

University of Illinois to offer free tuition for some in-state students

By [Sarah Schulte](#)

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URBANA, Ill. (WLS) --

It's a plan designed to keep more Illinois students in-state for their college education. On Monday, the University of Illinois announced a free tuition offer for residents who may not otherwise be able to afford it.

Eric Quezada is looking forward to being the first in his family to go to college. About to start his senior year in the IB program at Amundsen High School, the 17-year-old said choosing a college will all depend what school offers the most money.

"Colleges offer different deals and you are going to take the best deal, if it means going out of state, we have to go out of state trying to get the best deal," Quezada said.

Leaving the state has become an option for many Illinois students who have found better deals elsewhere. To stem the tide of quality students leaving, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has announced it will provide free tuition and campus fees for in-state students whose family income is less than \$61,000 a year.

"We think it's going to be critically important in keeping folks here so, they can graduate and be part of the economy that helps drive the economic vitality in years ahead," said Robert J. Jones, the chancellor of the Urbana campus.

At a cost of \$4 million a year, U of I will pay for the program with existing funds. It will be open for entering freshman in the Fall of 2019, just in time for Quezada, who said U of I is now on the top of his list.

"I will definitely apply now, knowing what they are going to offer," Quezada said.

Amundsen school counselor David Tucker said that while many factors go into

making a college choice, the talk of trying to be debt-free when graduating is something very attractive to his students as well as staying close to home.

"We worked with students with low to moderate income communities and the opportunity to have free tuition at U of I will really incentivize kids to remain in Illinois," said Tucker.

According to Chancellor Jones, U of I has the revenue to offer free tuition for at least 4 years. The university hopes the second wave of financing will come from philanthropy. Jones is hoping alumni step up with financial contributions.