



KEEP STUDENTS ON THE MAP

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MAPPING THE WAY

Students stand up to lawmakers and bring the Monetary Award Program back to Illinois schools

By **LAURA JANOTA** and **TOM KAROW**

Despite tough economic times, Stephen Franklin, a first-generation college student at Roosevelt University's Schaumburg Campus, was doing well. His goals of earning a bachelor's degree in history from Roosevelt and entering law school were in sight.

Then with little warning last fall, Illinois lawmakers cut \$200 million from the state's largest need-based-aid program for the spring 2010 semester to help reduce the state's budget deficit.

Suddenly, Franklin and 138,000 other low-income college and university students in Illinois faced the possibility of losing up to \$5,000 a year in Monetary Award Program (MAP) funding, meaning they could be forced to drop out of school or take fewer credits this semester.

Realizing that something had to be done, Franklin, along with Roosevelt students on both campuses, decided to actively campaign to have the MAP funds restored. Calling the cuts to MAP a social justice issue, they organized letter-writing initiatives, visited elected officials and participated in rallies.

Their hard work was successful. Late last semester state lawmakers agreed to appropriate an extra \$200 million for the MAP program and Gov. Pat Quinn, with three Roosevelt students by his side, signed legislation to restore the money.

"I'm one of the students affected by your action," Franklin told several Illinois legislators during visits to their offices. "It's time to stop talking about how education is such a priority. Show us you really mean it's a priority," he said.

ROADMAP TO SUCCESS Roosevelt University students from both campuses organized letter-writing initiatives, visited elected officials and participated in rallies to get Illinois Monetary Award Program funds restored this semester.

His comments were echoed by others, including Vinny Cascio, another Schaumburg Campus student. He joined Franklin and 44 Roosevelt students at an October rally at the State Capitol in Springfield. “It doesn’t matter whether you’re from Schaumburg or Chicago or downstate, we’re united on this issue,” Cascio said.

Roosevelt University President Chuck Middleton, who also aggressively worked to have MAP funds restored, praised those involved. “We are tremendously proud of the grassroots efforts of our students,” he said. “They provided leadership on a public-policy initiative and they lived the engaged life that we strongly encourage for all of our students.”

Over the years MAP funds have helped to reduce the disparity between students who can afford college educations and those who cannot. Available from the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, they are awarded to undergraduate students who need financial help the most. Approximately 47 percent of MAP grant recipients come from families with an annual household income of \$20,000 or less.

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ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY
STUDENT DIMITRA GEORGIOUSE

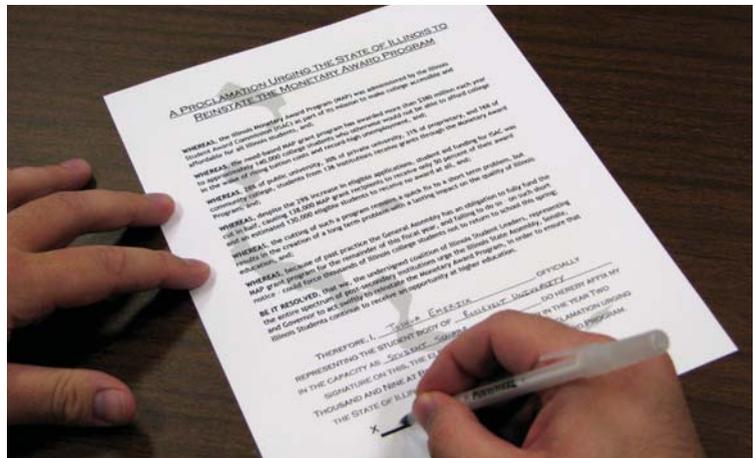
collected nearly 250 letters that were sent to dozens of state senators and representatives. Some of the other initiatives were a Roosevelt website dedicated to MAP issues, free buses so students could attend rallies in Springfield, Chicago and Peoria, a video which was on YouTube and Facebook, posters signed by students and delivered to House Speaker Mike Madigan, emails to alumni asking them to contact their lawmakers, newspaper interviews, informational meetings at both campuses and T-shirts proclaiming “Keep IL Students on the MAP.”

