



We know that proper funding for higher education is important on a societal level, by increasing opportunities for graduates and providing engaged citizens ready to participate in the workforce, making higher education a sound investment in the future.

But what does higher education mean to you, as an individual? Here are a few questions to spark some ideas of how you might present your personal narrative to Illinois legislators in Springfield.

Q1 - A quick bio (don't overthink!)

What is your name? _____

What school do you attend? _____

Are you a first generation student? Yes (If not, where did your parent/s attend college- state where if in Illinois)? _____

What is your major? _____

When will you (likely) graduate _____

What would you like to do after graduating? _____

Q2 – Why college matters to me

What is the main reason you want to finish your degree? _____

How do you see yourself giving back to Illinois in your career and/or life? _____

Q3 – What's your favorite talking point?

Rank the talking points from the back that means the most to you? _____

What is your second-favorite talking point? _____

Your third? _____

Build your personal narrative Now, take each answer you wrote above, and string it together as a coherent story.... (see example on back).

Example

Q1 - A quick bio (don't overthink!)

What is your name? Jane Smithfield

What school do you attend? Northeastern Illinois University

Are you a first generation student? Yes

What is your major? Elementary/Secondary Education - Math

When will you (likely) graduate) Next year!

What would you like to do after graduating? Teach middle school math

Q2 – Why college matters to me

What is the main reason you want to finish your degree? To help at-risk youth

How do you see yourself giving back to Illinois in your career and/or life? I want to help students who traditionally struggle with math do better when first learning pre-algebra (when most students start to struggle).

Q3 – What's your favorite talking point?

Ranked talking points (pick your favorite(s):

1. Students are the future leaders of tomorrow
2. Strong universities require strong funding
3. Over 125,000 Monetary Award Program (MAP) grant recipients, the poorest students in our state, were promised an award and without it many will not be able to continue at their college or university.
4. The absence of operational funding is already limiting public higher education's ability to provide services and classes for students to complete their degrees, which could lead to more students dropping out of college.
5. Raising tuition and fees and cutting positions give our out-of-state competitors a huge advantage to recruit talented students, faculty and staff
6. 70% of all jobs in the modern economy require some level of higher education. Illinois' citizens will be left out of job opportunities, better paying jobs, more growth and opportunity.
7. It's well documented that an educated citizenry is directly correlated to lower unemployment and increased tax revenues at all levels of government.
8. We boost the standard of living in communities around the state by providing good-paying jobs for our administrators, faculty and staff who support our schools and local businesses

Build your personal narrative Now, take each answer you wrote in, and string it together as a coherent story....

Hello Senator Know Senator's last name. My name is Jane Smithfield. I am a first-generation college student at Northeastern Illinois University. I am studying elementary and secondary education with a mathematics endorsement. I hope to teach middle-school math to at-risk students, who traditionally struggle when first learning higher-level math. I hope that you will support full funding for Illinois Higher Education because students are the leaders of tomorrow, and Illinois should invest in the future.

If you are not a student, feel free to adjust the narrative with alumni or place of employment information.

