

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

URBANA-CHAMPAIGN • CHICAGO • SPRINGFIELD

The University of Illinois is a public, non-profit university with three distinct campuses (Chicago, Urbana-Champaign, and Springfield) that enrolls more than 78,000 students annually and employs more than 28,000 staff. The University of Illinois is committed to addressing the issues of affordability, completion, innovation and accountability/transparency. Below is some information on how the University is advancing those important issues and looking forward to the upcoming reauthorization of the *Higher Education Act*.

Affordability

The University of Illinois supports the bipartisan priority of increasing college accessibility and ensuring affordability for all students. Across the three campuses, University of Illinois students received more than \$68 million in federal Pell grants to help expand access to postsecondary education in fiscal year (FY) 2013. The University of Illinois has a long history of supporting low-income students, through institutional aid and outreach and advising programs. For instance, the *President's Award Program (PAP)* was recently expanded to provide \$5,000 and \$10,000 renewable scholarships to qualified low-income and underrepresented students. The number of PAP students has increased dramatically, and 6-year graduation rates have risen for all groups of PAP students, closing to within 5 percentage points of the overall graduation rates at both the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Urbana) and the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC).

Completion

The University of Illinois is committed to ensuring that our students move to complete their degrees in a timely manner. To help ensure timely completion for Pell eligible students, UIC established the Undergraduate Success Center (USC). Low-income students are often also the first in their families to attend college, and the least equipped to navigate what can be a confusing new world. USC was established in November 2012 to address this concern. As a key component of the UIC Student Success Planning Initiative, the USC is a centralized location for student advising that works in tandem with all colleges and support units.

At the University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS), the *Students Transitioning for Academic Retention and Success (STARS)* program offers freshmen a variety of enhanced academic support services to help ensure success at UIS. Students receive individualized attention from academic advisors, peer mentors, and First Year Experience instructors. STARS students enroll in a unique section of UNI 101: College for First Year Students, specially tailored to their individual academic needs. Finally, STARS students benefit from a living-learning community, housed together where they can experience a strong sense of community with other STARS students and learn to maximize the resources available through the program. For Academic Year 2012 – 2013, 25 of the 26 students who entered the STARS program returned for their second semester, and more than 80 percent completed their first semester in good academic standing.

Innovation

The University of Illinois has been a pioneer in educational technology to improve access and learning outcomes for decades and is now active in the great MOOC experiment as a Coursera partner. UIS is a leader in online and blending learning, where students complete their degrees in person and online and has received numerous national awards, including from the Sloan-C consortium, for its innovative online programs.¹ As part of the upcoming HEA reauthorization, the University of Illinois believes the creation of new federal programs to promote innovation in learning technologies would be of great benefit.

Accountability and Transparency

The University of Illinois supports transparency efforts in assessing the costs of higher education. We object, however, to the increasing requirements regarding over-reporting and over-regulation of higher education. We believe that accountability should be low on regulation, but high on outcomes. We support existing efforts through the higher education associations, such as the Student Achievement Metric (SAM), which uses existing data reported to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to provide a more complete picture of graduation rates and student outcomes. We hope that Congress will simplify existing reporting to ensure that accurate and understandable information is provided to our students. The University of Illinois makes sure that prospective students are fully aware of all educational costs. All students accepted to University of Illinois who applied for financial aid promptly receive a statement that includes full cost of attendance, MAP and/or Pell amount, institutional need-based financial aid, any additional merit scholarship or waiver, federal loan eligibility, unmet need, and payment schedule and process.

For more information, please contact:

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¹ See: <http://www.uis.edu/colrs/about/history/excellence/>.