



THE SYSTEM CONNECTION

Greetings:

This is a busy travel week for yours truly, with meetings in Springfield on Monday and then the convening of the SIU Board of Trustees this afternoon with a work session, and tomorrow in regular session -- both days at SIUE.

Nonetheless, I've decided to use this edition of the *Connection* to accomplish a quick roundup of a host of pending legal and policy issues that continue to percolate in Illinois and Washington -- all of which could impact SIU in some way.

State Employee Pay Freeze -- Of everything that has taken place since my last column, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan's January 27 motion in St. Clair County Circuit Court to freeze state employees' wages pending a state appropriation has probably generated the most buzz across the entirety of the SIU System. In its simplest form, her motion comes down to this: AG Madigan wants the court to rule that employees cannot be paid without a budget (or at least an approp of some sort) as approved by the General Assembly and signed by the governor.

Depending upon the situation being addressed and the specific legalese involved (some of you might remember Governor Rauner's executive orders early in his term and subsequent debate about whether they applied to the public universities or not) there always seems to be confusion about whether we are "state employees." For this purpose, let me reassure everyone that we're not. Even if the court rules in favor of the attorney general, it will not stop SIU employees from getting paid. SIU receives an overall appropriation ... well, stopgaps of late ... and our payroll is drawn down from that. To wit, your deposit statement comes from SIU, not the State of Illinois. State agencies, however, send payrolls to the Comptroller drawn on their separate budget lines that have to be appropriated.

So set the worries on this one aside.

Maybe not surprisingly, two bills have since been introduced in the Illinois House -- one by a Republican member and one by a Democrat -- that would make state pay a continuing appropriation, one that gets paid no matter what such as debt service, pensions, and the like.

Overtime Rule -- Many of you will recall that former President Obama's final overtime regulation, doubling the pay threshold for which employees were required to be paid overtime and which was to take effect December 1, was instead put on hold November 30 when a federal judge in Texas issued

a nationwide injunction. Anyone earning less than the threshold would have been considered an hourly worker eligible for overtime pay.

As it stood then -- and still stands now -- anyone earning more than \$23,660 a year is generally exempt from receiving overtime pay in a salaried position. Within SIU, the new rule would have affected about 500 Civil Service and Administrative/Professional employees across all locations and positions (those who teach are generally exempt from earning overtime pay). At the time of the court ruling last semester, I said we would take some time for the situation to clarify itself before considering what further action -- if any -- we might take on our own.

The latest chapter in this story is that President Trump's Department of Justice has asked a federal appeals court in Louisiana to pause the case until his Administration can decide whether it wants to defend the rule or kill it off. Thus, there remains no clarity as we don't know if the Administration and the Congress will limit the rule, let the courts decide it, or do something else.

Since we don't have adequate funding due to the state budget crisis to implement this even if we wanted to do so unilaterally, we'll continue to monitor developments.

DACA -- This has become one of the most frequently used acronyms in HIED -- a sector already flooded with acronyms ... maybe second only to the military! -- over the last several months. It stands, of course, for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program which provides legal protection to undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children and meet certain conditions, including enrollment in higher education. I have written in this space previously about the concerns we share with many other campuses about DACA's fate in the Trump Administration.

Here's the update: Last month, a bi-partisan group introduced the BRIDGE Act in the U.S. Senate and House. BRIDGE would provide temporary relief from deportation and continue employment authorization to the roughly 750,000 individuals eligible for DACA ... including 57 students across the SIU System. Two members of the Illinois federal delegation are co-sponsors, Sen. Dick Durbin in the Senate and Rep. Luis Gutierrez in the House. We are reaching out to both of them to make them aware of our strong support for this bill, which has been referred to each chamber's judiciary committee. The BRIDGE bill also has the support of the Illinois Business Immigration Coalition and the 470-member Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, which includes nine Hispanic-serving institutions in Illinois.

Both Illinois legislators are champions for the bills they decide to sponsor -- tireless, actually-- and we'll be supporting their efforts in every way that we can.

Travel Ban -- The president's immigration executive order banning entry into the U.S. for residents of seven majority Muslim countries has been the most contentious of his actions so far. We are watching it closely at SIU: The ban impacts 38 students and 3 faculty members at SIUE, 88 students and 2 faculty members at SIUC, and 1 faculty member and 2 medical residents at the School of Medicine. Fortunately, none of these members of the SIU family was caught overseas when the executive order went into effect. This action has created significant fear and uncertainty not only among those directly affected, but among others who worry Trump will expand the ban to other countries. As I write this on Tuesday night, I actually have the network news blaring in the background as the reporter is saying that oral arguments continue to be heard in a San Francisco federal appeals court to decide if the ban will continue to be stayed.

