

Springfield, The State Journal-Register, Letter to the Editor, February 2, 2011

## **Letter: Get paperwork done soon for MAP award**

THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

Illinois community colleges serve one million students each year. Many students are eligible for the Illinois Monetary Award Program administered by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. ISAC will likely experience less MAP funding because of the economic downturn and reduced state appropriations. In recent years, when appropriations have been reduced, ISAC has been forced to reduce the number and amounts of awards.

The Monetary Award Program is a need-based award. A family's income, assets, size of household, and number of family members in college are used to determine eligibility and award amount. To apply, students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The U.S. Department of Education sends information from the FAFSA to the state of Illinois so ISAC can determine a student's eligibility for the MAP award.

Each award year, ISAC posts the deadlines a student must meet to be considered for a full-year MAP award (considering all other criteria are met). This year's deadline has not yet been posted. However, that deadline date has been moved earlier each year. Last year, the deadline was April 18. In case the date is even earlier this year, I urge students to complete the FAFSA immediately.

The FAFSA may be obtained by calling the U.S. Department of Education at (800) 433-3243. However, the preferred method is via the Internet. Visit [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) to complete the application. Students may also visit or call their community college student financial aid office for help with this important task.

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