



MEDIA ADVISORY

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ISAC SURVEY: UNCERTAINTY ABOUT MAP COULD LEAD STUDENTS TO DELAY A DEGREE OR DROP OUT *Impact of bridge funding on fall enrollment plans unknown*

Fiscal Year 2016 (2015-16 academic year) was an unprecedented year of turmoil for the state and for students who are eligible for and receive [Monetary Award Program \(MAP\) grants](#). Students and schools faced almost a full academic year without funding for public colleges and universities, and without funding for MAP, the State's largest need-based postsecondary financial assistance program. For students, the delay created significant uncertainty as well as direct financial hardship.

Many institutions credited student accounts for MAP for the fall 2015 term as they awaited payment from the State, but many colleges were not able to do so for the winter and spring 2016 terms. To address the delay in MAP, students had to find alternative funding, take fewer credits, transfer to a less expensive institution, or simply did not enroll for the term.

Stopgap funding passed in late April 2016, and the bridge funding bill signed into law last week (SB2047) finally provided funding to pay all 2015-16 MAP claims, albeit after the academic year had ended. While legislators in both chambers have indicated their intention to provide support for MAP for FY 17, there **currently is no appropriation for MAP for the 2016-17 school year** and any appropriation would not come until sometime after the General Assembly reconvenes, which isn't scheduled to occur until mid-November--leaving students and schools with ongoing uncertainty about when and how much funding will be available for MAP in the 2016-17 school year.

Public Act 90-488 requires that MAP be evaluated every two years and the findings be reported to the General Assembly. The [Illinois Student Assistance Commission \(ISAC\)](#), which administers the MAP grant, surveys MAP recipients as part of the preparation of each biennial evaluation. Prior to the passage of the latest bridge funding bill in June, ISAC sent a survey to nearly 100,000 students who had valid email addresses and who received MAP awards for the fall 2015 term. In light of the underfunding (as of the survey date) of MAP for 2015-16 and the ongoing uncertainty about availability of MAP for the 2016-17 school year, ISAC added some open-ended survey questions relating to the impact on students of the delay in MAP funding.

There were over 10,000 responses to the survey, and over 6,000 respondents provided answers to the open-ended questions. Some of the initial results of the survey are compiled in the [June FY16 MAP Grant Preliminary Survey Report](#) ("Preliminary Survey Report") posted in the [ISAC's online Media Kit](#). While initial analysis suggests the responding students are representative of the underlying MAP population, all survey results should be interpreted with caution. **In quoting the survey, please note that it is unclear whether students would respond differently regarding fall 2016 enrollment plans now that MAP has been funded for the 2015-**

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16 school year. Results will be finalized in a biennial report, which will be available in February 2017 when it is filed with the General Assembly.

The following preliminary data points regarding the impact on current MAP recipients of the delay in funding and the uncertainty about future MAP funding are depicted in the attached infographic, *MAP Makes College Possible*.

Fall 2016 enrollment plans if MAP isn't funded

- 1 in 7 respondents said that, for financial reasons, they would either **not return to school** for the fall 2016 term or **would have extreme difficulty** in doing so. The actual number of current MAP recipients who will not enroll in the fall could be significantly higher than the current survey suggests. Historically, more survey respondents say they are planning to enroll than those who actually do, in part because finances end up being a larger obstacle than the student initially thought—and that has been the case in years *without* the current uncertainty about the availability of MAP.
- Survey data suggests that as a result of the delay and underfunding of MAP, over 18,000 students could delay their degree and would be at higher risk of not completing it at all. According to Complete College America, “Time is the enemy of college completion. . . . The longer it takes, the more life gets in the way of success.” Indeed, research indicates that students who attend less than full-time take longer to graduate and many never do.¹

2015-16 school year

- 96% of respondents said MAP played an important role in allowing them to enroll in college for the fall 2015 academic term, but in the light of the delay and underfunding of MAP for the winter and spring 2016 academic terms, 87% of respondents said finances were the biggest obstacle to enrollment.
- 76% of respondents said that receiving a MAP grant reduced the amount of time they needed to work at a job for the fall 2015 academic term, but facing the delay and underfunding of MAP for the winter and spring 2016 academic terms, some students said they were working more hours.
- 89% of respondents said that receiving a MAP grant reduced the amount they had to borrow for the fall 2015 term, but because of the delay and underfunding of MAP for the winter and spring 2016 academic terms, more than 36% of respondents said they took out more student loans to cover educational costs for those terms.

The Preliminary Survey Report also provides some demographic and other college-going data related to MAP recipients. Some of that demographic data is depicted in the attached infographic, *Who are MAP Recipients*.

Please feel free to republish the attached infographics, with appropriate attribution pursuant to the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License. If you need them in another format, please contact [Lynne Baker](#).

¹ Complete College America, *Time is the Enemy* Report, September 2011, http://www.completecollege.org/docs/Time_Is_the_Enemy.pdf

A selection of some of the over 6,000 comments from respondents is also available in the Preliminary Report. The message in most of these comments is loud and clear--MAP makes college possible:

"I am so grateful that I was a recipient of the MAP Grant. I would be so much more in debt or struggled [sic] to be a full-time student. When the MAP grant was pulled [sic] beneath our feet, many students panicked because they didn't know if they would be able to finish the last two terms. My friends cried to their parents because they were trying to figure out how to come up with five thousand dollars. How horrible is it to make it to your senior year and get so close to graduating, but then you find out that you may not be able to get that diploma in your hands because the MAP Grant was being withheld from you."

"It is hard to say if I can enroll in the fall semester of 2016. I cannot afford the money MAP grant was providing. It is better to not go to school than quit in the middle of it. I don't know what is ahead of me."

"The MAP Grant is extremely necessary for me to continue my educational career at the university. I come from a low income family and, like many families in my community, we are unable to meet the costs. I am blessed to have been able to attend a whole year of college as a first generation student and I truly gave it my all throughout both semesters. However, I am afraid that the MAP grant cut will impact my ability to continue to further my education in the near future and this will ultimately hinder my goal of finding my passion and becoming the first in my family to graduate from a 4-year university."

Additional information about MAP is available in the [media kit](#) on the ISAC website.

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's flagship Monetary Award Program and other scholarship and grant programs ISAC administers—ISAC can help students make those choices a reality. www.isac.org

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