

**POLITICS TREND STATEMENTS**

Trend Statement #1: Continuing rapid growth of the population in Will County will result in the continuing expansion of suburban communities.

Trend Statement #2: Survey research in 2007 found that 66% of Illinois residents feel that illegal immigration is at least somewhat of a problem and 32% feel it is a big problem for the state.

Trend Statement #3: Education continues to be a concern among policy makers, with higher education institutions viewed as increasingly integral parts of economic development and expected to be more accountable.

Trend Statement #4: Public polls in Illinois continue to place education as a top priority issue in Illinois. When asked about supporting public policy areas through tax increases, many Illinois residents identify public education as their top priority.

Trend Statement #5: There will continue to be a strong focus on accountability and a shift from enrollment and access to performance and outcomes.

Trend Statement #6: Perhaps due to significant growth, transportation will increasingly be an issue in Will County.

Trend Statement #7: While school funding continues to be an issue in Illinois, support for school spending is lower in collar counties like Will than in Chicago or central Illinois.

Trend Statement #8: State commitments to fund higher education in the near future will be much less reliable than in the past. The revenue picture is difficult to predict, particularly in Illinois. Still, community college funding structures are built upon historical assumptions about revenue generation and will likely need to be changed.

Trend Statement #9: According to a 2007 policy survey, health care issues remain at the forefront of state residents.

Trend Statement #10: There is growing anger and resentment with currently sitting politicians as a result of perceptions of government growth and size and corruption.

Trend Statement #11: Between 2001 and 2007 survey research found that Americans and Illinoisans are increasingly dissatisfied with the way things are going in the U.S. and in Illinois.

Trend Statement #12: Americans are continually holding more liberal attitudes about race, gender and sexual orientation in the U.S., but changes in the attitude of providing preferential treatment to individuals based on specific criteria have stagnated or slightly fallen in the last 10 years.

Trend Statement #13: Between 1990 and 2007, survey research found that approximately 80% of Americans continue to feel that the U.S. needs stricter environmental protection laws.

Trend Statement #14: The state of Illinois is heading toward a crisis in its pension system.

Trend Statement #15: The state's structural deficit continues to be a major issue and will impact public institutions' ability to meet its mission and serve its citizens.

Trend Statement #16: Increased federal focus on community colleges will present challenges and opportunities for funding and policy-making.

Trend Statement #17: Fast population growth in the district will strain the local and regional infrastructure, school system and other support systems.

**Trend Statement #1: Continuing rapid growth of the population in Will County will result in the continuing expansion of suburban communities.**

**Rationale:**

Will County population is expected to reach 801,064 by 2015 compared to 660,009 in 2006. The number of households projected for Will County in the year 2015 is 279,714, compared to 225,208 for 2006 (Northern Illinois University, 2007).

Will County is growing because of international immigration, linguistic minorities, reasonable cost of living, and proximity to Chicago and DuPage County.

People are coming to Will County and Joliet to live, not for jobs. Most of the fastest growing jobs in Will County is projected to be low wage and low skill (Will County CED, 2004).

Will County is first in population growth and new home construction in Illinois counties and is the tenth fastest growing county in the U.S. (Will County, 2007).

**Sources:**

Northern Illinois University Regional Development Institute. (2007). *Will County Market Facts*. Online: <http://www.rdiniu.org/publications/marketfacts/2007/will2007.pdf>

Will County Center for Economic Development. (2004). *State of the Workforce*. Online: [http://willcountyworkforceboard.com/PDF/SOW\\_WILL.pdf](http://willcountyworkforceboard.com/PDF/SOW_WILL.pdf).

Will County, Illinois Facts and Figures (2007) Retrieved August 24, 2007, from <http://www.willcountyillinois.com/Default.aspx?tabid=245>

**Trend Statement #2: Survey research in 2007 found that 66% of Illinois residents feel that illegal immigration is at least somewhat of a problem and 32% feel it is a big problem for the state.**

**Rationale:**

According to a 2007 survey of Illinois citizens by the Center for Governmental Studies at Northern Illinois University found that 66% of Illinoisans felt illegal immigration is at least somewhat of a problem while 32% felt it is a big problem for the state. Additionally, a majority of Illinoisans favor punishing landlords that house and employers that hire illegal immigrants, ranging from 50% to about 66% (NIU, 2007). (Note: the term “illegal immigrants” is the one utilized in the administration of this particular survey).

Between 1995 and 2025, Illinois is projected to gain over one million people due to international immigration, the fifth highest in the U.S. and easily the highest in the Midwest. If not for international immigration, the population of Illinois would be projected to decline in the next 15-20 years. It is projected more Latinos will live in Illinois than in Arizona. Additionally, Illinois ranks tenth in the nation in the percent of residents who were born in a foreign country (JJC, 2003).

