

# NATION & WORLD

## Breaking the bank

### Budget impasse forces sacrifices to continue



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For Maggie Jaryszek, a DePaul junior studying psychology, understanding how the brain functions has been moved to the back burner as her education was jeopardized by the budget impasse between Gov. Bruce Rauner and state legislators in Springfield.

Jaryszek is one of 5,000 students at DePaul and 130,000 statewide who receives the Monetary Award Program, or MAP, grants. The budget stalemate, which started in July 2015, has jeopardized not only her education but also the education of many others throughout the state — schools that receive more state funding, especially Chicago State University (CSU), may close due to lack of funds — as well as human services for the elderly and low-income families.

The cuts to education have been the most talked about among college students and on their campuses. Eastern Illinois University had to lay off professors in preparation of not receiving funding, and CSU students will not have a spring break this year in order to expedite the quarter in case the school has to close.

Students have spoken out in response, trying to keep themselves and others afloat.

“It’s unfair considering that many rely on MAP to help finance their education,” Jaryszek said. “When Rauner went to school he didn’t have to deal with this. He doesn’t understand the problems of the people who rely on this stuff.”

However, it’s not just universities that are facing trouble. The current financial downturn can be related to the rollback of income taxes in January 2015. The rollback and the lack of increased revenues or cuts in spending, as well as the state’s pension requirements, have weighed the state down. Since July 2015, Illinois has operated without a budget and entities that are funded or receive funding by the state have had to make do, in the hope that legislators will pass a budget soon.

Rauner has said to the press that he does understand the difficulties, but that a balanced budget, not a “piecemeal” budget — a few entities funded here and there — would be better overall for the state and its residents.

To further prove that, Rauner vetoed a bill that would have funded MAP grants last week, calling instead for a balanced budget. However, without a budget in sight, Illinois is sinking deeper into debt and dragging many people down with it. The MAP

grants are one of the casualties. “Many of Illinois’ most vulnerable residents have already been negatively impacted by the current budget impasse and the state’s lack of action in paying its bills,” Katy Broom, communications coordinator of the Civic Federation, said. “Continued inaction will do nothing but make an even bigger negative impact on Illinois residents, including our most vulnerable.”

The state’s budget shortfalls are projected to be around \$4.6 billion for 2016, according to the Civic Federation, an independent, non-partisan government research organization that provides financial analysis to Chicago and Illinois. That shortfall could increase the state’s money in unpaid bills to \$10 billion.

To put that into perspective, the official tuition rate for Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and College of Communication

**\$4.6 billion**  
in unpaid bills  
**\$35,680**  
tuition for LAS  
and CMN  
**= 128,924**  
students

is \$35,680 for 2015. If the money in unpaid bills went toward tuition it could serve nearly 128,924 students. The rate is even higher for students at the business and science and health schools — that money could be used for the tuitions of 126,791 students.

Though the state is in its seventh month without a budget, and students who rely on MAP at DePaul don’t have to worry yet about the school funding their grants, many have protested or taken to social media hoping that legislators will take into account their futures and the importance of higher education now since no solutions have been offered.

“An investment in higher education is an investment in the future and in the economy,” Patrick Pfohl, executive vice president of student affairs for DePaul’s Student Government Association who formerly received MAP funding, said. “This is important to fund because college education is important for success. I hope more politicians come forward to support it.”

The clash of education and human services with the ongoing budget crisis is painful for many, including groups who are tasked with making recommendations and

proposals for the governor. Broom said the Civic Federation does not determine exactly where spending cuts should be made — that is a task for the General Assembly — but it does create a report that suggests where the state might cut down on spending since current levels of spending and revenue are “unsustainable.”

The federation, in its Feb. 11 report, recommended limiting spending in fiscal year 2016 and establishing spending controls to limit the amount of spending for three years.

Higher education encompasses nine public universities, community colleges and MAP grants, has faced a large amount of the spending cuts may still be an option the governor and legislators put in place in order to reverse the current financial situation.

Rauner’s 2016 budget proposed a spending cut of nearly 32 percent, going from \$1.2 billion to \$849.1 million. Cuts are suggested not only by the federation but also by IHS Economics, in the office of management and budget in Springfield, but the Civic Federation acknowledges that this may be hard for students and those relying on programs.

“The recommendations proposed by the federation are painful, but the ongoing budget impasse and state’s delay in paying down its backlog of bills has exacerbated the crisis to the point that there are no easy options left,” Broom said. “The loss of services in higher education and human services is a glaring example of the effect that the budget impasse has had on Illinois residents. The only way to get Illinois back on track is through shared sacrifice, which is reflected in the federation’s painful but necessary recommendations.”

DePaul has honored, and will continue to honor, MAP money for incoming students, but for some schools time is running out. Jaryszek believes politicians, especially Rauner, should keep them in mind during budget negotiations.

“I think they should consider our lives and empathize with us and our backgrounds,” Jaryszek said. “Not everyone comes from well-off families and education is a right, not a privilege.”

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