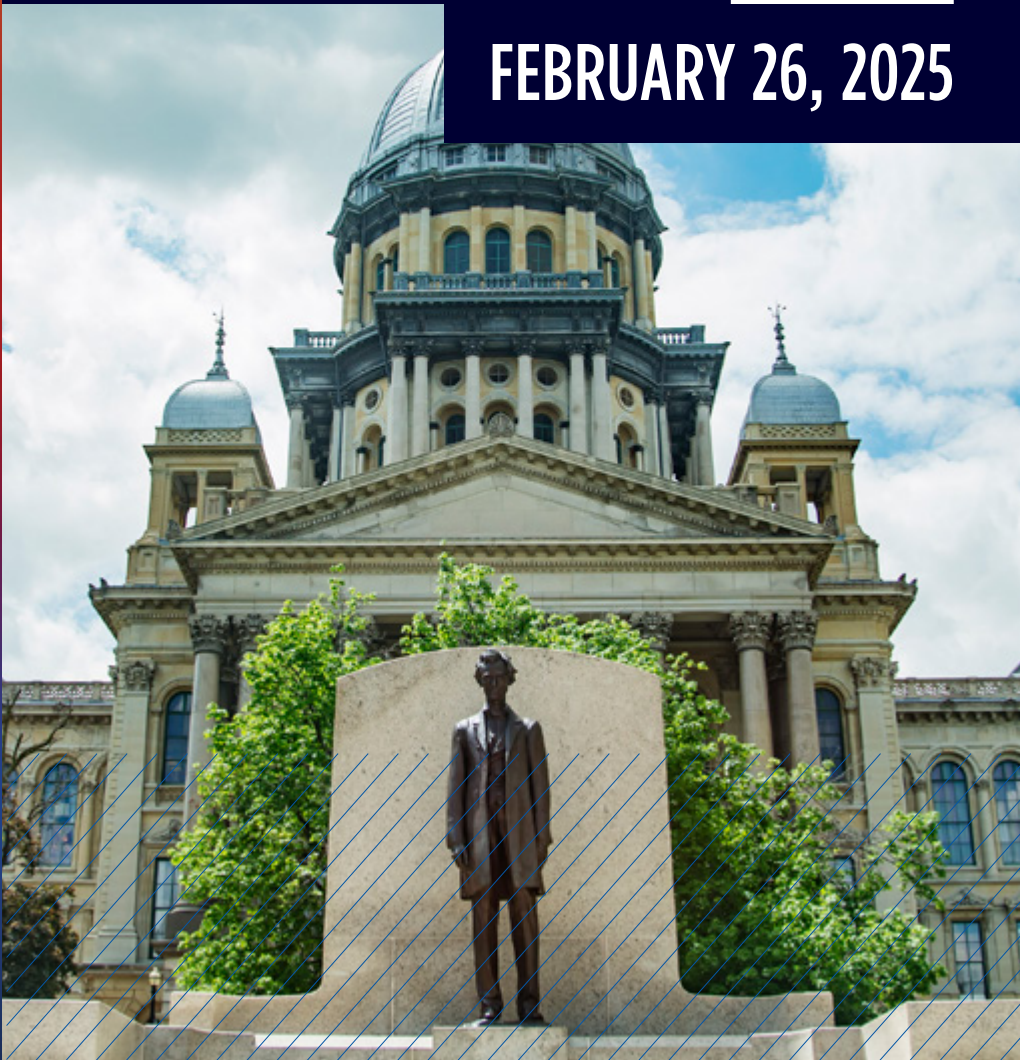


**I** University  
**UIC** of Illinois  
**UIS** System

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM

# DAY AT THE CAPITOL

FEBRUARY 26, 2025





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## ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM

The University of Illinois System is the state's most powerful economic engine—driving \$19 billion into the Illinois economy each year and educating more than half of all public university students in the state. Our graduates stay here, work here, and fuel local industries. With over 445,000 alumni in Illinois, we are the state's talent pipeline—training the next generation of doctors, engineers, teachers, and entrepreneurs. Investing in the U of I System means investing in Illinois' future—keeping top talent in-state and strengthening our communities for generations to come.

