



## THE SYSTEM CONNECTION

Greetings:

Hard to believe that summer is coming to its unofficial end as a new academic term starts next week at both SIUC and SIUE (and of course, students at the School of Dental Medicine and the School of Medicine are already well in the groove of classes), but this is a time of year that anyone who works in higher education should relish. All campus locations are buzzing with anticipation, energy and enthusiasm, and I know lots of folks have been busy preparing for this week's onslaught of new and returning students. If you have been away for the summer — which many on the academic side of the operation have been — we are delighted you are back safe and sound. And for those new hires joining the SIU family this fall, we are glad that you are sharing your talents with us. I appreciate everyone's focus on our top student priority across the SIU System: student success and timely degree completion.

It's impossible to use this first edition of the 2015-16 *Connection* to catch up on all happenings that have taken place these last three months, but I want to provide updates on a couple of big developments during the summer. I'll hope it's not too much of a hodge-podge ... and I'll try to be a little shorter in future columns!

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As many of you already know, SIUE Chancellor Furst-Bowe recently resigned to accept a position as vice president of instruction at Chippewa Valley Technical College, back in her home state of Wisconsin. The SIU Board of Trustees last week appointed Stephen Hansen to serve a one-year term as SIU Edwardsville's interim chancellor. Dr. Hansen is a highly respected member of the campus community who most recently served as interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Edwardsville. He also is a history professor and former dean of the Graduate School there. I want to extend my thanks to Steve for his willingness to provide his veteran leadership to the campus during this interim period.

A national search will commence for the next SIUE chancellor very soon ... following a similar process that was employed during the 2011-12 school year that resulted in Julie's hiring at that time.

At SIU Carbondale, I've continued wearing a second hat and serving as acting chancellor since we lost our good friend and colleague Paul Sarvela last November. During their July Board meeting, Trustees directed me to bring back to them a recommendation for an interim chancellor who will serve a two-year fixed term. As I had done at SIUE over these past few weeks, then, I will continue holding consultations and gathering input from internal and external constituency bodies, organized groups, and key individuals from the SIUC campus to inform the selection of this individual. I expect to name the Carbondale interim no later than the next regular meeting of the BOT on September 10 — though rather, I hope to utilize my tentative hiring authority to identify the interim chancellor before that time, putting that person in the role prior to the 10th.

The permanent search will get underway at SIUC in a little over a year from now.

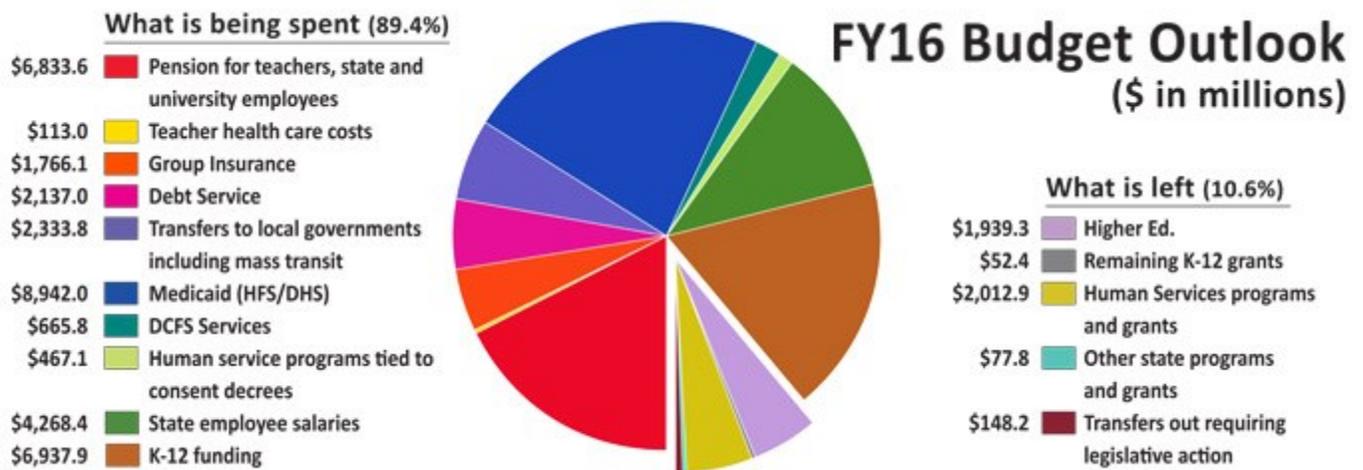
And finally, SIU School of Medicine Dean & Provost Kevin Dorsey announced at the July Board meeting that he plans to step down from his administrative duties and return to the faculty as of January 1, 2016. As such, the Board has further asked me to determine a “succession plan” to ensure a smooth leadership transition in selecting only the School’s fourth dean in 45 years. I have appreciated the willingness of many at the SOM to be involved in similar advice-seeking sessions, also held over this past month, as our Board continues to wrestle with how best to proceed in filling this important position.