Illinois bucks a national trend of undocumented immigrant growth slowing (Glanton, 2010). According to a Chicago Tribune analysis of Pew Research data, “The number of illegal immigrants in Illinois has remained stable in the midst of the recession, bucking a national trend in which the number living in the U.S. declined during the last two years as jobs dwindled, according to a study released Wednesday by the Pew Hispanic Center. Illinois ranked No. 5 with an estimated 525,000 illegal immigrants in 2009, more than the approximately 475,000 in the state in 2008. Nationwide, the total number of illegal immigrants has declined by about 1 million since 2007, to 11.1 million in 2009, representing about 4 percent of the U.S. population.”

**Sources:**

Glanton, D. (2010, September 1). Illegal Immigrants Down, but Not in Illinois. *Chicago Tribune*.

Joliet Junior College Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research. (2003, October). *The Growing Population and Changing Demographics of the state of Illinois and Will County*. Online: <http://www.jjc.edu/admin/ie/information/district/illinoisdemographichanges.pdf>.

Northern Illinois University. (2007). *Most in Illinois Favor Laws Targeting Illegal Immigration*. Center for Governmental Studies. Online: <http://www.niu.edu/PubAffairs/RELEASES/2007/april/immigration.shtml>

**Trend Statement #3: Education continues to be a concern among policy makers, with higher education institutions viewed as increasingly integral parts of economic development and expected to be more accountable.**

**Rationale:**

Education is still a top concern among Illinois residents, although in the last two years economic and state government issues have moved to the forefront of policy concerns (see Education Trend statement #8 for rationale and sources).

The U.S. Department of Education recently chartered a report examining the future of higher education in the U.S. The report was the result of input from hundreds of high level individuals from education, non-profits, and business sectors. The report concluded that higher education in the U.S. needs to improve in “dramatic ways” (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Manufacturers note a lack of skilled workers in the U.S., asserting that education is the country’s most urgent public policy issue and calling on policy makers and governments to pay more attention to education (National Association of Manufacturers, 2005).

Research indicates that due to a globalized economy in which success is based on the quality of human (as opposed to physical) capital, governments are increasingly looking to higher education as integral components of economic and workforce development (Alexander, 2000).

**Sources:**

Alexander, F. K. (2000). The Changing Face of Accountability: Monitoring and Assessing Institutional Performance in Higher Education. *Journal of Higher Education*, 71, 411-431.

National Association of Manufacturers. (2005). *Skills Gap Report*. Online:  
[http://www.nam.org/s\\_nam/bin.asp?CID=89&DID=235731&DOC=FILE.PDF](http://www.nam.org/s_nam/bin.asp?CID=89&DID=235731&DOC=FILE.PDF).

U.S. Department of Education. (2007). *A Test of Leadership: The Secretary of Education’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education*. Online:  
<http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/index.html>

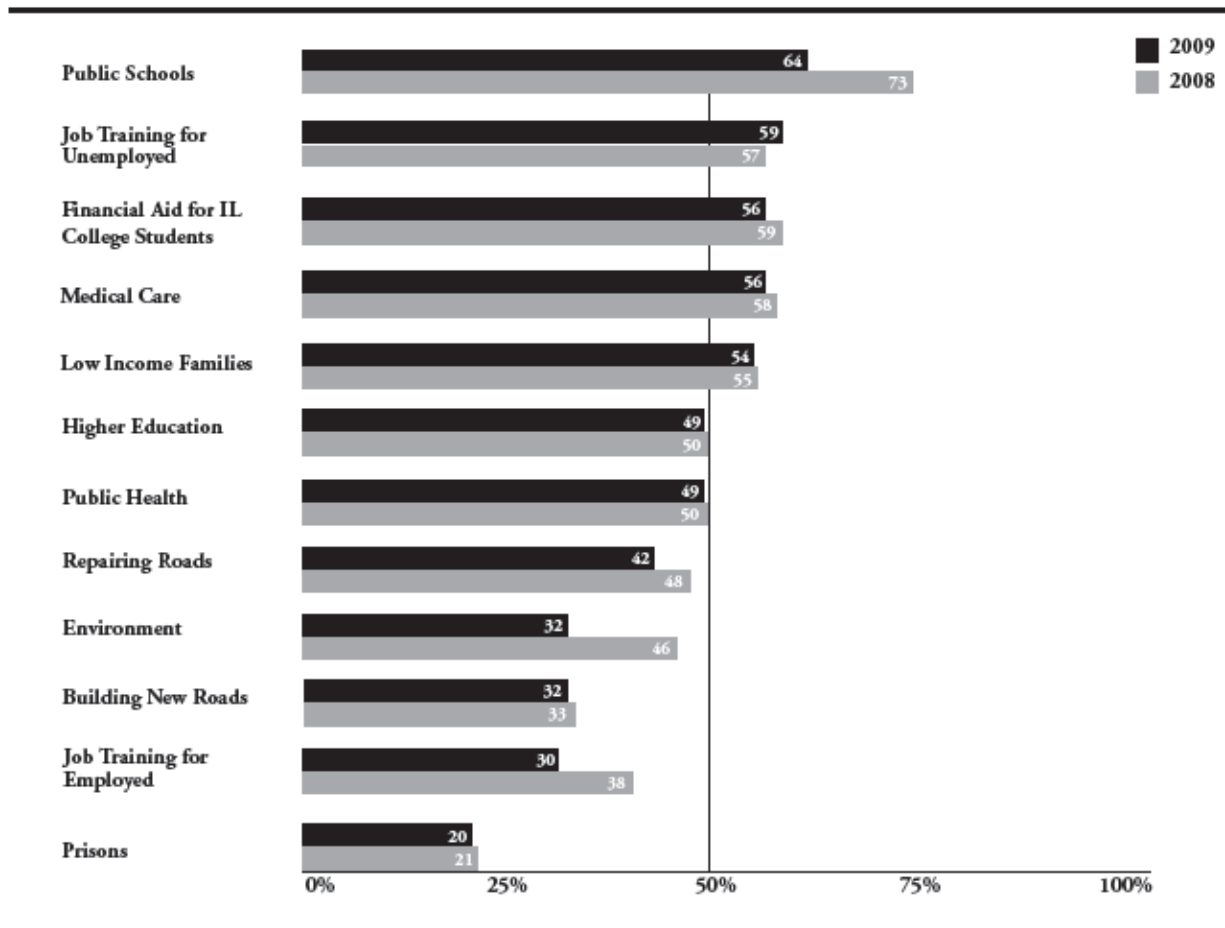
**Trend Statement #4: Public polls in Illinois continue to place education as a top priority issue in Illinois. When asked about supporting public policy areas through tax increases, many Illinois residents identify public education as their top priority.**

