



May 22, 2015

To the members of the General Assembly:

Public universities are critical to Illinois' future – large-scale incubators for the human capital that is essential to drive progress, economic growth, and competitiveness. Combined, our public universities enroll nearly 200,000 students and send about 50,000 graduates into the workforce every year, each and every one an economic engine for the state and beyond.

A recent study by the Economic Policy Institute found that high-wage states are overwhelmingly those with a highly educated workforce. A 2014 U.S. Department of Labor report shows that workers with a bachelor's degree earn 65% more than workers with a high school diploma. For workers with master's degrees, the earnings gap is nearly double and then jumps to nearly 140% for workers with doctoral or professional degrees. And workers with those skills are exactly what our nation's employers need: more than half of jobs created during the recent economic recovery were filled by workers with a bachelor's degree or better.

We are responsible stewards of public funds, and we pledge to continue to remain so. We strive to provide affordable, accessible, quality education for our youth. We are leveraging precious state support by attracting more than \$1.2 billion in external funding – dollars that multiply in many ways to support the economy today and that serve to foster innovation and thereby the new businesses and jobs of tomorrow.

In short, public universities represent the key to our state's future economic prosperity and competitiveness.

As leaders of Illinois public universities, we are committed to doing our responsible share of providing solutions to the state's fiscal problems, and we will work relentlessly in partnership with others to put Illinois on the road to recovery. We are vigorously ramping up efforts to operate more efficiently and more effectively across the board, by streamlining administrative services, enhancing the performance of our academic programs, developing plans to raise revenues from current and new sources, and reinvesting in our core strategic priorities and mission. We believe that relief from overly burdensome regulations will be an additional essential part of what must become a new operating model for our universities.

We must not compromise on the excellence of our institutions and of the education we provide to the citizens of Illinois through damaging and precipitous cuts in funding. We believe that maintaining a robust, sustained, and predictable level of state support for our universities is absolutely essential for the future wellbeing and economic prosperity of our state.

We seek and thank you for your support and for your dedicated service to the people of Illinois.

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