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PRESS RELEASE
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ISAC Adds New Service to collegezone.com

SPRINGFIELD -- The Illinois Student Assistance Commission, the State of Illinois' centralized agency responsible for administering and promoting student financial aid programs, has unveiled an addition to its Web site, collegezone.com. In addition to providing trusted, comprehensive information for students and families on how to plan, find, apply and pay for a college education, students now can also research career options and complete skills assessment tests that will help match their skills to possible careers.

The IllinoisMentor online service, accessed through collegezone.com, is aimed at students in eighth grade through high school and beyond and is a free tool for career and college planning. Students can take virtual campus tours of Illinois colleges and universities, research colleges' admission requirements, complete online admission applications, and communicate directly with school counselors via e-mail.

"Since introducing the College Zone Web site in 2003, ISAC has continued to upgrade the technology and interactivity for visitors to the site. IllinoisMentor is one more resource for students, families, and guidance counselors that will help bridge the gap as they learn more about how to pursue a college education," explained Larry E. Matejka, Executive Director of ISAC. "Our goal is to provide one more tool to students who still think that college may be unattainable - and help them make college a reality."

To promote the new IllinoisMentor service, ISAC will be asking high school guidance counselors to encourage their students to visit collegezone.com. For those guidance counselors who request a College Zone promotional kit from ISAC during February and March 2006, their high school will be entered into a drawing. To provide more students with access to collegezone.com, twelve Illinois high schools, one from each of ISAC's twelve regions throughout the state, will be randomly selected to win two Dell computers. One computer must be stationed at the high school so that all students have access to collegezone.com. The other computer must be given to a student attending the winning high school in a random drawing open to all students. ISAC expects to announce the winners and award the free Dell computers during April 2006.

Expanding the College Zone Web site at this time is appropriate since February is traditionally a critical point in helping students apply for both college admission and financial assistance. ISAC encourages students and families to begin completing financial aid applications now.

In conjunction with the College Awareness and Preparation (CAP) project, ISAC will be working with its partners in the financial aid community to present over 50 financial aid workshops across the state during the month of February. Students and families are invited to attend these free workshops open to the public. A list of all free CAP workshops is available on collegezone.com by clicking on Outreach.

Students and families may also call ISAC toll-free at 800.899.ISAC (4722) to speak with a College Zone Counselor for assistance in learning about the financial aid process, to access information on ISAC's scholarship, grant, and loan programs, and to receive more details on free CAP workshops.

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About College Zone

College Zone is a comprehensive and user-friendly guide to "everything college." As a service of the State of Illinois' Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), College Zone offers helpful resources in specific "zones" for students, parents, guidance counselors, financial aid administrators, and lenders. A special section on the College Zone Web site is available in Spanish for students and parents. College Zone includes phone and e-mail support, walk-in centers located on every community college campus, and written materials in both English and Spanish.

Resources for Students

Career Center

- **Career Information** - Learn how the Career Center can help students choose a career.
- **Career Self-Assessment** - Discover how to explore careers by identifying personal interests and skills.
- **Career Matching Assistant** - Find a career best suited to each student's interests and skills (career data provided by the Illinois Department of Employment Security).
- **List of Careers** - View a comprehensive list of careers by alphabetical order or clusters (career data provided by the Illinois Department of Employment Security).
- **Links to Career Resources** - Visit other Web site resources for information on jobs, internships, and volunteering resources.
- **My Mentor Careers** - Store the results of a student's career exploration.

Plan for College

- **High School Planner** - While still in high school, students can plan ahead to meet college entrance requirements.
- **Planner Timeline** - Students can find out what they should be doing each year of high school to best prepare for college.
- **Add Your Counselor** - Students can include their high school counselor in their plans for college by allowing him or her to view their My Mentor section of IllinoisMentor at collegezone.com.

Find a College

- **Campus Tours** - Learn more about admission requirements, costs, financial aid, academics, and student life.
- **Comparative View** - Compare colleges in Illinois.
- **Matching Assistant** - View colleges that match students' specific requirements.
- **Distance Search** - Find the college closest to any ZIP code or city.
- **My Mentor Recruiter** - Students can release data to specific colleges.

Applications and Transcripts

- **Applications and Transcripts** - Students can apply online and request their official transcript be sent electronically to the colleges of their choice. Students may complete, manage, and submit their admission applications from this area of the Web site.

Help for Parents

Financial Aid

- **Financial Aid** - Parents can find out about all the types of financial aid - scholarships, grants, loans, and work programs - and how they can help finance a college education.
- **Scholarship Search** - Use the free reputable scholarship search services to locate available programs based on personal information.
- **Calculators** - Parents can use calculators to estimate the amount of state and federal financial aid their child may qualify for, the monthly student loan payment amount once it enters repayment, the monthly payment amount on a graduated repayment plan, and more. In addition, the SLOPE (Student Loans Over Projected Earnings) calculator can be used to determine what percentage of a student's income will be taken up by student loan payments, based on their career choice, and how that will impact their monthly budget and future borrowing for high-ticket items such as cars and homes.

About the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC)

The Illinois Student Assistance Commission is the State's centralized provider of financial assistance aimed at helping students and families access postsecondary education and/or training. Each year, the Commission awards an estimated \$400 million in scholarship and grant aid to nearly 185,000 qualified students, and also provides an additional \$1 billion to borrowers through its student loan programs. The agency offers credit-based alternative loans through the non-profit student loan secondary market (IDAPP), a 529 prepaid tuition program known as College Illinois!, and a broad array of outreach and informational services to ensure that families have access to the information they need to pay for a college education. More information is available by calling toll-free 800.899.ISAC (4722) or visiting the agency's Web site at collegezone.com.