**Rationale:**

Education is still a top concern among Illinois residents, although in the last two years economic and state government issues have moved to the forefront of policy concerns (see Education Trend statement #8 for rationale and sources).

When asked about what area in which Illinois residents would most likely support a tax increase, education is still at the top. However, there was a significant decrease between 2008 and 2009, most likely due to the dynamics existing in Education Trend statement \$8 and Politics Trend statement #3. The following chart from the Northern Illinois University Center for Government Studies demonstrates this dynamic (p. 2):

*figure 3 Support for Increases in State Spending 2009 Compared to 2008*



**Sources:**

Northern Illinois University. (2010). *2010 Policy Survey*. Center for Governmental Studies. Online: <http://www.cgsniu.org/>

**Trend Statement #5: There will continue to be a strong focus on accountability and a shift from enrollment and access to performance and outcomes.**

**Rationale:**

The past two presidential administrations have placed a high emphasis on accountability and outcomes. First, the Spelling's Commission report called for colleges and universities to be more transparent in their practices and even identified accountability as an integral component of the success or failure of higher education in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Two trends which have highlighted a strong focus on accountability under the current president (Obama) are the education reform plan and recent policy-making surrounding the for-profit industry. A crucial component of Obama's Education Reform Plan is an emphasis on accountability (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Recent publications about the for-profit college and university sector and alleged abuses of taxpayer dollars has led to increased oversight and reporting requirements by the sector (Epstein, 2010).

In 2009 and 2010, several calls were made for community colleges to focus more on outcomes, quality, and success, as opposed to enrollments, signifying a shift from operational effectiveness to institutional effectiveness. The American Association of Community College's (2010) College Completion Agenda calls on community colleges to focus more on completions among their students. President Obama's graduation initiative calls on community colleges to graduate five million more graduates in the next 10 years (Brandon, 2009).

**Sources:**

American Association of Community Colleges. (2010). *College Completion Agenda*. Online: <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/newsevents/News/articles/Pages/091020101.aspx>

Brandon, K. (2009). *Investigating in Education: The American Graduation Initiative*. U.S. Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation. Online: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/Investing-in-Education-The-American-Graduation-Initiative/>

Epstein, J. (2010, October 28). Almost Final Rules. *Inside HigherEd*. Online: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/10/28/regs>

U.S. Department of Education. (2007). *A Test of Leadership: The Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education*. Online: <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/index.html>

U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *Obama Administration's Education Reform Plan Emphasizes Flexibility, Resources, and Accountability for Results*. Online: <http://www2.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2010/03/03152010.html>

**Trend Statement #6: Perhaps due to significant growth, transportation will increasingly be an issue in Will County.**

**Rationale:**

Transportation will continue to grow not only as an industry and labor market area, but will continue to influence political dynamics in Will County (see Economics Trend statements #4 and #5 and Labor Market Trend statement #1).

In 2009 (NIU, 2010), only 30% of Illinois residents supported a tax increase for roads (down from 38% the year before and third from the bottom of the list of public projects). With the tremendous projected increase in road traffic and congestion, the politics of addressing transportation issues will have an impact on the political dynamics of the district.

**Sources:**

Northern Illinois University. (2010). *2010 Policy Survey*. Center for Governmental Studies. Online: <http://www.cgsniu.org/>

**Trend Statement #7: While school funding continues to be an issue in Illinois, support for school spending is lower in collar counties like Will than in Chicago or central Illinois.**

**Rationale:**

Education Trend statement #8 detailed how support for education is still high, but has taken a back seat in 2009 and 2010 to state government issues and unemployment/jobs (see the trend for rationale and data sources).

