)](#) that will begin to simplify the application, and there will be expanded financial aid eligibility for some students. The 2023-24 FAFSA and the [Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid](#) became available Oct. 1, 2022.

“There are a lot of exciting changes happening that can make education after high school more accessible for more students, especially for low-income students,” said Executive Director of ISAC Eric Zarnikow. “Changes to the FAFSA over the next two years, expansion of federal Pell Grant eligibility, and the significant increase in state funding for the [Monetary Award Program \(MAP Grant\)](#) can improve educational access, attainment, and ultimately long term career enjoyment and financial security for Illinois families. ISAC encourages our schools and partners to take advantage of the free supports we can provide to them and directly to students and families navigating the college and financial aid process.”

The FAFSA is the financial aid form that determines eligibility for federal, most state, and some institutional financial aid for college, technical school, or graduate school. Students should complete the 2023-24 FAFSA as soon as possible after October 1. Many scholarships and grants have limited funding and are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

Among the changes to the 2023-2024 FAFSA form are the removal of the question related to the requirement that students identified as male at birth register for Selective Service before the age of 26 to qualify for federal student aid. Questions related to drug convictions have also been removed from the FAFSA. (Such convictions did not and do not affect eligibility for state-administered financial aid). In addition, effective July 1, 2023, the federal Pell Grant program will be expanded to students in approved programs who are incarcerated in state or federal institutions.

The Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid provides a way to apply for MAP for undocumented students in Illinois who have not obtained legal permanent residency. It's important to note that most students will continue to complete the FAFSA, rather than the Alternative Application, to determine their eligibility for federal and state financial aid. If a student is unsure which application to complete, they can contact the financial aid office of the college or university they plan on attending, or an [ISACorps member](#), for assistance. Pre-screening questions on the Alternative Application itself can also assist a student in determining which application to complete.

Activities and resources available to help with college planning and financial aid

- ISAC and partners offer **free financial aid completion and college application workshops**, where Illinois students and families can fill out college applications and/or complete their FAFSA or Alternative Application right then and there, with direct assistance from college and financial aid experts. ISAC is supporting in person events as well as providing some virtual options. Workshops in Spanish are available. Students and parents can check directly with their high schools for events within or sponsored by their own school. For a continuously updated list of ISAC-supported events that are open to the public, visit studentportal.isac.org/events.
- Students and families can get free **one-on-one assistance from the ISACorps member** in their area. The ISACorps are recent college graduates who are extensively trained to serve as near peer mentors to high school students navigating the college and financial aid process. Find your local ISACorps member at studentportal.isac.org/isacorps.
- Personalized assistance is also available through **ISAC College Q&A** (isac.org/collegeqa), a **free text messaging service** where students and families can get answers to their college and financial aid questions sent directly to their phones.
- The **ISAC Student Portal** (isac.org/studentportal) offers free online tools and resources for students, as well as short videos about college planning and financial aid. Check out ISAC's [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/user/ISACvid/featured) page, <https://www.youtube.com/user/ISACvid/featured>, or the Now Playing section of the Student Portal for our **ISAC College Minute™ videos**, covering topics from financial aid to things to know when starting college—all in a minute!
- ISAC also offers assistance through the agency's **call center**, 800-899-4722 (ISAC), and its Online Chat service, available at isac.org.
- ISAC supports high schools and counselors who would like to participate in the **CCE fall campaign** with a downloadable toolkit, materials, and event support. Counselors can find out more and sign up at collegechangeseverything.org/ccemonth.

- High schools can participate in **ISAC's FAFSA Completion Initiative** to receive data on a weekly basis identifying students who have not filed a financial aid application. This information is used by schools to target support to students who might otherwise not complete an application. High schools can track their progress weekly on ISAC's website and receive Recognition of Excellence honors for reaching financial aid application completion milestones. Find out more at isac.org/FAFSA-Completion.

About ISAC

The mission of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) is to provide Illinois students with information and assistance to help make education beyond high school accessible and affordable. 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 and follow us on [Facebook](#) @ILStudentAssistance, [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) @ISACfinaid and on [YouTube](#).

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.

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