



## THE SYSTEM CONNECTION

Greetings:

So the question for this week is whether you want to start with the good news or the bad news. Let's take the latter first, and get it out of the way:

For those who were following developments toward a state budget for FY17 as advanced in the Illinois Senate last week, you already know that valiant effort ultimately was unsuccessful ... and that SIU still sits with no spending plan or even a short-term ("stopgap") state appropriation.

While a few of the less controversial from the dozen "grand bargain" budget bills passed the Senate on Tuesday, February 28, the necessary support for the tougher votes -- covering pension reform, a property tax freeze, workers' compensation, and an income tax increase -- had evaporated by Wednesday afternoon.

For more than a few respected political insiders, the Senate's bipartisan plan was seen as the last best hope to get a budget deal done -- without the stalemate lasting until we get beyond the next statewide general election in *November 2018*. I would love to have the pundits be proven wrong and see the Senate reconnoiter over the coming few weeks to still put a budget together for this year. Any idea can be resurrected at any time ... but at present, no one can identify a Plan B which is out there.

As such, the focus of our efforts at SIU now has to change in a couple of different ways.

First: In a worst-case scenario, if there is not going to be a budget enacted for potentially another two years, we must pivot and go back to making the strongest case possible for continued stopgap appropriation(s) that can bridge us through whatever period exists until Illinois passes an actual budget. After the pounding our regular operations have taken, brought on by 20 months of this fiscal impasse, the SIU System cannot go for another 20 with zero state support ... short of hollowing out the core of our campus programs, services, facilities, and regional support projects. I don't usually quote myself from other venues for this column, but further to the issue of another stopgap payment, it seems appropriate here to restate what I shared with the *Chicago Tribune* in a story that ran on January 3 ("Stopgap budget set to expire, returning Rauner-Madigan standoff to where it was last summer"):

*"I understand it may be very difficult to see a path by which we get a budget done, possibly even for the next two years," said Randy Dunn, president of Southern Illinois University. "We understand that political reality. What we won't be able to live with is going that period of time without some sort of stopgap appropriation or more limited spending authority ... it's an untenable situation."*

We cannot allow our standing in the hyper-competitive higher education marketplace to end up in junk bond status. So our repositioning to advocate for a third tranche of stopgap money got underway even yesterday as representatives of all the public universities -- including myself -- testified before the Senate Higher Education Committee. What remains concerning, though, is the fact that in that same *Tribune* article cited above, Governor Rauner was quoted as stating that he would be open to another stopgap budget only if there is a property tax freeze and term limits enacted. And those politics will be very tough indeed ... so we continue to wait.

The second thing which must happen -- yet again, unfortunately -- is the consideration of another round of budget reductions to be decided upon as soon as practicable and in place by the start of the coming fiscal year on July 1. As most of you know, the governor's proposed HIED budget for FY18 would decrease our state appropriation by 15% (compared to our last normal funding year of FY15), which would not surprisingly result in additional cuts to the operating budget on each of the campuses. We've known about that since Governor Rauner's budget address on February 15, and the planning to deal with that level of cut while minimizing its impact on core programs and services has been ongoing across the System on pretty much a continuous basis for well over a year. I'm guessing that many regular readers will recall the two lists of possible cuts published in this space

364 days ago: One list was driven by the severity of last year's state budget proposal, while the other was a "doomsday" list of reductions -- as I stated at the time, "in the almost-unbelievable event there is no state budget deal until after the November general election."

Well, we're right back there once more.

Given that the Springfield and Edwardsville (through the "Congress" project) campuses last year undertook major budget reviews leading to permanent reductions that have already been put into effect -- and the fact that Carbondale's budget prioritization work continues through this spring, while additionally having to address its structural deficit due to enrollment loss, plus pay back borrowed reserves that have kept operations going through this year -- the lion's share of cuts to be made and the largest impact of this latest round of budget retrenchment will be felt by SIUC.

To allow as much time as I think we can afford for another attempt at a legislative solution, while knowing that certain SIU budget actions may need to be announced sufficiently in advance of the next meeting of our Board of Trustees on April 5-6, we will be holding off on the next issue of the *Connection* until **March 29** at which point I will outline in greater detail what is anticipated will need to take place to keep all of SIU viable through the Fall 2017 semester if no further state appropriation is forthcoming this spring. Much of the attention at that time will be given over to sharing the actions that will need to be taken to get SIU Carbondale on a more solid financial footing if we are forced to head into FY18 without any state support.