Tax increase support for public schools is lowest in suburban cook and the collar counties when compared to Chicago and the rest of the state (NIU, 2010). Tax support for higher education and financial aid for college students, however, is more variable depending on the region. Suburban Cook County and Northern Illinois residents express the lowest support for tax increases for higher education. However, collar counties are more likely to support it (as demonstrated by the table from the NIU policy study below, p. 3):

*table 2* Support for Increases in State Spending, 2009

	Public Schools	Medical Care	Job Training	Low Income Families	Public Health	Student Financial Aid	Higher Education
Statewide	64 %	56 %	59 %	54 %	49 %	56 %	49 %
Region							
Chicago	74	72	64	70	64	62	58
Suburban Cook	54	47	61	42	50	45	39
Collar Counties	61	52	60	55	45	58	49
Northern IL	69	40	57	49	39	49	43
Central IL	64	44	42	29	24	53	54
Southern IL	63	63	57	60	58	61	40

Northern Illinois University. (2010). *2010 Policy Survey*. Center for Governmental Studies. Online: <http://www.cgsniu.org/>

**Trend Statement #8: State commitments to fund higher education in the near future will be much less reliable than in the past. The revenue picture is difficult to predict, particularly in Illinois. Still, community college funding structures are built upon historical assumptions about revenue generation and will likely need to be changed.**

**Rationale:**

First, while residents may be more supportive of tax support or tax increases for higher education (see Politics Trend statements #4 and #7), the trend in Illinois has been lower support for higher education when compared to other states and a funding structure for K-12 education that is one of the most variable in the nation, depending on the district (see Education Trend statement #4). So, while residents and politicians may express support for education, the actual support in terms of behavior is mixed.

Second, Illinois is witnessing several issues related to the state budget, finance, and economic direction (see Economics Trend statement #11 and Politics Trend statements #14 and 16). In short, Illinois workers are competing in a global environment, meaning a flattening and even decreases in actual wages that Illinois residents earn (see Economics Trend statement #1 and Labor Force Trend statement #2). At the same time, demand for services has increased. Coupled with an unwillingness to make spending cuts or tax increases, the projection is that the policy environment will be extremely competitive in the future, with Medicaid, K-12 education, prisons, and pensions all competing for an increasingly smaller share of state revenues. This means that all sectors will need to be more efficient and productive on the spending side and more entrepreneurial and accept a higher degree of tolerance for ambiguity on the revenue side.

Third, there is evidence that historic assumptions about how community colleges generate revenue will not be valid or at least are gradually shifting from an emphasis on enrollment and access to student success and outcomes. According to the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Columbia University, most states require community colleges provide data on performance and between 1979 and 2006, 25 states enacted performance funding for community colleges. CCRC also notes that “federal funds under the Perkins Vocational Education Act and the Workforce Investment Act carry significant performance accountability requirements” (CCRC, 2010). National movements in this area, although not necessarily related to funding, include the AACC Completion Agenda and the AACC Voluntary Framework for Accountability (VFA), which is specifically designed to anticipate changes in how community colleges are funded (AACC, 2010a; AACC, 2010b).

In Illinois, there is movement towards advocacy for and anticipation of funding models based on performance. In the recent Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE, 2010) Commission on Finance report, it was noted that “Performance-based funding is a valuable policy tool to achieve state goals of improved student outcomes. Illinois should move forward with development of financial incentives to achieve desired outcomes – particularly improved educational attainment. The Commission acknowledges that the development of performance-based funding is in its infancy and continued collaboration is required to develop specific funding metrics and goals. Performance-based funding must not be developed in isolation. Thus, the Commission recommends continued involvement of and consultation with a broad cross-section of education, business, labor, and nonprofit leaders as specific performance-based funding models are developed” (p. 33). The report specifically called for funding to be tied to completion and affordability goals.

**Sources:**

American Association of Community Colleges. (2010a). *College Completion Agenda*. Online: <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/newsevents/News/articles/Pages/091020101.aspx>

American Association of Community Colleges. (2010b). *Voluntary Framework for Accountability*. Online: <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/vfa/Pages/default.aspx>

Illinois Board of Higher Education. (2010). *Report to the Governor, the Honorable Pat Quinn and Members of the Illinois General Assembly by the Higher Education Finance Study Commission Pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution 88*. Online: <http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/SJR88/Materials/FinalReport.pdf>

Community College Research Center at Columbia University. (2010). *Accountability research and publications*. Online: <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Collection.asp?cid=9>

**Trend Statement #9: According to a 2007 policy survey, health care issues remain at the forefront of state residents.**

**Rationale:**

Health care continues to remain a legitimate concern and is at the forefront of Illinois residents' concerns in 2009. However, it has taken a backseat to state government and economic issues in 2009 (NIU, 2010). \

One notable shift in this area is that increasing numbers of Illinois residents feel health care is not a government responsibility. This is a shift from just a few years ago, when a majority of residents felt that health is a governmental responsibility (NIU, 2010).

