In May 2018, 262 I-Promise Scholars completed undergraduate degrees, 150 of whom were first-time freshmen in Fall 2014. There are now a total of 1,807 alumni since the program’s inception.

Our survey of I-Promise graduates sheds light on their tremendous success at Illinois. With a 75% response rate, we discovered our Class of 2018 I-Promise Scholars are Achievers, Global Citizens, Servant Leaders, and Future-Driven.

**Achievers**
- 80% are first in family to attend college
- 55% earned other scholarships, in addition to Illinois Promise
- 55% took on leadership positions in one or more Registered Student Organizations
- 25% participated in a minority or fraternity
- Average GPA of 3.15
- 84% held at least one part-time position at some point in their academic career
- On average, 56% of I-Promise Scholars graduate in 4 years (76% higher than the national 4-year average) and I-Promise graduation rates increase to 78% in 5 years and 79% in 6 years (20% higher than the national 6-year average).

**Servant Leaders**
- 50% of grads completed 50+ hours of community service while at Illinois
- Assisting at Habitat for Humanity
- Hugging animals at the ASPCA
- Caring for infants at Crisis Nursery
- Rebuilding homes on Alternative Spring Breaks
- Tutoring at elementary schools
- Distributing food to the homeless
- Advocating for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault
- Working at the Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, Presence Hospital, and more

**Global Citizens**
- Scholars studied abroad in places like Italy, Costa Rica, Botswana, South Korea, Ireland, Australia, Bahamas, Haiti, and more

**Future-Driven**
- 43% indicated that they intend to pursue a master’s, doctoral, or professional degree immediately after graduation
- 53% completed an internship or co-op in preparation for life after graduation
- Grads landed at graduate programs at schools like Savannah College, Tuskegee University, Medical College of Wisconsin, George Washington University, Loyola University Chicago, Erikson Institute, and Columbia University School of Nursing
- Grads secured employment at organizations like the Peace Corps, IBM, City Year Chicago, PepsiCo, Ion, Honeywell, Amazon, and SpaceX

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*Source: National Center for Education Statistics*

**WHERE ARE THEY NOW?**

**Danny Corona, Architectural Studies**
Full time intern at Interplan LLC in Oakbrook Terrace, working on small scale projects from national clients like Chase, Fifth Third Bank, Panera Bread, Holiday Inn, Walmart, and others. Planning to attend graduate school to pursue a master’s degree in architecture and become a licensed architect.

**Ronald Oliver, Learning and Education Studies**
Currently residing in Baltimore, Maryland, and attending Morgan State University, working toward a master’s degree in Higher Education Administration with a concentration in Student Affairs. Ronald loves attending Morgan, but will always be an Illini at heart. I-L-L!

**Ricardo Ramirez, Technical Systems Management**
Before graduation, landed a Project Engineer position with F.H. Paschen, a general contractor located in the north side of Chicago. Currently working on an addition to a CPS elementary school in the south side of Chicago.

**Katherine Sears, double major: Political Science and English**
Working as a legal secretary at the Stein Ray Law firm in downtown Chicago, studying for the LSAT exam and preparing for law school, with a goal of being co-published in a law journal at some point in the near future.

**Aileen Valdovinos, Psychology**
Attending graduate school at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign studying Social Work and working as an evening youth counselor at Cunningham Children’s Home.

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**SPECIAL THANKS**
Partnerships exist with a number of campus units and community organizations to coordinate I-Promise enrichment opportunities. Special thanks to the Counseling Center, the Office of Undergraduate Research, U of I Extension Financial Wellness Program, the Office of Volunteer Programs, Illinois Abroad and Global Exchange, the Office of Student Financial Aid, The Career Center, the Office of Minority Student Affairs, the Illinois Leadership Center, the Illini Union Bookstore, University Housing, Chancellor’s Special Events Team, Public Affairs, and the Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations.

**Sarah Watson, Director**
Scholar Support Programs
Campus Center for Advising and Academic Services
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Illinois Promise is much more than a financial scholarship. It’s a commitment by the campus to create an enriching and supportive educational environment that fosters personal and professional success. It’s a commitment by donors to open doors of opportunity to high-achieving students to join the Illinois family as they make their way through bright futures. It’s a commitment by scholars to make the most of the opportunity, to seize for greatness, and to pay it forward every step of the way.

CHALLENGER’S MESSAGE

This fall marks the thirteenth year of the Illinois Promise program here at Illinois. More than 330 new Illinois Promise scholars joined a freshman class that includes record numbers of first-generation students and students from underserved backgrounds, as well as the highest number of Illinois residents in 10 years. We’re proud to welcome this new class to campus, and excited to watch them follow in the footsteps of the 1800+ Illinois Promise graduates who came before them. Scholarship programs such as Illinois Promise—and the generosity of donors and friends who support these initiatives—help us ensure affordability to qualified Illinois students and assist ambitious students in pursuing their aspirations at our world-class University. With you and With Illinois, these students will change the world.

— Robert J. Jones, Chancellor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Illinois Promise is an access scholarship program initiated in 2005 to provide support for high-achieving University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign students with the greatest amount of financial need. The scholarship is designed to cover a student’s cost of attendance including tuition, fees, room, and board, and books and supplies. Funding is provided by institutional and private sources, including individual and corporate donors.

