

Higher Ed Funding Commission Holds Inaugural Meeting - A Focus On Equity Will Help Determine The Financial Future Of Illinois' Public Universities

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SPRINGFIELD— Established by state lawmakers, the newly formed [Commission on Equitable Public University Funding](#) met this week to hold an open discussion on how Illinois' public universities are funded. The commission was created by SB 815, co-sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Kimberly Lightford and Representative Carol Ammons, and signed into law by Governor JB Pritzker in August.

“We have a historic opportunity to truly affect change in the state’s higher education system and ensure that all students have a chance to achieve their postsecondary goals,” said Illinois Deputy Gov. for Education Martin Torres, a co-chair of the commission.

The commission includes 33 members whose expertise spans the higher education landscape.

“The commission members are all champions for higher education and committed to improving opportunities for Illinois students,” said Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) Chair John Atkinson, co-chair of the commission. “We look forward to working together to put equity at the forefront of our funding decisions.”

“This group’s work is aligned with the state’s new higher education strategic plan, [A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth](#), which outlines the need to invest in higher education in a way that is equitable, stable, and sufficient, through a set of core principles that will be the foundation of a new funding approach,” said IBHE Executive Director Ginger Ostro said.

The commission will recommend at minimum specific data-driven criteria and approaches to the General Assembly to fund public universities adequately, equitably, and stably in Illinois and to evaluate existing funding methods.

Additionally, the commission must provide a report of its findings to the General Assembly no later than July 1, 2023. The report must include recommendations for an equity-centered funding model to distribute state resources to public universities. In addition to fulfilling the core principles for the new funding approach laid out in A Thriving Illinois, the commission’s recommendations must also address specific criteria.

Members of the commission include:

- Deputy Gov. for Education Martin Torres, Co-Chair
- IBHE Chair John Atkinson, Co-Chair
- Senate Majority Leader Kimberly Lightford, Co-Chair

Rep. Carol Ammons, Co-Chair

Sen. Scott Bennett

Sen. Dale Fowler

Sen. Chapin Rose

Rep. Katie Stuart

Rep. Dan Brady

Rep. Mike Marron

Sheila Caldwell, Vice President Anti-Racism, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, SIU
Andreas Cangellaris, Provost, UIUC
Lisa Castillo-Richmond, Executive Director, Partnership for College Completion
LCherita Ellens, Executive Director, Women Employed
Lisa Freeman, President, NIU
Gloria Gibson, President, NEIU
David Glassman, President, EIU
Cheryl Green, President, GSU
Terri Goss Kinzy, President, ISU
Diane Hayes, Professor SIU-E
Guiyou Huang, President, WIU
Brandon Kyle, Student, GSU
Dan Mahony, President, SIU
Ralph Martire, Executive Director, Center for Tax and Budget Accountability
Dennis Papini, UIS
Javier Reyes, Provost, UIC
Zaldwaynaka “Z” Scott, President, CSU
Robin Steans, President, Advance Illinois
Respicio Vasquez, General Counsel, Elgin Community College
Simón Weffer, Associate Professor NIU
Wendi Wills El-Amin, MD, Associate Dean, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, SIU
School of Medicine
Jack Wuest, Executive Director, Alternative Schools Network
Eric Zarnikow, Executive Director, Illinois Student Assistance Commission