



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**GOVERNOR PRITZKER PROCLAIMS OCTOBER COLLEGE CHANGES EVERYTHING MONTH® IN ILLINOIS**

**Complete Your College and Financial Aid Applications with Free Support Statewide!**

CHICAGO –Governor Pritzker has [proclaimed](#) October College Changes Everything® (CCE) Month in Illinois, as students begin to complete their college and financial aid applications for the 2022-23 school year. Now in its sixth year, CCE Month college planning activities accelerate in October, although the [Illinois Student Assistance Commission](#) (ISAC) and its partners provide an intensive schedule of free college and financial aid planning support to students and families from Labor Day through Thanksgiving. The [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA®\)](#) and the [Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid](#) for the 2022-23 school year will both be available on October 1, 2021.

“Families across the state continue to feel the financial and other personal impacts of the pandemic, and this has been especially true for low income families and communities of color,” said ISAC Executive Director Eric Zarnikow. “So, it’s particularly important for students to be able to identify affordable and flexible educational options that will make it possible for them to realize their career and financial goals.”

“The return to in-person learning allows us to connect with more students and families statewide to provide free college planning and financial aid support services,” said Zarnikow. “Completing a financial aid form is a critical first step for students, so they are aware of the options that are available to them and don’t miss out on funding for whatever educational path they choose.”

The FAFSA is the form that determines eligibility for federal, most state, and some institutional financial aid. Students are encouraged to complete the 2022-23 FAFSA as soon as possible after October 1 to have the opportunity to receive all the financial aid for which they might be eligible.

The Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid provides a way for some undocumented students and for some transgender students to apply for [Monetary Award Program](#) (MAP) grants. It’s important to note that most students will continue to complete the FAFSA, rather than the Alternative Application, in order 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.

Students who are applying to multiple Illinois public universities will find it simpler and more efficient this year, as all Illinois publics (along with many private institutions) will be using the popular Common Application.

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

- Free financial aid completion and college application workshops, where 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 will be 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](http://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](http://studentportal.isac.org/isacorps).
- Personalized assistance is also available through [ISAC College Q&A \(isac.org/collegeqa\)](http://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 \(isac.org/studentportal\)](http://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](http://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 [collegechangepseverything.org/ccemonth](http://collegechangepseverything.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 help reach students who might otherwise not complete an application. High schools also receive weekly recognition on ISAC's website and on social media for reaching financial aid application completion milestones. Find out more at [isac.org/FAFSA-Completion](http://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](http://isac.org) and follow us on [Facebook](#) @ILStudentAssistance, on [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](http://collegechangeseverything.org).

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