Many universities across the country have expressed their concerns about the travel ban, including SIU's with statements from both Chancellors Colwell and Pembroke after the ban was signed. Beyond that, I know the actions we have taken may seem at best to be marginal; but one school won't get this changed. As such, we are relying on higher education's large and influential national associations (e.g., APLU, AASCU, ACE, et al. -- more acronyms to Google if interested) which have big staffs and the resources on the ground in D.C. to make our collective voices heard.

SIUC, SIUE, and the SIU System have all signed onto a letter sent to Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly coordinated by the American Council on Education and joined by nearly every other national HIED association that exists. The letter states that international students, faculty, and scholars have served America well throughout the nation's history; enrich campuses and the country with their talents and skills; and are vital to the innovation and entrepreneurship expected of the country's greatest colleges and universities. With so many other groups taking to the streets in protest, it may be that the concerns are finally getting heard.

A final note: I want to thank our staffers at both Carbondale's Center for International Education and Edwardsville's Office of International Affairs for their efforts and concern for their students since all of this has taken place. Our international staffers have been pressed to the max to deal with this to aid and support our impacted students and faculty members -- and their families --and they deserve a round of thanks from the rest of us at SIU. Many of those folks have provided the best examples of the caring ethic for our students ... and it hasn't gone unnoticed.

And no ... I'm not writing about the state budget this week. We shall all watch and wait, to see if the Illinois Senate can indeed pass a "grand bargain" budget deal soon which they've been working on for a few weeks already, now with twelve separate bills all bundled together (all have to pass for any one bill to pass). If an affirmative vote indeed happens, we will then see how it is received by Governor Rauner and the Illinois House of Representatives. As always, I'll do my best to keep you apprised as developments warrant.

Randy Dunn

Faces of SIU

Long-time readers of this column probably recall that on occasion, I like to introduce you to SIU couples whose commitment, enthusiasm and "esprit d'corps" inspire us all.

Meet SIUC's Tena and Shane Bennett. They met while pursuing master's degrees in sport management at Western Illinois University, and both started their SIUC careers with Recreational Sports and Services. Tena moved over to the Student Center in 2007 as assistant director of facilities and operations, becoming associate director the following year. She has been Student Center director since 2013.

Shane just joined the SIU Foundation in December as director of development for the College of Business. Prior to that, he spent eight years at the Student Recreation Center as assistant director of intramural sports and sport clubs.

In addition to their family obligations (they have an eight-year-old daughter), they both are very active outside of the university. Shane officiates NCAA and Illinois high school football and basketball, is

president of the Tri-C Athletics Board, and serves as secretary on the Board of Elders of Our Savior Lutheran Church. Tena officiates high school and junior high volleyball, is a volunteer coach for Tri-C athletics, serves on the Carbondale Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors Committee, and is a member of the Board of Maintenance and Alter Guild at Our Savior Lutheran Church.



Of his new job, Shane says, “While I was at the Student Recreation Center, I worked closely with students every day. My new role allows me to help students financially by working closely with the greatest alumni and friends in the country. This also gives me an opportunity to expand my knowledge in

higher education. There are so many great professionals who work at the SIU Foundation, and they have the same passion for SIU as I do and want to make a positive difference.”

Tena brings “a realistic yet optimistic outlook” to her job.

“Students, faculty and staff don’t have to come to the Student Center, but knowing that they choose to is a great feeling,” she says. “Every day in the building is different and we are providing services for individuals from on- and off-campus. Being a part of the Student Center team and working with great people makes the job fun every day.”

Tena and Shane are all about students. Thanks to both of them for a strong and lasting commitment to our university.

Other Voices in HIED

The New York Times: [Campuses Wary of Offering ‘Sanctuary’ to Undocumented Students](#)

Washington Post: [How Trump’s travel ban could hurt science](#)

Washington Post: [‘We fear the chilling effect this will have’: Nearly 50 higher education associations unite to oppose travel ban**](#)

The New York Times: [Voices From Rural America on Why \(or Why Not\) to Go to College](#)

Washington Post: [Falwell says Trump administration has tapped him to lead a higher-ed panel](#)