**Sources:**

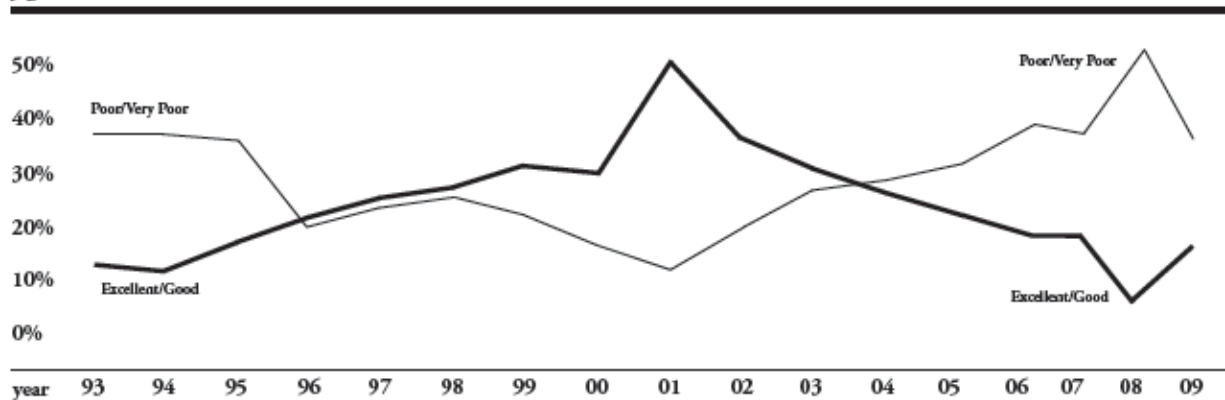
Northern Illinois University. (2010). *2010 Policy Survey*. Center for Governmental Studies. Online: <http://www.cgsniu.org/>

**Trend Statement #10: There is growing anger and resentment with currently sitting politicians as a result of perceptions of government growth and size and corruption.**

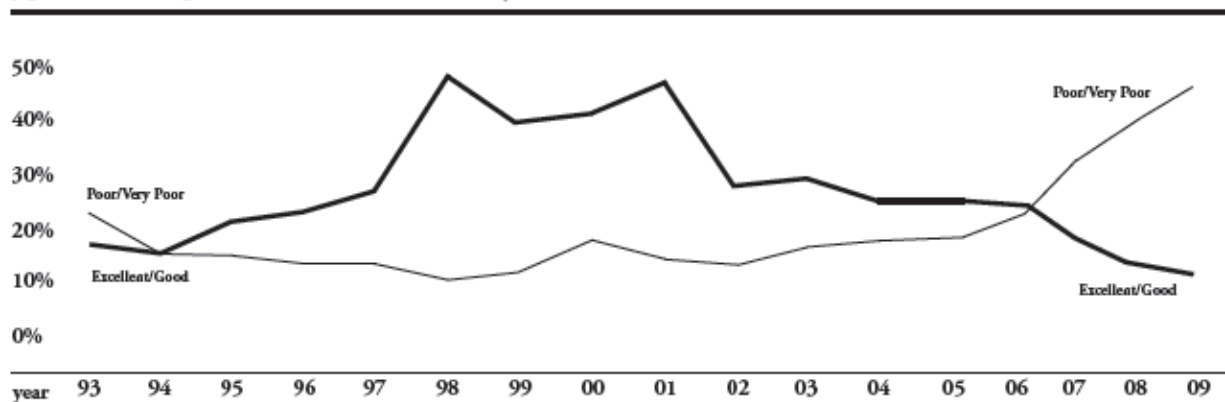
**Rationale:**

According to the Northern Illinois University Annual Public Policy Survey, the percent of state residents who rate public officials in congress as “poor” to “very poor” has increased steadily since 2002, reaching a high in 2008. Other branches of the government have also increased in this category in the past several years (NIU, 2010). The charts below from the NIU policy survey show how Illinois residents feel about the U.S. congress and Illinois General Assembly over time (p. 15):

*figure 16* Ratings of Congress, 1993-2009



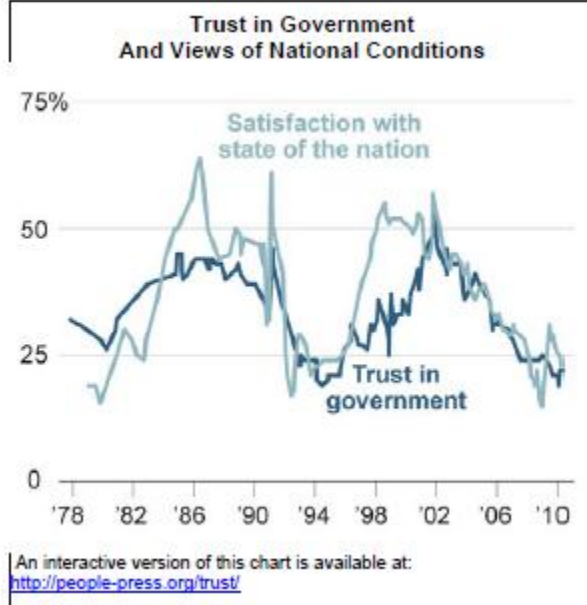
*figure 17* Ratings of the Illinois General Assembly, 1993-2009



The University of Illinois Public Opinion poll of corruption and trust in government also revealed a general level of skepticism and doubt among Illinois residents in terms of corruption and trust in government officials (Gaines & Kuklinski, 2007). Perhaps not surprisingly, there were differences when asked about the level of government, politicians specifically, and depending upon the political orientation of the respondent.

