

Illinois Higher Ed *The Friday Memo*

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[College costs worry Americans, even as they see college as vital](#)

The public is growing more anxious about a key element of the American dream: a college education. Increasing numbers consider a college degree essential for success, yet more and more say college is out-of-reach for qualified students. That's the conclusion of Public Agenda's latest report, *Squeeze Play: The Public's View of College Costs Today*.

[Illinois Kids Count report shows achievement gaps](#)

Educational disparities persist across Illinois, particularly with respect to school resources and student achievement, according to *Illinois Kids Count 2009*. IBHE Executive Director Judy Erwin, was among the essayists for the data book. "We all – families, communities, business, labor and educators – must insist that a preschool to graduate school(P-20) learning continuum becomes Illinois' plan for student success," Erwin asserted in the essay contained in the Kids Count report. At one of eight community press conferences highlighting the report, Dr. Walter Milton, Springfield's superintendent, echoed the same call for collaboration. "Our nation is at stake. We must pool our resources and have a constant conversation. Quality education has to be seen as a priority."



Presenting the 2009 Illinois Kids Count findings at a Springfield press conference, were John Kelker, United Way of Sangamon County, Erich Bloxdorf, Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, Matt Blakey, Springfield Urban League, and Dr. Walter Milton, Springfield's schools superintendent.

[Symposium to focus on bolstering role of technology in classroom](#)

UPCOMING

February

10 [House Higher Education Committee, 2 p.m.](#)

11 [House Appropriations-Higher Education Committee, 10 a.m.](#)

20 Faculty Advisory Council, Northwestern University

24 AeA 21st Learning Environment Symposium, Illinois State Museum, Springfield

March

18 Legislative Reception of the Higher Education Legislative Coalition, Illinois State Museum, Springfield

AeA, a trade association representing the technology industry, will sponsor a half-day forum February 24th on using leading technology tools to transform the 21st Century learning environment in Illinois schools. The Illinois Innovation Talent Project has engaged public and private leaders in a pilot initiative to promote innovation-centered education and further ongoing efforts to increase student achievement, particularly in math, science and engineering. The 21st Century Learning Environment Symposium will be held at the Illinois State Museum in Springfield. Government and education attendees can attend free of charge, but need to register by phone, email or fax.

[Attorney General outlines prevailing wage requirements for colleges and universities](#)

Attorney General Lisa Madigan sent a letter to thousands of public bodies, including institutions of higher education, describing the duties and requirements the Illinois Prevailing Wage Act imposes on contractors on public works projects.

[Participation in AP rises; increasing number of minority students meeting benchmark for college success](#)

The number of Illinois students taking and passing AP exams increased in 2008, according to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Illinois also ranked in the upper half of the nation for number of high school seniors – 15.2 percent – who scored 3 or higher on an AP exam in 2008 according to the 5th Annual AP Report to the Nation “We know that a rigorous academic curriculum builds the foundation both for success in the classroom and following graduation,” said State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch. “We’re pleased to see our AP results improve and expect to see the trend continue as we review and revise our Illinois Learning Standards and continue our work with the American Diploma Project.”

[Treasurer proposes credit card restrictions](#)

State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias will introduce legislation to ban credit issuers from offering any gifts when marketing credit cards on college campuses; prohibit the selling or transferring of student names and personal information to credit card lenders; force state colleges, universities, and their affiliates to disclose marketing agreements with banks that target students; and require credit card issuers to pay for and conduct financial literacy classes for students if they want to advertise or market their products on campus. The restrictions will be contained in a Senate bill sponsored by Senator Donne Trotter and a House version sponsored by Representative Kevin Joyce.

[LLCC Green Center to host workplace sustainability workshop](#)

Lincoln Land Community College’s Green Center, in conjunction with the Illinois Sustainable Technology Center at the University of Illinois-Champaign, is presenting a “green economics workshop” on Thursday, Feb. 19. “Go Green and Save Money: Fiscally Sound Green Business Practices” will be held from 8 a.m. to noon in the

Trutter Center on LLCC's main campus.

