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Students Attend MAP Grant Rally in Springfield

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Students Attend MAP Grant Rally in Springfield

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Nine Illinois Wesleyan University students joined thousands of fellow college students across Illinois on Thursday for a rally at the state Capitol building, all in an effort to save student financial aid.

More than 2,000 college students who hail from Illinois attended the rally in hopes of ensuring funds for the Illinois Monetary Assistance Program (MAP). This summer, state legislators budgeted MAP funds for the fall semester, leaving money for the spring semester in doubt.

The students making the journey to Springfield on Thursday were first-year Natalie Lalagos of West Chicago; sophomores Kathryn Breisch of Batavia, Alfred Brown of Springfield, Daniel Cochran of New Lenox, Marqui Lei Fairchild of Gridley, Ara Holiday of Lexington and Hillary Pick of Chenoa, Ill.; and juniors Jessica Meyer of Chicago and Matthew Hastings of Oak Lawn. Currently, 430 Illinois Wesleyan students, or about 21 percent of the campus, are among the 137,000 college students from Illinois who receive nearly \$5,000 a year in MAP funding.

“It was incredible. There was so much excitement,” said Holiday, who noted she related to the stories she heard at the rally of those who depend upon MAP grants. “My father died when I was 15, and it left my mother with the huge burden of supporting four children,” said Holiday, who is double major in psychology and sociology. “She has taken on a second job to make sure I can get through college. Losing the MAP grant would make it so much harder.”

After the rally, Illinois Wesleyan students then ventured into the Capitol building to try and speak with their state senators and representatives, or leave messages encouraging MAP funding. The Illinois Wesleyan students also met with Rep. Dan Brady [R-85th District]. “Those of us who were able to meet with our representatives got a lot of information,” said Holiday.

In the wake of the statewide rally, legislators authorized payment of the spring semester MAP grant, but did not include a source of funding.

“Cutting off MAP funding half way through the year leaves students scrambling for money,” said Carl Teichman, director of government and community relations at Illinois Wesleyan, who accompanied the students to Springfield. “In a worst-case scenario, they may be forced to leave college. We don’t want to see that happen.”