There is no application to become an Illinois Promise Scholar. Instead, the Office of Student Financial Aid reviews a student’s Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and determines eligibility using several criteria:

• Family income at or below the federal poverty level ($24,300 for a family of four)
• Family assets of less than $50,000 (does not include home)
• Family income at or below the federal poverty level ($24,300 for a family of four)
• Illinois residency

In return, recipients must maintain eligibility for the scholarship by earning a minimum 2.0 grade point average and enrolling full-time (12 hours or more), among other criteria. As part of the award package, they are also offered a limited amount of student loans each year as well as the opportunity to secure a Federal Work Study position and earn income bi-weekly through part-time employment on campus.

Support for I-Promise Scholars also involves much more than the financial award. Scholars join a diverse community of students who benefit from uniquely tailored resources and programs throughout their time on campus. To learn more about Illinois Promise, visit i-promise.illinois.edu.

THE SUPPORT WE OFFER

In addition to financial support, the I-Promise opportunity includes a variety of programs and initiatives aimed at ensuring scholars have the resources and information necessary to propel their academic and professional futures.

Academic Outreach

I-Promise staff members or “Promise Coaches” meet individually with students, monitor grades and overall academic progress, and provide advocacy and resources aimed specifically at meeting the unique needs of Illinois Promise Scholars.

Programs and Events

From housing information sessions to free final exam “survival” packs, orientation meetings to journal award banquets, there are a variety of events that bring scholars together throughout the year.

Leadership Opportunities

Scholars have the chance to hone leadership skills of the art and are selected to become I-Promise Council members or sponsored participants at an annual leadership retreat hosted by the Illinois Leadership Center each winter.

IP Picks Student Bulletin

Every two weeks, scholars receive an electronic newsletter with campus and community news as well as information that is hand-picked with their needs in mind.

Mentoring Program

A staple of Illinois Promise is its first-year mentoring program, designed to ease the transition to college for new freshmen and transfer students. During the 2017-2018 academic year, 110 students elected to participate and were matched with a mentor (academic professionals, faculty, retired faculty, staff, graduate students, or community members). Mentors and mentees participate in skill-building and community activities throughout the one-year commitment and many choose to connect year after year.

“…One thing I appreciate about my mentor Vera is her interconnectedness to campus; she is always informing me of events that I might be interested in partaking in. Vera and I share a love for reading and this creates endless opportunities for the both of us in our next steps after finishing our degrees. My mentor is someone that I am fully responsive with and she helped me find my bearings as a transfer student.”

— Princess White, English, Class of 2019

“...Being a mentor to Princess is extremely rewarding. Over the past year and a half, we have cultivated a relationship of respect and trust. I have tried to be for Princess what I thought I needed when I was in college—responsive, available, present, attentive, thoughtful, compassionate, and professional. What has happened though, is that our relationship has grown to encompass much more than what I imagined. I have learned so much about myself and am grateful to Princess for her candor and for her trust in me.”

— Vera Orr, Doctoral Candidate in Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership

GIVING TO ILLINOIS PROMISE

“I clearly remember my day on campus last spring when I met some of the Illinois Promise students and was VERY impressed. I feel I can personally relate to them because at 18, I’m tough, the last year of high school and my 4 years at U of I. Approximately 13 years ago, I set up my first charitable foundation in San Francisco and since then, on or around 3 more in Chicago, all with the same purpose—to locate qualified students with financial need, get them into college, and follow them until they receive their degrees. That’s one of my major goals. I’ve always been happy with the Illinois Promise program. I feel privileged to be able to give back. That’s why I support the I-Promise scholarship program.”

— Joseph Peolot, B.S. ’55 Journalism

I-PROMISE MATTERS

I-Promise Scholars are some of Illinois’ most remarkable students. Many have overcome significant challenges in their path, toward a college education and have dreams and aspirations of making a difference in their lives. Illinois Promise supports them in creating a world-class education and making their dreams a reality.

Ian Call, Philosophy

I lost both of my parents when I was very young and was placed with distant relatives in upstate Illinois. After being accepted at Illinois, I found out that I’d been awarded the Illinois Promise scholarship. The news of security and the guidance received from the I-Promise program staff helped me through a rough transition and led me to discover my academic passion. I’m now working on a research project that helps to fund my intellectual curiosity while, hopefully preparing me for a graduate program in physics.

Lurra Chavez, Theatre

When I was in the fifth grade, a teacher told me that I had to be potential to be an outstanding student and to get involved in things that sind out of my reach. Words cannot express how thankful I am for the educational, personal, and professional growth I’ve experienced at Illinois and I owe so much to that. I-Promise has taught me how to manage my time well and set out to get the best in a career that combines sound design, engineering, and mixing.

Jonny Hernandez, Undeclared

I’m from a place where violence is ongoing and a feeling of panic and dread, expecting bad news, runs through your thoughts every day. With support from my family and a dedicated mentor at my high school, I earned my spot at Illinois. My focus on visual and media, and the Illinois Promise scholarship has opened doors for me, given me a strong sense of community, and helped me learn so much about myself. I plan to take what I learn here back to my community in order to create a safer and closer-knit neighborhood.

Jada Smith, Recreation, Sport and Tourism

I feel so fortunate to be growing up with a rough mother on the south side of Chicago. When I was a freshman in high school, my mother told me job. We were homeless for a while and so had to start with nothing. I decided to work at a local college and then committed to the University of Missouri; but the Illinois Promise scholarship was too good to pass up. My first semester wasn’t easy. The support and technical assistance I’ve received from Illinois Promise staff and advisors to facility is what kept me here, succeeding in ways I’ll never imagined.