“It’s rather unusual these days to see students organize around one issue and let their voices be heard,” said Donald McNeil, chair of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. “The support MAP has received from Roosevelt and students across the state – from four-year publics, private liberal arts colleges, community colleges and proprietary schools – shows what can be done when you come together with a common interest.”

Danielle Medine, a MAP student and finance and accounting major, went up to Gov. Quinn at a rally in Chicago to let him know how the loss of her MAP grant would affect her

“We were fighting for our future – everyone’s future,” said Roosevelt student Josh Emerick, a political science major, who was also involved. “The University totally supported our ideas.”

Those ideas were part of a comprehensive and coordinated campaign that used students, administrators, trustees and alumni. For example, the student-run





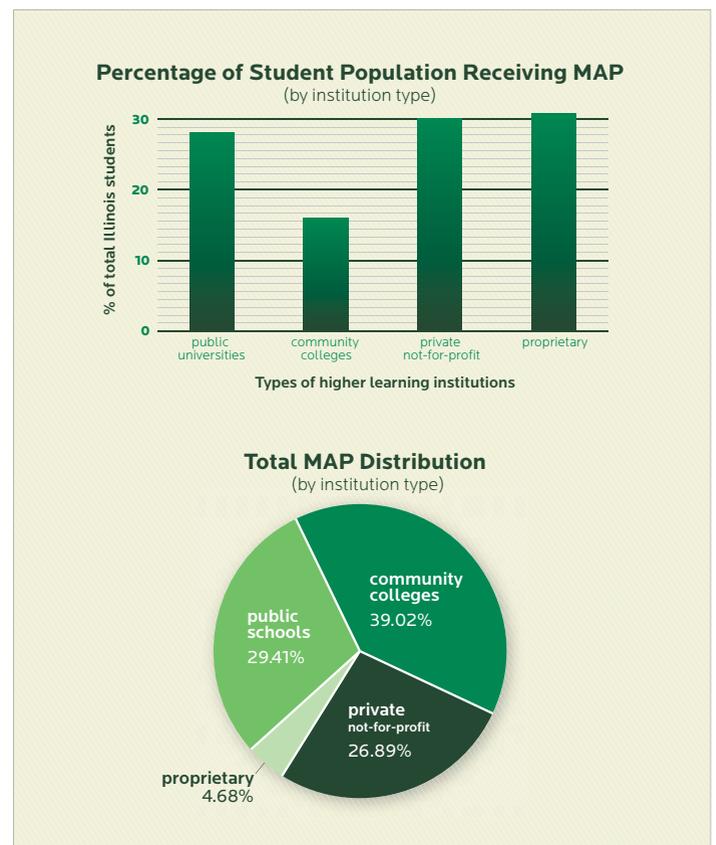
ability to pay for her education. “I had mixed feelings about the governor at first, but was pleasantly surprised that he was so enthusiastic about our efforts,” said Medine, who was wearing her green Roosevelt University “Keep IL Students on the MAP” shirt during the rally.

Quinn also met privately with Middleton and the presidents of Loyola University, Northern Illinois University and Illinois Central College. At the meeting, Middleton said his biggest fear was that if students dropped out of universities or colleges for financial reasons, they would never return to complete their degrees.

“That was an historic meeting and the first time in my memory that presidents representing public, private and community college institutions in Illinois joined forces and informed the governor of their concerns about an issue that has broad implications and consequences for college students across the state,” said David Tretter, president of the Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities and an activist in Springfield for the last 20 years.

“I think people realize that what we were able to do was great,” said Dimitra Georgouses, a political science major at the Chicago Campus who stood on a platform during the rally in Springfield and led shouts of “save MAP now” along with hundreds of other students from across the state. “However, we may have to do something even bigger in the future to save MAP for other students,” she said. “I plan to be there to fight because if we don’t make higher education a priority everything else in our society will start to crumble. This is not simply about giving some schools money. It’s about our future as a society.”

A WELL-DESERVED VICTORY The drive to keep state funding in place this semester for 138,000 low-income college and university students in Illinois succeeded, thanks in part to the efforts of engaged Roosevelt students.



SOURCE: WWW.SAVEILLINOISMAPGRANTS.ORG

ROOSEVELT GOES

VEGETICALE

Roosevelt begins construction on a dramatic new building that will forever transform the face of the University