The workshop will take an in-depth look at the economics of green practices and is designed especially for businesses, educational institutions, churches, and other nonprofit organizations, and state, county and city municipalities who want to save money and improve their environmental performance through green practices.

[Presley to discuss attracting students to science education careers](#)

Experts lament that not enough American schoolchildren excel in mathematics and science – and that one reason is the shortage of skilled teachers in those fields. But where will those teachers come from?

On Wednesday, February 18 at noon central time, Jennifer B. Presley, director of science and mathematics education policy at the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, and Monica Plisch, assistant director of education for the American Physical Society, will lead an audio conference on how colleges can attract more students to science education careers and create the best possible educational experiences for these students. Presley is the former director of the Illinois Education Research Council and author of several studies on student preparation for college and teacher quality.

[Tips for the Golden Years](#)

The State Universities Retirement System (SURS) is offering 2 one-day Retirement Education Seminars at its office in Champaign. In addition to general retirement information for all members, there will be breakout sessions regarding specific plans. Topics include:

- Estate planning
- Social Security
- Insurance
- “Encore” – discovering what the next chapter in your life will look like.

[People in the News](#)

Ethics and education at all levels - though particularly higher education - will be the top priorities of [David Yepsen](#), who was announced Wednesday as the new executive director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute. A 34-year journalist at the Des Moines Register, he will begin his new job on April 1.

University of Illinois at Chicago physicist [Robert Klie](#) has been awarded a five-year, \$400,000 National Science Foundation Faculty Early Career Development award to further his research on cobalt oxides, a promising class of ceramic materials.

[Campus News](#)

[Mennonite exceeds national, state pass rates on nursing exam](#)

Mennonite College of Nursing at Illinois State University ranks above the state and nationwide averages for the number of graduates who passed the national nursing licensure examination on the first try in 2008. Ninety-seven percent of Mennonite graduates passed the National Council Licensure Examination for registered nurses (NCLEX-RN) on the first try last year. The nationwide NCLEX-RN pass rate for nursing program graduates was 87 percent, while the State of Illinois pass rate was 90 percent.

[JWCC, HLG team up with programs to help adults earn bachelor's degrees](#)

John Wood Community College and Hannibal-LaGrange College are working together to help busy adults who want to earn bachelor's degrees.

[MORE CAMPUS NEWS](#)

[News from Higher Education](#)

[In stimulus bill, US funds for schools double](#)

(Christian Science Monitor)

About a quarter of the new money is aimed at low-income pupils, to help with the achievement gap.

[Colleges show interest in new GI Bill Program, but many are wary of its cost](#)

(Chronicle of Higher Education)

As college administrators deal with dwindling budgets and rising demand for student aid, they also face decisions about whether, and to what extent, they can afford to commit to participate in a new federal program that seeks to help veterans attend private colleges, graduate schools, or out-of-state public institutions.

[The drive to go from the factory to the classroom](#)

(The Wall Street Journal)

Pamela Becker spent 13 years assembling Buick Skylarks, all the while studying part-time for two degrees as she looked for a way off the General Motors factory floor. Now, 29 years after starting her studies -- and at the height of the crisis in the auto industry -- Ms. Becker is a college instructor helping displaced Michigan auto workers reinvent themselves.

[Duncan: Stimulus aid could give schools help](#)

(USA TODAY)

The one-time, multibillion-dollar congressional stimulus offers public schools "an extraordinary opportunity," not just to plug gaping state and local budget holes, but to improve education in ways that have eluded the USA for decades, Education Secretary Arne Duncan said Thursday.

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Illinois Board of Higher Education
431 East Adams, 2nd Floor, Springfield, Illinois 62701-1404
Phone: (217) 782-2551
<http://www.ibhe.org>
FridayMemo@ibhe.org