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Pritzker Administration and IBHE Award GEER Grants to Nine Illinois Institutions to Recruit and Retain Students Most in Need

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Board of Higher Education is awarding grants to nine colleges and universities which will target equity in recruitment and retention. The \$3 million in funding comes from the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund for use in FY 2021.

“As part of our laser focus on equity, IBHE, in conjunction with Gov. JB Pritzker’s Office, will use these dollars to support students with the greatest need,” said Ginger Ostro, executive director, IBHE. “Each of the institutions is demonstrating evidence-based efforts to recruit and retain first-generation, low-income, underrepresented, and rural students. The bottom line is that we want these students to stay the course.”

The institutions will support the students’ progress toward degree completion by closing digital equity gaps, providing targeted, academic, and social/emotional supports through peer mentoring and other innovative efforts. This includes equipment checkout efforts, enhanced financial and career literacy programs, intensive language instruction, childcare assistance, increased campus food pantry supplies, and telehealth.

Grantees are:

- Eastern Illinois University - \$41,693
- Eureka College - \$165,424
- Governors State University - \$456,286
- Lewis University - \$446,891
- Lincoln College - \$375,948
- National Louis University - \$444,094
- Northern Illinois University - \$456,286
- Northeastern Illinois University - \$456,286
- St. Xavier University - \$157,092

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Stephanie Bernoteit, deputy executive director, IBHE, said, "This funding originally comes to Illinois from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and we know from working with colleges and universities across the state that COVID-19 has brought to light many inequities for at-risk students. We are pleased that Illinois could dedicate some of those dollars for programs designed to increase post-secondary attainment for that group of potential and returning students."

The grant program was open to all four-year Illinois public and private/non-profit institutions of higher education holding accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission.

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