Policy Priority: Affordability

With the 5th highest average public university in-state tuition and fees in the country, Illinois’ high tuition rates place college out of reach for many low-income students.1 Historically, the Monetary Award Program (MAP), Illinois’ need-based financial aid program, offset high tuition costs for all eligible students. Today, MAP grants cover only 32% of the cost of attending a public university. The consequences of this imbalance are particularly acute for first generation students and students of color who make up over half of all MAP grant recipients.

75% of higher income students graduate within 6 years, while only 37% of low-income students do.2

Only 42% of eligible students receive a MAP award each year. In 2016, nearly 100,000 students that were eligible did not receive a MAP grant.3

MAP recipients graduate at the same rate as non-MAP recipients at the same institution.4

Proposed solutions

Increased investment in our higher education system, including a fully-funded MAP program, is necessary to ensure our institutions can serve all students well. However, there are cost-neutral policies that the state can consider in the interim, to make college more affordable for Illinois students:

+ Adopt an equity-based funding formula that distributes resources equitably and predictably, and that ensures institutions serving our most vulnerable students are well-resourced.

+ Improve time-to-degree by limiting most associate and bachelor’s degree programs to 60 and 120 credit hours, respectively.

+ Maximize the number of courses that are universally transferrable among Illinois colleges and universities, saving students time and money.

3. ISAC. Monetary Award Program (MAP) Evaluation, 2017.
4. Ibid.