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University of Illinois launches scholarship initiative
Campaign seeks \$100 million to promote student access

CHICAGO, Ill. — University of Illinois President Michael J. Hogan on Thursday launched a \$100 million fundraising campaign that will increase financial aid to help students and their families offset tuition costs that have risen sharply as state funding for the University has declined over the last decade.

The University's Board of Trustees endorsed the campaign – known as Access Illinois: The Presidential Scholarship Initiative – during a meeting at the University's Chicago campus, saying the three-year campaign will help ensure that deserving students are not shut out due to cost.

Hogan kicked off his new initiative by pledging \$100,000 to endow a scholarship – a gift from him and his wife Virginia.

“There is no higher priority to me than making sure that rising costs don't deny students the life-changing opportunities that a University of Illinois education provides,” Hogan said. “College is a cornerstone of the American dream, and we are committed to preserving it for our students.”

Board Chairman Christopher Kennedy said the initiative will promote student access, a hallmark of the University's land-grant mission for nearly 150 years.

“Our rich history is filled with stories of students who changed the world, simply because education unlocked doors of opportunity,” Kennedy said. “This crucial initiative will ensure that the University continues to welcome the best and brightest students, regardless of their ability to pay.”

Hogan said the financial aid campaign is needed to offset costs that have risen as state funding for the University has shrunk by more than 30 percent over the last decade.

Hogan praised the Board of Trustees for addressing the access and affordability issue, first through a new policy that limits tuition increases to increases in inflation, and now through its support of this new scholarship initiative, which will help plug unmet financial need on the University's three campuses.

The new initiative will be led by the University of Illinois Foundation, which is nearing completion of an eight-year, \$2.25 billion capital campaign. The Brilliant Futures campaign – the largest in University history – is scheduled to conclude at the end of the year.

“The University of Illinois Foundation is very proud in partnering with the University and President Hogan on this most important initiative,” said Sidney S. Micek, president of the University of Illinois Foundation. “Scholarship support has been a significant part of the Brilliant Futures Campaign and this initiative will be creating more momentum and emphasis on student assistance over the next three years. At the end of the day, we want to be able to help deserving students throughout Illinois and from around the country to have an opportunity to get a degree from the University of Illinois. That is the most important thing to our donors, alumni and friends of the University.”

Hogan said the initiative will solicit donations from the University’s more than 600,000 alumni and other supporters, seeking general-use gifts that can be used to meet current needs as well as endowed scholarships that provide financial aid in perpetuity.

“No matter how big or small, every gift is an investment that will pay rich dividends for our students and our commitment to access for all,” Hogan said. “I hope our alumni and friends will reflect on the doors of opportunity that the U of I has opened for them, and give generously.”

Hogan also announced that the University has reallocated an additional \$3 million to support its President’s Awards Program – the first funding increase since the scholarship program for high-achieving, underrepresented students was created more than 25 years ago.

The increase will boost funding for the program to \$7.5 million, effective July 1. Awards will increase to \$5,000, up from about \$1,000 to \$3,000 currently. The program was established in 1984 to assist students who are academically gifted but economically disadvantaged, including minorities and students from Illinois counties that are underrepresented at the U of I.

“Nearly doubling our commitment to this critical award program will reap immediate benefits, providing scholarships that will make a real difference right now for students who might otherwise be priced out of their dream of an education at the University of Illinois,” Hogan said.

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The University of Illinois is a world leader in research and discovery, the largest educational institution in the state with more than 76,000 students, 24,000 faculty and staff, and campuses in Urbana-Champaign, Chicago and Springfield. The U of I awards more than 19,000 undergraduate, graduate and professional degrees annually.