As you by now note from above, there has been a deliberate attempt to employ a “staggered” approach across our campuses to move forward in a more manageable and deliberative fashion for permanently filling these three of the top four leadership positions in the system. Our Board felt it critical that we not be searching all three senior positions at once — and I believe their thinking is wise on this count.

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When it comes to SIU’s state budget support for the fiscal year that began nearly two months ago now, we will open the new school year about where we ended the last one — with the General Assembly and Gov. Bruce Rauner still in a stalemate. At the end of May, the General Assembly did pass a budget that would have cut support for the state’s higher education institutions at a nominal 8.75 percent — a smaller cut than the 31.5 percent originally proposed by the governor last February, but still highly damaging to our ongoing operations with a systemwide loss in the neighborhood of \$17 million or so. Nevertheless, the governor, as expected, vetoed the legislators’ spending plan ... and we’ve been at an impasse since that time.

What’s especially worrisome, though, is that the bulk of state spending — almost 90 percent — has in fact been committed due to an assortment of court rulings, consent decrees, and spending decisions made by the Rauner administration. Unfortunately, that remaining 10 percent of the budget not appropriated includes the full \$1.9 billion normally allocated to higher education — with a \$5 billion +/- revenue shortfall *still left unaddressed*. The chart below provides a graphic portrayal of the problem, and you can figure out the dangerous math for us here, in the absence of a revenue plan:



(Courtesy of Capitol Fax)

The worrisome part, of course, is that with so much of the state budget obligated now ... and state operations kind of limping along without major crises yet (albeit increasing numbers of human service providers statewide have burned through cash reserves and are ending services) ... and no elected official wanting to own a tax hike ... there may be nothing to move this off dead-center for some time yet. But make no mistake: We can't survive what's shown above ending up as the FY16 default "budget" for the State of Illinois. I understand that many of you are worried — even scared — about where things sit right now. Along with our sister public institutions in the state — which we stay in close contact with — we will continue to work every lever we have and push every button we can to get this thing resolved.

As I have previously indicated, we have identified sufficient cash resources to keep us operating through the fall semester. But we also know that we cannot sustain our operations without state funds indefinitely, so we keep on keeping on with both the legislative and executive branches to find some middle ground. It has to happen...

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I've said many times that we are a human capital organization. You can't be in the education business otherwise! And one of the best parts of my job is sharing with alumni, university friends, varied officials, and the public the many contributions of our talented and dedicated colleagues who "are" SIU. So this year, for each edition of the *Connection*, I am adding a new piece in this space that acknowledges at least some of those innumerable efforts. Every bi-weekly *Connection* will have a "Faces of SIU" section, where we will introduce one of our thousands of employees who is making a positive difference for Southern Illinois University and the communities we serve.

First up is Nicki Stewart, a physician assistant at SIU Healthcare's Center for Family Medicine in Quincy. I intentionally kicked off this addition to feature someone not on one of our three main campuses ... as a reminder of the impact SIU has throughout the state. Also: Quincy Family Practice just last week celebrated its naming as a Federally Qualified Health Center.

Nicki is a two-degree graduate of SIUC; she earned her bachelor's in physiology with a chemistry minor in 2007, and her master's from the physician assistant program in 2009. She said becoming a physician assistant is "the perfect career for me, combining my love for science and my love for people, while providing excellent flexibility for a work/life balance." In addition to enjoying an "excellent education to prepare me for this career," Nicki also met her husband Kyle while they both were undergraduates; he graduated with a degree in health care management in 2007. They are the proud parents of two daughters.

Nicki returned to her native Quincy a few years ago to join the clinic, calling it "a joy to continue working for the SIU mission." She's housed in the Department of Family and Community Medicine, and especially enjoys women's health, preventative care, musculoskeletal medicine and integrative medicine. Nicki says it has been "a blessing to return and provide services to my hometown," adding, "I love supporting patients, and seeing them recover from an injury or illness to improve their quality of life." Thanks for all you do, Nicki!

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I will close (finally, you say!) this first-of-the-year column by offering everyone a head's up that I do plan to deliver a "State of the System" address sometime in September. I had toyed with just video streaming this speech online, but instead have decided to deliver it on-site at our three primary campuses. We're still nailing down exact dates for each location, and we'll get those forwarded as soon as arrangements are finalized. While I plan to touch briefly on a couple of highlights at each of our campuses, this talk will really be more forward-looking and NOT just a listing of accomplishments from the past year. Time will also be provided for a Q & A, of course. I hope you will join me as the opportunity may allow; we'll also post it online too.

Randy Dunn