

Illinois Higher Ed
The Friday Memo

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December 6, 2013

[Pension reform bill passes General Assembly, signed by the Governor](#)

Posted by SURS on December 4, 2013



General Assembly members returned for a one-day session on December 3, to vote on [SB 1](#), a compromise pension reform bill hashed-out by legislative leaders late last week. The legislation passed the House 62-53, and the Senate 30-24.

[Governor Quinn signed the bill on December 5.](#)

The main elements of the reform package include:

- Reduction of the Automatic Annual Increase (AAI) for retirees
- AAI deferments for future Tier 1 retirees
- Capping pensionable earnings for Tier 1 participants
- The option for 5% of present Tier 1 participants to join a new defined contribution plan
- Delaying the retirement age for current state workers under age 45
- Changes to the Effective Rate of Interest
- Eliminating the use of sick and vacation days for service credit or pensionable earnings for future participants
- Reduction of employee contributions (1%) for Tier 1 participants
- Funding guarantees

[New Financial Aid Toolkit part of Department's efforts to improve college access and affordability](#)

The U.S. Department of Education has announced the launch of an online "one-stop shop" aimed at guidance counselors and other advisers, such as staff or volunteers at community-based organizations, who assist students through the process of selecting and financing their higher education. The Financial Aid Toolkit, available at FinancialAidToolkit.ed.gov, consolidates financial aid resources and content into a searchable online database, making it easy for individuals to quickly access the information they need to support their students.

[Quad-Cities chosen for college graduation initiative](#)

The Quad Cities have been selected as one of 20 communities nationwide to work with a private foundation to help increase the number of Americans who walk out of a college with a degree. Indianapolis-based [Lumina Foundation announced December 4 that Achieve Quad-Cities will receive a three-year, \\$200,000 grant.](#) The Foundation also will provide a network of national experts and resources to help the organization reach its goal of making college more accessible.

The Quad Cities effort includes a number of organizations including the Quad Cities University and College Presidents Council, the Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce, the Community Foundation of the Great River Bend, the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, the Iowa College Student Aid Commission, and Achieve Quad Cities to improve postsecondary

UPCOMING

DECEMBER

- 10** [IBHE Board Meeting](#),
Governors State University,
University Park
- IBHE Disabilities Advisory
Committee, GSU, University
Park
- 13** [IBHE Faculty Advisory](#)
Council, IASB Office,
Springfield

attainment rates. Matt Mendenhall, vice president of programs at Community Foundation of the Great River Bend, said the grant will be used to find new and innovative ways to help both traditional and non-traditional students pay for college. "It's exciting because it represents an opportunity for all of the higher education institutions, as well as the Chamber, the Community Foundation, and some other entities to be able to work together to increase attainment of higher education credential degrees," he said.

[This opportunity](#) builds on the already significant collaborative efforts among area colleges and universities, including Augustana College, Black Hawk College, Eastern Iowa Community Colleges, Palmer College of Chiropractic, St. Ambrose University, Trinity College of Nursing and Health Sciences, and Western Illinois University – Quad Cities. Each college or university places enormous importance on students completing post-secondary education and will continue to do so. What the Lumina partnership provides is opportunities to "think regionally" in increasing higher education attainment.

Call for Proposals - Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation Grant

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), Illinois Community College Board, Illinois State Board of Education, The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning, and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, in conjunction with the Illinois Early Learning Council's subcommittee on Higher Education Learning and Professional Development, are collaborating to offer the ***Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation Grant***. **Through this grant, higher education institutions have the opportunity to apply for up to \$50,000 in grant funds to be used in 2014, to support program innovation and partnerships for early childhood educator preparation.** The eligible applicants are consortia of two- and four-year institutions of higher education. The four-year institution must be the fiscal agent and, accordingly, must be accredited with a currently approved early childhood educator preparation program. The [cover memo](#) and [application form](#) include the complete details. **Applications are due to IBHE by December 18, 2013.**

[People in the News](#)

The Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) is pleased to announce that qualified Illinois high school students have been designated as **2014-15 State Scholars**. A [listing of all 2014-15 State Scholars](#) – displayed alphabetically by high school, within each school's county – is now available.

[Kamal Eldeirawi](#), assistant professor of health systems science at the University of Illinois at Chicago, is one of 12 educators from across the United States to be named a Nurse Faculty Scholar by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Eldeirawi will receive a three-year, \$350,000 award to promote his academic career and support his research. The Nurse Faculty Scholar award is presented to junior faculty who show outstanding promise as future leaders in academic nursing. Eldeirawi will use the grant to extend his research on risk factors for asthma and other respiratory ailments, especially in minority and immigrant populations.