# MEETINGS WITH LEGISLATORS & STAFF

## When you meet with a legislator

- **Be flexible.** Meetings are often affected by committee hearings and votes. Meetings may need to be relocated to accommodate the changing legislative schedule or the size of a group.
- **Have a prepared story.** Know what you're going to say before you meet. Tell your legislator about your experience with the U of I System and what your education means to you.
- **Try to incorporate the key messages outlined for the day.** Be brief and to the point. If the conversation veers off topic, try to gently steer it back to what you'd like to discuss while making sure to be responsive to any comments or questions.
- **Answer questions only if you are certain.** Legislators may ask you all kinds of questions about the policies you are advocating for, or about unrelated topics. It's okay to tell your legislator you don't know the answer, but will relay their questions to the U of I System government relations staff.
- **Be courteous.** Sometimes, a legislator may have a different opinion than you. Please remember to be respectful despite any disagreements, both in-person and on social media.

## After your meeting

Debrief with your group about your conversation. Each group lead will be responsible for submitting your feedback form for each meeting. Please make note of any promised actions, unanswered questions and responses to the items you discussed with the legislator.

# BY THE NUMBERS

53% OF ALL STUDENTS ATTENDING ILLINOIS PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES ARE ENROLLED IN U OF I SYSTEM UNIVERSITIES

1 IN 46 ILLINOIS JOBS CONNECTED TO THE U OF I SYSTEM

76% GRADUATION RATE FOR THE SYSTEM: COMPARED TO THE NATIONAL AVERAGE OF 64%

97,772 STUDENTS EDUCATED ANNUALLY

\$19B+ YEARLY CONTRIBUTION TO THE ILLINOIS ECONOMY

79% OF UNDERGRADS ARE ILLINOIS RESIDENTS

32% OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IDENTIFY AS AN UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITY

\$1,000,000,000+ TOTAL RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

\$283M ANNUAL INSTITUTIONAL AID FOR UNDERGRADS

# SUPPORT FOR INCREASED INVESTMENT IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM

## Ensuring Illinois' economic future through investment in higher education

### BACKGROUND

Illinois' continued economic growth depends on a highly educated workforce, cutting-edge research, and strong public universities. The U of I System plays a pivotal role in shaping the state's talent pipeline and fostering economic development, with an annual economic impact exceeding \$19 billion. However, despite past increases, state funding for higher education remains below historical levels when adjusted for inflation. Additional state investment is crucial to sustaining affordability, driving innovation, and retaining Illinois' top talent.

Increased funding is also necessary to support student success initiatives, including expanded MAP grants and AIM HIGH awards, which provide critical financial assistance to students. Investment in higher education infrastructure, research, and workforce development programs ensures that Illinois remains competitive nationally and globally.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### To ensure long-term stability and competitiveness, the Illinois General Assembly should:

- Increase operational funding for the U of I System to support faculty excellence, academic innovation, and essential student services.
- Expand MAP and AIM HIGH financial aid programs to increase affordability and reduce financial barriers for Illinois students.
- Fund deferred maintenance programs to modernize campus infrastructure and maintain a safe, high-quality learning environment.
- Release already appropriated capital funding to continue innovation and growth

Investing in these areas will allow the U of I System to continue delivering a world-class education while ensuring that Illinois remains a national leader in research, workforce development, and economic opportunity.

### INCREASE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ILLINOIS

The U of I System is a driving force behind the state's innovation economy, fostering entrepreneurship, research, and workforce readiness. To maximize this impact, the state should:

- Support university-led research and industry partnerships by investing in the Discovery Partners Institute, Illinois Innovation Network, and other R&D initiatives.
- Expand funding for STEM education and technology commercialization to encourage innovation and attract high-tech industries to Illinois.
- Leverage the U of I System's alumni network of over 445,000 graduates living in Illinois to retain talent and grow the state's workforce.

These initiatives will stimulate job creation, attract federal and private investment, and strengthen Illinois' position as a leader in emerging fields such as biotechnology, quantum computing, clean energy, and advanced manufacturing.

### CONCLUSION

Investing in the U of I System is an investment in Illinois' future. Increased state funding for higher education, research, workforce development, financial aid, and infrastructure will allow the U of I System to continue driving innovation, economic growth, and student success.

#### A well-funded U of I System will:

- Keep Illinois students in-state for higher education and careers.
- Attract businesses, industries, and research funding to Illinois.
- Ensure long-term sustainability of faculty retention and pension systems.