A wordle analysis by the Pew Research Center indicated that many Americans hold the opinion that Congress is corrupt and dysfunctional (Pew Research Center, 2010a). Nearly every branch of government has decreased in terms of satisfaction over the last decade (Pew Research Center, 2010b). A 2010 survey

of Americans by the Pew Research Center (2010b), found that trust in government has decreased steadily since about 2002 and is the lowest it has been in 30 years. The following chart highlights this trend:



#### Sources:

Gaines, B.J., & Kuklinski, J.H. (2007). *Partisanship and Perceptions of Corruption in Illinois*. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Institute for Government and Public Affairs. Online: <http://igpa.uillinois.edu/opinion-monitor/trust-and-corruption>

Northern Illinois University. (2010). *2010 Policy Survey*. Center for Governmental Studies. Online: <http://www.cgsniu.org/>

Pew Research Center. (2010a, March). *Congress in a Wordle: Dysfunctional, Corrupt, Selfish...* Online: <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1533/congress-in-a-word-cloud-dysfunctional-corrupt-selfish>

Pew Research Center. (2010b, April). *Distrust, Discontent, Anger, and Partisan Rancor*. Online: <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/606.pdf>

**Trend Statement #12: Americans are continually holding more liberal attitudes about race, gender and sexual orientation in the U.S., but changes in the attitude of providing preferential treatment to individuals based on specific criteria have stagnated or slightly fallen in the last 10 years.**

**Rationale:**

The 2007 environmental scan stated the following: The percentage of Americans who feel it is okay for people of different races to date each other has increased every year over the last decade. On the other hand, the percentage of Americans who feel it is okay to give preferential treatment to minorities to help them get ahead has been relatively stable over the last 10-15 years. The percent of Americans who believe that school boards have the right to fire individuals because they are homosexual has steadily decreased from about half in the late 1980s to about 33% by 2004. Half of Americans believed AIDS is God's punishment for immoral behavior in 1987. By 2007, that rate had fallen to 23%. In 1987, 30% of Americans completely disagreed that women should "return to their traditional roles in society." In 2007, the percent had increased to 51% (Pew Research Center, 2007a; Pew Research Center, 2007b).

Recent polls suggests these trends are continuing. Currently, about 31% of Americans believe it is okay to give preferential treatment to minorities. This number is nearly identical to the early 1990's and dipped between the late 1990's and mid-2000's (Pew Research Center, 2009a). However, more Americans approve of "affirmative action programs to help blacks, women and other minorities get better jobs and education" (Pew Research Center, 2009). 83% of Americans in 2009 agreed it is okay for people to date people of another race, up from 66% in 1991 and 73% in 1999 (Pew Research Center, 1999b). The Pew Research Center (2009b) also found that "even though there has been little change in the number of Americans holding strong religious beliefs, the percentage with conservative views on social values has been steadily declining over the past two decades. The average number of conservative responses on an index of five social values has dropped from 3.0 in 1987 to 2.4 this year. Put another way, the percentage of respondents giving three or more conservative responses has declined from 62% in 1987 to 46% in 2009." More Americans favor openness and more rights in general for homosexuals; on the other hand, the percent of Americans who feel that homosexuals should be allowed to marry has increased slightly between 2005 and 2009 (Pew Research Center, 2009b).

**Sources:**

Pew Research Center. (2007a). *Databank: Key Data Trends*. Online: <http://pewresearch.org/databank/keytrends/>.

Pew Research Center. (2007b). *Trends in Political Values and Core Attitudes: 1987-2007*. Online: <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/312.pdf>.

Pew Research Center. (2009a). *Public Backs Affirmative Action, But Not Minority Preferences*. Online: <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1240/sotomayor-supreme-court-affirmative-action-minority-preferences>

Pew Research Center. (2009b). *Trends in Political Values and Core Attitudes: 1987-2009*. Online: <http://people-press.org/report/517/political-values-and-core-attitudes>

**Trend Statement #13: Between 1990 and 2007, survey research found that approximately 80% of Americans continue to feel that the U.S. needs stricter environmental protection laws.**

**Rationale:**

The percentage of Americans who feel the U.S. needs stricter environmental protection laws slipped from about 90% in 1990 to about 80% a few years later and has remained stable ever since (Pew Research Center, 2007).

In 2003, about 66% of Americans felt people ought to pay higher prices if it meant more protection for the environment. That number has decreased significantly since, with only half of Americans continuing to feel that way (Pew Research Center, 2009). Other issues, and in particular the economy, are currently perceived to be a higher priority (Pew Research Center, 2009).

In Illinois, the environment has also slipped in terms of importance as a policy issue. In 2008, 46% of Illinois residents supported a tax increase to help the environment. The next year, that number has fallen dramatically to 32% (NIU, 2010).

