



## THE SYSTEM CONNECTION

Greetings:

After a busy and rewarding stretch leading up to the conclusion of another academic year, I once more have a variety of items to share with you before I put *The Connection* on summer hiatus:

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During their work session last Wednesday afternoon, the SIU Board of Trustees spent considerable time discussing the possible impact of changes in reporting lines of our first-professional schools. You may recall that last fall, the Board expressed interest in reviewing the reporting relationships of the Schools of Medicine, Law, Pharmacy and Dental Medicine. Trustees asked for an analysis and recommendations that the dean of the School of Medicine report directly to the System president, and that the deans of the other three schools report to their respective chancellor. (Currently, the medical school dean reports to the SIUC chancellor, while the other deans report to their provosts.)

I anticipate the BOT will continue these conversations when it convenes at the School of Medicine in Springfield for its next regular meeting in July — and likely beyond. In addition, the SIU System office is in ongoing discussions with the Higher Learning Commission, which is our regional institutional accreditor for SIUC and SIUE. The HLC has posed certain questions about this proposal, especially regarding the continuing relationship of the School of Medicine to SIUC if the medical school dean reports to the president. So we'll continue to provide background and clarification to our accreditors and constituency bodies, as the Board continues its deliberations.

It's important that I reiterate a point I have made several times since this topic emerged earlier this year: No change will take place if doing so would put SIUC's Carnegie research designation at risk, or otherwise lead to a weakening of any existing programs.

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At last Thursday's plenary session of the BOT, the trustees approved an appointment that represents a real changing of the guard on the Edwardsville campus. Jeff Waple, who has 20 years of professional service in student affairs, will become vice chancellor for student affairs on July 1. He will replace Narbeth Emmanuel — "Nobby" as he is known on the campus — who is retiring after a highly successful and distinguished 20-year career. It's an understatement to say that SIUE is a far different place compared to when he started ... Nobby played an integral role in transitioning SIUE from a commuter campus to the vibrant residential university it is today. Edwardsville's climb in both enrollment and prestige (in various rankings and ratings covering

the public comprehensive universities' sector) has made Edwardsville into a true statewide institution.

We appreciate your many contributions, Nobby, and wish you all the best in your well-deserved retirement.

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And speaking of fond farewells: Graduates on all of our campuses were treated to memorable send-offs during well-planned and well-executed commencement ceremonies. I had the pleasure of participating in SIUE's Friday night ceremony, and all three at SIUC given my acting chancellor duties on that campus. I sure don't want to risk leaving someone out by trying to list all of the units and departments that worked tirelessly on behalf of our grads and their families to make our graduations the great events they are. What our SIU students experience when they "walk" is the result of months of planning; what they don't see are the small armies (most behind the scenes) working non-stop across our campuses for days ahead of – and throughout -- commencement weekend to tend to every detail. Thanks to ALL who contributed in whatever capacity — and my gratitude goes as well to those faculty members who attend to support and honor their graduating students.

All of our special commencement guests – including Gov. Bruce Rauner -- saw the very best of SIU on display these previous weekends. I know my invitation for the governor to join us at one of the SIUC ceremonies caused some controversy and questioning. But it was clear from my conversations with him — and watching him shake hands with each of the doctoral and master's students at Carbondale's 1:30 p.m. exercises — that he was genuinely pleased to be at SIUC and to have a first-hand look at what celebrating a degree means in the lives of our students. So in that sense, I think we accomplished our goal of having the governor more tangibly understand the value of the state's investment in our students and our universities. Several of us took advantage of that opportunity to respectfully address the budget situation with him, too. I am hopeful that we will see positive results from those conversations in the near future as the General Assembly strives to complete the work of this spring's session and pass a state budget.

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So with another academic term in the rear-view mirror, I hope every reader can look back on the year with some level of satisfaction at our many accomplishments across SIU in teaching, research and service ... despite a variety of challenges we faced (and still do, of course). I always celebrate surviving another year and being able to net a few more steps forward than back when taking stock of everything accomplished.

We all are well aware of the potential fiscal difficulties that lie ahead, as I've written about a number of them in this space over the past few months. But we will continue to prepare our students for success in careers and in life ... we will continue to deliver much-needed quality-of-life and economic development services to our communities and our regions ... and we will continue to find solutions to many of the issues facing society. That's what great universities do — and SIU isn't going anywhere, so we'll keep up that work. I will be back with another year of

this column on Aug. 19, though I'll obviously continue to communicate with you as need may demand on various issues, notably the budget. If you are on a nine-month contract, I hope you have a wonderful, safe, and enjoyable summer. If, like me, you are a 12-month employee, make sure to find some "down time" with family and friends and re-charge your batteries for what will be another exciting and unpredictable year ahead.

Randy Dunn