# U OF I SYSTEM 2025 TALKING POINTS

## WIDENING DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY

- The U of I System is committed to making higher education accessible to all Illinois students. Through the **AIM HIGH** program, high-achieving Illinois high school students can have their tuition fully covered, ensuring that financial barriers do not hinder academic success.
- We offer a **four-year tuition** lock for incoming undergraduate students, providing financial predictability and stability for families. This guarantee ensures that students can plan their education without the fear of rising costs.
- Starting in 2025, the U of I System will guarantee admission to Illinois high school graduates who transfer from **any college in the nation**. This initiative is designed to bring talent back to Illinois, fostering a skilled workforce that drives the state's economy.
- With **79% of our students hailing from Illinois**, we are deeply committed to serving the state's residents. **Over 56% of undergraduate students receive financial aid**, and **80% of students at U of I System universities receive grants or scholarships**, making higher education more attainable for all.

## FUTURE-FORWARD WORKFORCE

- The U of I System is **Illinois' strongest talent pipeline**, with over **445,000 alumni** in state filling critical roles in healthcare, engineering, education, and more—driving the state's economy forward.
- The system **educates more than half of all public university students in Illinois**, ensuring Illinois maintains a competitive, highly skilled workforce.
- The U of I System awarded **27,041 degrees** in 2023-24, with **70% of graduates choosing to stay in Illinois**. These graduates fill critical roles in growing sectors.
- The U of I System is proud to serve a diverse student body, with **32% of undergraduates identifying as underrepresented minorities**. We believe that diversity drives innovation and strengthens our communities.
- At University of Illinois Chicago, **40% of first-year freshmen are first-generation students**, reflecting our commitment to providing opportunities for those who are the first in their families to attend college.

- Discovery Partners Institute is a hub for tech talent development, focusing on creating a diverse workforce that reflects the demographics of Chicago and Illinois. Through initiatives like the **Pritzker Tech Talent Lab**, DPI is training the next generation of tech leaders, with **70% of participants identifying as Black, Latino/a, or multiracial**.

## ADVANCING AN ECONOMY FOR ALL

- The U of I System contributes **\$19 billion annually** to the Illinois economy, supporting **164,200 jobs**—equivalent to **1 out of every 46 jobs** in the state.
- With **\$1.1 billion in separately funded research**, our universities are at the forefront of groundbreaking discoveries in fields like quantum computing, healthcare, and sustainable energy. These innovations not only advance knowledge but also attract businesses and create high-paying jobs in Illinois.
- The **Illinois Innovation Network** is a statewide network of 15 hubs that drive research, innovation, and economic development. With **\$500 million in state funding**, the IIN is creating jobs, advancing research, and fostering collaboration between universities, industry, and communities.
- The IIN's **Illinois Broadband Lab** is leading efforts to expand broadband access and digital equity across the state, ensuring that all Illinoisans can participate in the digital economy.

## CLOSING GAPS IN HEALTHCARE

- UI Health provides comprehensive care, education, and research—**training the next generation** of healthcare leaders. With campuses in Chicago, Peoria, Rockford, and Springfield, UI Health serves over **1.4 million patients** annually from communities in **every corner of the state**.
- Our **two top-tier medical schools** are dedicated to closing healthcare gaps, particularly in rural and underserved areas. From maternal healthcare to mental health services, we are committed to ensuring that all Illinoisans have access to quality care, regardless of their ZIP code.
- In the 2024-25 academic year, UI Health added over **2,400 new healthcare professionals** to the workforce, addressing critical shortages and improving health outcomes across the state.

## CALLS TO ACTION

- Advocate for increased funding and support for the U of I System to ensure its continued success in driving economic mobility, innovation, and workforce development.
- Collaborate with the system to create opportunities for students and drive economic growth.
- Leverage the system's vast network of alumni, students, faculty and staff to support economic development and talent retention.

# NOTES

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# CONTACT US

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# SCHEDULE

## REGISTRATION

11:00 – 11:30 AM

Atrium- Illinois State Library Gwendolyn Brooks Building

The entrance to the State Library is through the first floor north door (Monroe Street Entrance). External Relations and Communications staff and members of the Student Advocacy Coalition will greet you upon entering. Check in for your name tag, group assignment, lobbying materials and briefing materials.

## LUNCH WITH PRESIDENT KILLEEN & ADVOCACY PREP

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Atrium- Illinois State Library Gwendolyn Brooks Building

Hear from U of I System leadership about the importance of alumni and student advocacy. Receive a briefing on talking points and best practices for lobbying.

12:45 PM

GROUP PHOTO ON EAST CAPITOL STEPS

## LEGISLATOR MEETINGS

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Illinois State Capitol

Advocates will break into their legislative groups and meet with their state legislators. Assigned group leads will help guide you through the Capitol building and coordinate your team's strategy for the meetings.