



THE SYSTEM CONNECTION

Greetings:

Since nothing is happening on the state budget front, or really in Springfield at all -- and won't until sometime after the November 8 elections -- I decided this might be a good week for a "potluck" column.

Speaking of elections, with the season in full swing, I wanted to remind everyone who's involved in the political game by whatever form or fashion to be (again) reminded to keep state and institutional ethics requirements in mind while on the SIU clock. The Illinois Office of Executive Inspector General has produced a [guide](#) for state employees' political activity, explaining what you can, and cannot, do under the Ethics Act.

While I know the statewide online ethics training we take is captivating -- enthralling even -- a quick review of the highlights once more may be informative for those who have a bent toward politicking.

To quickly summarize: State employees (and yes, for our purposes here that includes those of us employed by Illinois public universities) are generally not restricted from engaging in political activities such as voting, attending town halls and debates, or participating in campaigns. But, political activities *are* prohibited during work time, unless you are using vacation or personal time. Those activities include soliciting, accepting or making campaign contributions, and volunteering for a candidate or a political party. Keep in mind, though, that conducting these activities at any time by misappropriating state resources -- including your work e-mail account -- is strictly prohibited.

So fully exercise your constitutional rights, just know what you can do when ... where ... and how. If you have any questions or desire further guidance, don't hesitate to contact SIU's Chief Ethics Officer [Michelle Taylor](#) at 618.536.3480.

Mentioning the upcoming elections calls to my mind something else.

I've thought for a while now that I'll probably devote a future column -- maybe around the presidential inauguration in January -- to those things that either a President Trump or President Clinton should pay attention to when it comes to formulating federal policy around higher education.

And no, I'm not talking here about free college, or forcing tuition reductions, or some of the other pie-in-the-sky proposals (sorry ... I know I'm editorializing ... but it's my column) that tend to get their

strongest hearing during major state and federal election cycles as one candidate or party tries to out-promise the other, currying favor with voters.

Rather, I'm instead referring to those fairly straightforward proposals that everyone in our business knows are out there that can make a marked difference in increasing affordability and accessibility. Thinking ahead to that future column, I can probably come up with four or five policy interventions that could contribute to a meaningful platform for whomever moves into the White House.

But I can tell you right now what should be first on that list -- as we're living the experience that brings it to the fore here in Illinois. States HAVE to be more aggressively pushed (read, threatened?) by the federal government to end the disinvestment so many of them have been making in their state HIED systems. It is a settled question that years of drastic cuts to state funding for public universities constitute the most significant variable driving tuition increases at those institutions. The Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities has reported that in FY16, 47 states spent less per student than before the Great Recession; average state spending in the aggregate remains 18 percent lower than before the recession. The vaunted recovery noted in many states has not yet made it to many of the public colleges and universities across our nation.

There is a federal role to be played to lead state investment as part of the ongoing federal-state partnership. Whether it's a tool like the maintenance-of-effort provisions included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the so-called federal stimulus funds) from 2008 and 2009, or some other approach, there are ways that federal policy can be utilized to incentivize states to increase their levels of support. It worked before, and it can work again -- and we need it here as much as anywhere.

WTH? ... It's Back

Faithful readers may remember that last year I started an occasional segment in this column that I titled WTH? (Other variations exist but you get the drift.)

An observant staffer recently discovered a piece that I think qualifies for my first WTH entry of this year. I'm sure there's more to this story -- maybe? -- but on its face, it seems to fit the parameters of a WTH mention in this space.

Earlier this summer, The University of Iowa announced on its website that it had just inked a new master articulation agreement with ... wait for it ... the Illinois Community College Board. In the words of P. Barry Butler, executive vice president and provost at Iowa, "[t]his is an exciting new partnership that will benefit thousands of Illinois community college graduates who want to pursue a bachelor's degree at UI."

The full press release can be found [here](#).

I get it. A lot of Illinois kids -- in Chicagoland, as well as where I grew up, in the western part of our state -- head off to Iowa City for their baccalaureate degrees. No doubt these agreements improve accessibility and make for easier transitions in those cases.