**Sources:**

Northern Illinois University. (2010). *2010 Policy Survey*. Center for Governmental Studies. Online: <http://www.cgsniu.org/>

Pew Research Center. (2007). *Trends in Political Values and Core Attitudes: 1987-2007*. Online: <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/312.pdf>.

Pew Research Center. (2009). *Trends in Political Values and Core Attitudes: 1987-2009*. Online: <http://people-press.org/report/517/political-values-and-core-attitudes>

### **Trend Statement #14: The state of Illinois is heading toward a crisis in its pension system.**

#### **Rationale:**

As of 2004, Illinois had the highest unfunded pension liability in the U.S. at \$43 billion. This rate is much higher than the second and third place states of Ohio (\$30 billion) and New York (\$28 billion). Illinois' unfunded pension liability as a percent of the entire gross state product in 2004 was 8.1% - the sixth highest in the U.S. Illinois currently paid about \$2.6 billion to its pension system. In the next 3-5 years, that amount will increase to nearly \$4 billion. Illinois' five pension systems are \$35 billion in the red. The entire state operating budget for Illinois is about \$45 billion. Since 1970, Illinois has never paid a pension requirement in full, choosing to defer the costs (University of Illinois, 2007).

A 2005 article in *Business Week* noted that "the challenge to fixing the state's pension mess is politics. The halls of the state legislature in Springfield are a lobbying battleground between proponents of a plan to cut new benefits and union-led forces opposed to such a two-tier system. Elected officials are hesitant to ask the rest of their voters to pay for (pension) promises through higher taxes (because) outside of government workers, very few employees have these kinds of deals anymore. State Representative Robert Molar says 'It will be hard for us to go to the taxpayers and ask them to pay for our pensions with benefits you in the private sector couldn't even dream of'" (Business Week, 2005).

In 2008, the Illinois Teachers Retirement System had the fifth worst performance in the U.S. of any public sector pension system, losing 22% in one year alone (Pew Research Center on the States, 2010a). In 2008, Illinois had only 54% of the necessary assets on hand to meet long-term pension obligations – the worst in the nation (Pew Research Center of the States, 2010a). The Pew Research Center on the States (2010a) noted that "the state in the worst shape in fiscal year 2008 was Illinois. With a combined funding level of 54 percent, the five pension systems of Illinois had accumulated a total liability of \$119 billion, \$54 billion of which was unfunded. To start closing that gap and covering future expenses, the state should have made an actuarially required payment of \$3.7 billion in 2008. Instead, it contributed a little less than \$2.2 billion, meaning that the state will face a bigger gap in 2009 even apart from investment losses. For Illinois, the unfunded liability is more than three times annual payroll costs" (p. 17).

Despite modest steps at reform, analysts suggest that Illinois continues to rely too much on debt in funding its pension obligations (Pew Research Center on the States, 2010b; Walsh, 2010). In a story on Illinois' pension system, Schaper (2010) notes, "today, the unfunded pension liability in Illinois is much greater than the pension funds' assets, and has ballooned to a staggering \$77.8 billion." An analysis by the Chicago Tribune noted "Government accounting standards have facilitated this surreptitious borrowing by grossly undervaluing the state's pension liabilities. A true financial valuation of unfunded pension liabilities reveals a debt of more than \$200 billion for the state and local governments. That is around \$42,000 per Illinois household and only counts benefits that public employees can claim based on today's pay and work history" (Novy-Marx and Rauh, 2010).

#### **Sources:**

Business Week. (2005, June 13). *Sinkhole: How Public Pension Promises are Draining State and City Budgets*. Available in paper and Online:

[http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/05\\_24/b3937081.htm?chan=search](http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/05_24/b3937081.htm?chan=search)

Novy-Marx, R., & Rauh, J. (2010, August 13). Can the Illinois Pension Catastrophe Be Stopped? Chicago Tribune. Online: [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2010-08-13/news/ct-oped-0813-pensions-20100813\\_1\\_unfunded-pension-public-pension-systems-type-plan](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2010-08-13/news/ct-oped-0813-pensions-20100813_1_unfunded-pension-public-pension-systems-type-plan)

Pew Research Center on the States. (2010a, February). *The Trillion Dollar Gap: Underfunded State Retirement Systems and the Roads to Reform*. Online: [http://downloads.pewcenteronthestates.org/The\\_Trillion\\_Dollar\\_Gap\\_final.pdf](http://downloads.pewcenteronthestates.org/The_Trillion_Dollar_Gap_final.pdf)

Pew Research Center on the States. (2010b, March). *Roads to Reform: Changes to Public Sector Retirement Benefits across States*. Online: [http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewcenteronthestatesorg/Roads\\_To\\_Reform.pdf?n=1145](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewcenteronthestatesorg/Roads_To_Reform.pdf?n=1145)

Schaper, D. (2010, March). *Shortfall Threatens Illinois Pension System*. National Public Radio. Online: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=125076655>

University of Illinois Institute of Government and Public Affairs. (2007). *The Illinois Report: 2007*. Online: <http://www.igpa.uiuc.edu/lib/data/pdf/TheIllinoisReport2007.pdf>.