[Campus News](#)

[Expanding access for CPS students to top colleges](#)

Northwestern University and the City of Chicago announced a new program to help Chicago Public School (CPS) students prepare for and gain admittance to selective colleges and universities. The Northwestern Academy is designed to help CPS high school students who are academically talented and qualify for the free or reduced lunch program with supplemental educational opportunities and support services to prepare them for highly selective colleges and universities. "Northwestern is deeply committed to supporting Chicago Public School students and providing opportunities for a world-class education that will prepare these students for college and careers," said Northwestern President Morton Schapiro. "Our involvement with Chicago schools is strong, far-reaching, and growing."

[SIUE \\$52 million science building dedicated](#)

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) christened its \$52 million Science Building West in a ribbon cutting ceremony in November. The facility incorporates laboratories for faculty and student research initiatives in a state-of-the-art learning environment. It opened for use during the 2013 fall semester. "The SIUE Science Building Complex project has been worked on at the state level for many, many years by both current and former state legislators, and many others in this community," Poshard said. "Our elected officials, University leaders, business and labor leaders, and alums never gave up on this project, because they have long understood and appreciated the prosperity that this University brings to Southwestern Illinois. "For some time now, the lack of a new science building has been an impediment to the growth of this University and, today, we can say that hurdle has been cleared."

[COD moves forward with Phase II of Home Security Training Institute](#)

College of DuPage (COD) is moving forward with plans to expand its training options for area emergency response agencies. The Board of Trustees recently unanimously approved architectural and construction management contracts for building Phase II of the Homeland Security Training Institute. Phase II will be located on the College's Glen Ellyn campus proximal to the current Homeland Security Education Center, built in October 2011. The Phase II facility will provide much needed additional first responder instruction for advanced firearms training, interactive "shoot/don't shoot" simulation, and weapons cleaning/repair training. The total estimated cost of the project is \$16 million with an expected completion of Spring 2015. "This new facility will address training needs that have been identified as critical and enable COD to continue its vision to serve as a national leader in emergency response instruction," said College of DuPage President Robert L. Breuder. "The proposed facility's underground range will be perfectly safe, invisible to the surrounding area, silent, and 'lead free,' which will preserve the environment."

[UIUC receives Grand Challenges explorations grants](#)

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) is a Grand Challenges Explorations winner, an initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Daniel L. Rock, a professor of pathobiology, and Mark S. Kuhlenschmidt, a professor and the interim head of pathobiology, will pursue innovative global health and development research projects. Grand Challenges Explorations funds people worldwide to explore ideas that can solve persistent global health and development challenges. The projects Rock and Kuhlenschmidt are pursuing are two of more than 80 Grand Challenges Explorations Round 11 grants announced by the Foundation.

Rock's project focuses on the development of a single one-dose vaccine to prevent sheep pox, goat pox, peste des petits ruminants (a disease afflicting goats and sheep), and Rift valley fever (a livestock disease that can be passed to humans) for an extended period of time. This novel approach would provide long-term disease control for the animal population with a single vaccination.

Kuhlenschmidt's project focuses on the development of a system to better study a microscopic parasite called *Cryptosporidium*, a protozoan transmitted in contaminated water, causing a diarrheal disease in humans. According to the World Health Organization, diarrheal disease is the second-leading killer of children younger than five years old, and Kuhlenschmidt said, "about 50 percent of that is due to *Cryptosporidium*."

[News from Higher Education](#)

[Group hopes to map a faster path to college completion](#) (Chronicle of Higher Education)

With on-time graduation rates hovering in the single digits in some of its member states, Complete College America recommends that students step on the accelerator and colleges slam on the brakes when it comes to the credit hours needed to graduate.

[Obstacles preventing access to higher education for all](#) (The Huffington Post)

Recently, President Obama took to the road to explain the need to obtain a higher education.

[Student debt load found to vary by college and state](#) (The New York Times)

Rising student debt has become a national concern, but the picture is far from uniform, with students at some colleges borrowing 10 times as much as their counterparts at other colleges, a report says.

[Durbin pushing bill to ease struggle of repaying private student loans](#) (Chicago Sun-Times)

U.S. Senator Dick Durbin, D-Ill., is introducing a bill to protect students from getting overwhelmed by private-loan payments that grow out of control without explanation.

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