

Illinois Public University Presidents and Chancellors

News Release

For Immediate Release

Bradley Hoey
Northern Illinois University
Office: 815-753-6667
Cell: 815-761-2541
Email: bhoey@niu.edu

Contacts:
Tom Hardy
University of Illinois
Office: (312) 996-3772
Cell: (312) 543-7476
Email: hardyt@uillinois.edu

February 8, 2010

Slow, reduced payments by state put universities in jeopardy ***Plan needed to sustain orderly operations on campuses***

CHICAGO, Ill. -- Presidents and chancellors of the public universities in Illinois today jointly urged the governor and comptroller to agree on a plan to provide state funding that was committed to higher education and to reduce a payment backlog that threatens the universities' operations.

A letter to Gov. Pat Quinn and Comptroller Dan Hynes signed by the presidents and chancellors of the 13 four-year public university campuses in Illinois called upon the state to "honor its commitments" of support and set a payment schedule to enable the universities to "manage our respective cash flows...and sustain orderly operations."

It was noted that midway through the fiscal year, as of Jan. 25, the taxpayer-supported public universities collectively remain more than \$735 million behind in state payments of their total appropriation. The result has been austerity measures such as spending down cash reserves, reducing budgets, salary and hiring freezes, employee furloughs and reductions in days of campus operations.

"We have done what we can to forestall this crisis by enacting countless measures to save resources and postpone payments until the last possible moment. We have drawn down our available resources, and we are now counting on tuition dollars to keep our doors open for students beginning in the new spring semester," the public university leaders explained.

"Still, no amount of cutting and sacrifice can make up for the absence of hundreds of millions of dollars in state appropriation payments. Without full funding of our appropriations in a timely manner, we will be forced to take even more drastic actions that will diminish the educational opportunities of our students and our service to the people of Illinois," they stated.

The state legislature approved and Quinn signed a general revenue budget for the current fiscal year that provided a total of \$1.39 billion in state funding for the universities to use as the core revenue source in support of their instructional budgets—faculty and staff salaries, libraries, utilities, infrastructure maintenance, equipment and supplies. As of Jan. 25, the universities had billed \$1.07 billion against their total 2010 appropriations, but they had only received \$335 million, or 24% of the total billed. Hynes' office disburses state appropriation dollars.

The university leaders noted that the public university campuses spread across the state are valuable assets for the economic prosperity of Illinois. Together they enroll about 233,000 students, employ 43,000 faculty and staff, and award 49,000 degrees annually.

“For more than a century our public universities have been engines of economic growth, raising the standard of living for countless Illinois citizens, and at no time has that capacity been more crucial,” the presidents and chancellors observed. “Every dollar spent on higher education is repaid many times over in job-creation at every level... The people of Illinois and the state as a whole need the Illinois public universities to help shape our state’s future, including our economic recovery, and drive the next generation of technology and opportunity.”

Acknowledging the state’s fiscal crisis will be difficult to solve and offering to assist in the effort, the presidents and chancellors urged the state in the meantime to honor its commitment and fully fund the public universities’ appropriations. “We request a reliable appropriations payment schedule be set and agreed to that will allow us to manage our respective cash flows for fiscal 2010 and thereafter, and sustain orderly operations,” they said.

The letter is available online at: <http://www.uillinois.edu/go/PublicUniversities>.