Walsh, M. (2010, June 19). *In Budget Crisis, States Take Aim at Pension Costs*. New York Times. Online: [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/20/business/20pension.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/20/business/20pension.html?_r=1)

**Trend Statement #15: The state's structural deficit continues to be a major issue and will impact public institutions' ability to meet its mission and serve its citizens.**

**Rationale:**

Illinois has the second worst debt level in the U.S. and a bond rating one level above junk. Projections for the deficit, causes, trends, rationale, and sources are in Economics Trend statement #11.

State government issues are not the only cause for the structural deficit. As manufacturing as declined in relative importance in the last 30 years in Illinois, wages have flattened (and real income has actually fallen). As a result of increased productivity and globalism, Illinois lost hundreds of thousands of high-skill manufacturing jobs to low-skill/low-wage jobs in the last 30 years. This creates a vicious cycle of increased demand for services and, without a robust high-skill workforce (with the exception of Chicago) and increased migration of talented workers to other regions outside of Illinois (again, except for Chicago), this leads to a further decline in economic activity and revenue generation by the state (Smith & Wall, 2006). Without structural and cultural changes at the state government level and a reorientation of how the state organizes incentives and a positive environment for business, the deficit and challenges Illinois will face in the future will be structural in nature and difficult to change.

**Sources:**

Smith, R., & Wall, A. (2006). *Estimating the Economic Impact of College Student Migration from Illinois*. Illinois Education Research Center. Online:

[http://ierc.siu.edu/documents/Smith\\_and\\_Wall\\_Exec\\_Summary.pdf](http://ierc.siu.edu/documents/Smith_and_Wall_Exec_Summary.pdf)

**Trend Statement #16: Increased federal focus on community colleges will present challenges and opportunities for funding and policy-making.**

**Rationale:**

This rationale is based on the federal government's shift in focus in how it approaches higher education through policy (AACC, 2010). First, there is a shift from research and development as an economic driver to job creation (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Community colleges are seen as a vehicle for this due to their agility and responsiveness to labor market needs (Brookings Institute, 2009). Second, the federal government is looking for efficiency and cost-effectiveness measures and will likely hold states, institutions, and accreditation agencies accountable for them (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Community colleges are less expensive than four-year institutions. Finally, the Obama administration has made community colleges a key component of federal education policy, as witnessed through the American Graduation Initiative (Brandon, 2010).

**Sources:**

American Association of Community Colleges. (2010). *Legislative Agenda*. Online: <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Advocacy/Pages/legagenda.aspx>

Brandon, K. (2009). *Investigating in Education: The American Graduation Initiative*. U.S. Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation. Online: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/Investing-in-Education-The-American-Graduation-Initiative/>

Brookings Institute. (2009, May). *Transforming America's Community Colleges: A Federal Policy Proposal to Expand Opportunity and Promote Economic Prosperity*. Online: [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2009/0507\\_community\\_college\\_goldrick\\_rab/0507\\_community\\_college\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2009/0507_community_college_goldrick_rab/0507_community_college_full_report.pdf)

U.S. Department of Education. (2007). *A Test of Leadership: The Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education*. Online: <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/index.html>

U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *Obama Administration's Education Reform Plan Emphasizes Flexibility, Resources, and Accountability for Results*. Online: <http://www2.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2010/03/03152010.html>

U.S. Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation. (2010). *Obama Administration's Education Reform Plan Emphasizes Flexibility, Resources, and Accountability for Results*. Online: <http://www2.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2010/03/03152010.html>

**Trend Statement #17: Fast population growth in the district will strain the local and regional infrastructure, school system and other support systems.**

**Rationale:**

As articulated in Politics Trend statements #1 and #6 and Economics Trend statement #11, growth in many areas will challenge the JJC district to keep up with infrastructure and other services (see the trend statements for rationales and data sources).

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP, 2010), which covers the Will and Cook County portions of the JJC district, identified the following challenge areas for the region:

- Livable Communities
  - Achieve greater livability through land use and housing
  - Manage and conserve water and energy resources
  - Expand and improve parks and open space
  - Promote sustainable local food
- Regional Mobility
  - Invest strategically in transportation
  - Increase commitment to public transit
  - Create a more efficient freight network
- Human Capital
  - Improve education and workforce development
  - Support economic innovation

Although there is not a coordinated planning effort at the Will County level, the Will County Center for Economic Development (CED) does coordinate regional economic development efforts. These are included in a recent white paper on innovation by the CED (2010). Goals in this plan include:

- Bring new businesses to Will County
- Help current businesses stay and grow in Will County

The CED plan also includes alignment of existing processes, including:

- New company awareness and engagement.
- Target industry councils.
- Target industry programs.
- Alignment of CED activities and engagement of CED volunteers.
- Creation of a strategic policy council (SPC).

**Sources:**

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. (2010). *Go to 2040: Comprehensive Regional Plan*.

Will County Center for Economic Development. (2010). *A White Paper on 2011-15 CED Innovation (DRAFT)*.