

## **Challenge Grant for Illinois Promise**

A private family foundation has awarded a three-year, \$500,000 challenge grant to help raise funds for the Illinois Promise program. Launched in 2005 by Chancellor Richard Herman, Illinois Promise is a scholarship program designed to help students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds achieve their dream of a college education.

“As a public university,” Chancellor Herman stated, “we must ensure that talented students of all economic backgrounds have access to our programs. If the face of our campus does not reflect our society, we cannot fulfill our obligation to create the leaders of future generations.”

### **The Program**

The goals of Illinois Promise are to provide greater access to a University of Illinois education by removing financial barriers for the state’s neediest students and to retain these students through graduation. The program serves students from families with incomes at or below the federal poverty line who cannot contribute to their student’s education. Although most of these students receive substantial financial aid, it rarely covers all their expenses. Illinois Promise scholarships bridge the gap between students’ federal and state financial aid packages and the actual cost of an Illinois education. Students with severe financial need often struggle academically as they try to juggle courses with full-time work. By mitigating their financial concerns, Illinois Promise enables students to concentrate on their studies, thereby ensuring their academic success. In addition, the program provides a variety of support services that help students adjust to and succeed in the college environment.

The program initially served a cohort of 125 freshmen. Today, the program serves well over 600 students from freshmen through seniors.

### **The Challenge**

The University of Illinois is committed to seeking private support to sustain the Illinois Promise program. Initial fundraising efforts focused on providing scholarships for students currently enrolled in the program. The ultimate goal is to create an endowment for Illinois Promise that will ensure that the program continues to operate into the future.

Thanks to the generosity of a private family foundation in the Chicago area that is committed to advancing educational opportunities for disadvantaged students in our state, we have received a challenge grant that will match endowment gifts for Illinois Promise from individual donors and groups. Specifically, the three-year, \$500,000 challenge grant will match dollar for dollar endowment gifts of \$25,000 or more, up to a maximum of \$50,000 for any individual donor or group of donors. Grant funds will be used to support current Illinois Promise scholarships, while endowment gifts that qualify for the match will be invested to ensure the program’s future.

The challenge grant offers a wonderful opportunity to secure at least \$1 million in new funding for this important program. We are asking alumni and friends, as well as corporate and foundation partners to help us meet the challenge with a gift to Illinois Promise.

### **Impact**

Your gift to Illinois Promise helps deserving students attain what may previously been out of reach—a University of Illinois education. As one Illinois Promise student says:

“The door to a good education at Illinois has been opened. Despite the loss of my grandmother/guardian my senior year in high school, I am still able to attend my number one college of choice, thanks to the generous support of Illinois Promise.”