But in the wake of record drops in enrollment at numerous of our state's public institutions of higher education, as well as recent national press (most notably, coverage in *The New York Times*) that highlighted Illinois' role as one of the country's largest exporters of post-secondary students, one might reasonably wonder why this was on the "to do" list right now for the ICCB.

I know we have the Illinois Articulation Initiative that provides us something akin to UI's special agreement, and I guess I should begrudgingly give Iowa credit for going after this ... assuming the impetus for this came from their side.

But as this news has made the rounds across SIU over the last day or so, it has caused any number of our folks to wonder aloud about timing and how something like this happens as Illinois' universities find themselves struggling through their greatest operational and financial distress of the last 50 years.

To close, I would remind readers of the State of the System address schedule:

SIUC (Student Center Ballrooms): Monday, Oct. 17, 4 p.m., followed by light after-hours reception

SIUE (MUC Meridian Ballroom): Tuesday, Oct. 18, 10:30 a.m., followed by light lunch

SOM (South Auditorium): Tuesday, Oct. 18, 4 p.m., followed by light after-hours reception

If anyone planning on attending is in need of interpretive services for any location, please let **Paula** in my office know at your earliest convenience. We are also looking to record the talk at least at one location (it will be the same speech at each campus) for those who may not want to take time out of the day, but still want to hear whatever I decide I'm going to say.

Due to the address, plus some other demands impinging around this time, I'm going to take a fall break from the *Connection*. As such, I'll be back once again on November 2 ... see you then.

Randy Dunn

Faces of SIU



As is the case with colleagues across the SIU system, Bill Retzlaff wears multiple hats on the Edwardsville campus. He is one of two associate deans of the College of Arts and Sciences, a professor of biological sciences, and the university's faculty athletics representative. In that role, he is the liaison between academics and the athletics department, and he represents SIUE with our conferences and the NCAA.

"Dr. Bill" -- as he is known across campus -- also is widely recognized for his commitment to sustainability. In 2004, Bill and Susan Morgan, professor of environmental engineering and associate dean of the Graduate School, founded and co-direct G.R.E.E.N. at SIUE -- the Green Roof Environmental

Evaluation Network.

"My bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees are in forestry -- one of the original areas of sustainability," Bill said. "I chose this degree (and life) path because I love plants and I enjoy working to preserve natural resources for future generations."

Students and faculty in G.R.E.E.N. work closely with collaborators to evaluate green roof and green wall systems and green building technologies. Since the research collaborative was founded, Bill estimates that more than 100 SIUE students have worked on green roof projects, many of them from

biological sciences, civil engineering, and environmental sciences. In addition, scholarly work from G.R.E.E.N. has been incorporated into direct and indirect teaching.

As is true across the SIU System, the Edwardsville campus demonstrates a strong commitment to sustainability, including, for example, several buildings designed and built to LEED standards. Bill's efforts have promoted the development of green roofs on six buildings, totaling more than 17,500 square feet. Last fall, he was honored with the Research Award of Excellence from Green Roofs for Healthy Cities, a not-for-profit association working to promote the green roof industry throughout North America.

"I never thought that I would work on a building roof as I developed my passion for the environment," Bill said. "But my plant background and some of the lumber and construction background I learned in forestry courses and research experiments have served me well while collaborating with green roof contractors."

Bill's passion for sustainability -- and SIUE -- has been infectious since he joined the faculty in 1999.

"I absolutely enjoy our 2,660-acre campus and all of the inhabitants," he said. "I'm fortunate that once I enter campus from almost any direction, I can drive almost a mile before coming to a campus facility. I'm appreciative of the fantastic talents of my faculty and staff colleagues. I'm thriving at SIUE because I can serve the students by working with them collaboratively on many projects."

Other Voices in HIED

The Conversation: [Public universities are under threat – not just by outside reformers](#)

Washington Post: Op Ed: [Lawyer: Why the lower standard of evidence in college sexual-assault cases is dangerous](#)

Times Higher Education: [Public higher education 'dying in the US', warns Robert Reich](#)

Boston Globe: Op Ed: [It's time to free speech on campus again](#)

Washington Post: Op Ed: [After gaining legitimacy, can online higher education replace traditional college?](#)

The New York Times: [Supreme Court Declines to Consider N.C.A.A. Rules on Paying Athletes](#)
