

About ISAC

The Illinois Student Assistance Commission is a state agency with a mission to help make college accessible and affordable for Illinois students. Unaffiliated with any school or sector, ISAC provides objective and comprehensive information to help students and families make informed choices about post-secondary education. Then, through the Monetary Award Program and other scholarship and grant programs ISAC administers, ISAC can help students make those choices a reality. Since 1957, ISAC has administered more than 4.8 million awards to Illinois families, totaling nearly \$10 billion in grants, scholarships and non-loan aid.

Looking for information, data, or an expert source? Here are just some of the topics ISAC can cover:



The **Monetary Award Program (MAP Grant)**—including budget, award information, applicant demographics, institution statistics, and process



Statistics, program information and appropriation history on all ISAC administered grant and scholarship programs



College tuition rates for Illinois universities and colleges



College access, particularly for first generation and low income students



College and career exploration and planning



Managing college costs



Minimizing student loan debt



Applying for financial aid



FAFSA completion efforts in Illinois



Student loan repayment options

Call us for data, tips and insight if you are covering:

College Changes Everything® Month	Money Smart Week	National 529 Day (529 savings and prepaid tuition plans)
October	April	May 29th

More about ISAC

Primary agency functions:

Administration of the **Monetary Award Program (MAP)**, the state's largest need-based grant program, and other **state and federal grant and scholarship programs** for college

College access and outreach programs and services, including one-on-one assistance, tailored to first-generation college students, but available to all

Call Centers and a free text messaging service respond to questions about college and financial aid, student loans and repayment

Professional development for counselors, teachers and financial aid advisors

Research on college access and affordability

College Illinois! 529 prepaid tuition program

Student loan servicing, default aversion, collection and rehabilitation (part of the wind-down of the Federal Family Education Loan Program)

State and federal program compliance evaluations for colleges and universities

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Governance

A ten-member Commission, appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Illinois Senate, provides oversight for the agency.

Commissioners serve staggered six-year terms without pay, typically meeting five times annually to review and approve agency activities as well as provide important perspective, insight and direction for the agency. The Commission hires the Executive Director, who is responsible for leading the agency's execution of its mission to help make college more accessible and affordable for Illinois students.

Staff

Led by Executive Director Eric Zarnikow, the agency employs approximately 270 staff all over the state (including ISACorps members and temporary employees), who administer a variety of state grant and scholarship programs; offer guidance and support for students and parents through ISAC's Call Center, Student Services, and College Access and Outreach divisions; provide research and data on state higher education programs and higher education issues; help train financial aid administrators and guidance counselors; and provide student loan servicing, default aversion and collection and rehabilitation as part of the wind-down of a federal program.

A team of recent college graduates working throughout the state make up the ISACorps, who work as near-peer mentors and assist students and families with the college-going and financial aid processes.

As a result of budgetary constraints and subsequent reductions in force, ISAC's regular staff has been reduced by nearly 60% since FY 2007. The ISACorps were added in FY 2009, paid entirely through a federal College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) until FY 2014. Funded in FY 2015 through a combination of federal loan proceeds and modest state support, and in FY 2016 through federal proceeds alone as a result of the lack of a state budget, the ISACorps has decreased to about two-thirds of the size it was in FY 2014, but it continues to serve students across the state.