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Notwithstanding the above, there is a little good news this time as well:

You will recall from an earlier column that we had serious concerns that the premium cost of our employee health insurance might see a dramatic jump sometime soon, due to a recent declaration of impasse by the Illinois Labor Relations Board -- as the state employees' AFSCME labor union negotiated a new contract with the State of Illinois. Talks between the parties essentially broke off well over a year ago.

As a reminder, there are two facts to remember here: 1) A finding of impasse would have allowed the governor's team to unilaterally impose their final bargaining terms, in this case possibly leading to up to a 100% increase in employee costs for health care; and 2) Whatever the AFSCME settlement on insurance costs is (even if imposed upon the union) thus becomes the "pattern contract" for setting the state rate which public university employees also pay for health insurance coverage.

Late last week, the Illinois 4th District Appellate Court delayed the implementation of the ILRB's ruling that impasse had been reached between AFSCME and the state.

At the very least, this ruling will most likely result in a significant delay before any imposition of terms by Illinois state government, thereby providing a reprieve before SIU employees would see their health insurance premiums take any big jump. It is virtually a lock that this will now go to the Illinois Supreme Court for a final decision -- and additional work at the bargaining table may be mandated -- so it is not unforeseeable that many months could pass before this is resolved.

In the meantime, any premium increase is stayed by the court.

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And finally: President Trump's new executive order -- to replace the earlier "travel ban" executive order that was blocked by a nationwide temporary restraining court order on February 3 -- was released on Monday. At first glance, there is not a lot different, though the Departments of State and Homeland Security are given discretionary authority to make case-by-case decisions to issue a visa in limited situations involving "study" and employment. Another difference between the old and new order is that permanent residents and current visa holders are exempted from it.

We were especially hopeful that the revised order might recognize and broadly waive international medical graduates for residency programs, physicians and other health professionals, and certain groups of researchers ... but such is not the case. The School of Medicine is following developments especially closely here, and we'll reach out to assist both SIUC and SIUE for other special cases that may arise.

As was our approach under the original order, SIU is joining with the Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities to advance the public universities' deep concern that the pipeline of students and faculty from the impacted countries (note that Iraq was removed from the list of countries) is effectively cut off, while doing nothing to lessen the chilling effect on all other international students who are in the midst of the admissions process.

And as I finish the column on Tuesday night, the State of Hawaii has just filed suit to challenge this new executive order. As with most things we deal with here ... more to come ...

## Faces of SIU



Jeannine Banning doesn't need the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics to document the popularity of a physician assistant master's degree from SIU. The federal agency had predicted employment of physician assistants would grow 30 percent between 2014 and 2024, much faster than the average for all occupations.

As the program/student advisor in our School of Medicine's Physician Assistant Program, Jeannine coordinates the recruitment and admissions process for all applicants. She decides which applications will move on for consideration by the program's admissions committee.

This year alone, Jeannine reviewed 1,000 applications for a class size of 40. The requirements are stringent – which, since many of us rely on PAs these days, is a good thing. Consideration is given to candidates with high overall, science and pre-requisite GPAs; competitive GRE scores; evidence of significant direct health care experience; strong references; and experience shadowing a certified PA.

Jeannine brings a strong blend of medical and educational experience to the job. A Dallas native, she earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at Austin and her nursing degree from El Centro College in Dallas. Jeannine moved to Carbondale in 1989, and earned a master's degree in health education from SIU in 1996.

Her nursing experience is extensive; she has held positions in Texas, Arkansas, Virginia and Illinois. And that experience gives her a broader perspective about the role of the PA in a health care team. Jeannine became the PA program's first advisor in 1998, leaving the program in 2003 to return to nursing. She came back to SIU as the program/student advisor in 2013.

"There are many things that I love about this job," she said. "I have found a true match in blending my interests in education and medicine. It's a pleasure to meet and talk with so many applicants who are bright, highly motivated and caring of others. Honestly, I am honored to work with our PA students, faculty and staff."

Jeannine believes one of the reasons the PA program attracts so many applicants is its problem-based learning (PBL) curriculum.

"The PBL cases are based on real patient problems that are carefully selected by faculty to stimulate students' learning in all relevant areas of basic clinical and behavioral sciences," she said. "Patient cases are designed to incorporate signs and symptoms of patients' varied problems that providers encounter in practice."

Then there is the program's track-record. The most recent five-year data for students taking the national certification exam for the first time shows an average pass rate of 99 percent for SIU students. The national average is 94 percent.

There also is the simple fact that the demand for health care services is growing. Jeannine has good reason to believe SIU will continue to attract large numbers of applicants for the PA program.

"I have yet to meet a PA who wishes they had chosen a different career path," she said.

Thanks, Jeannine, for your contributions to the PA program and the success of our students.

## Other Voices in HIED

Forbes: [Op Ed: It's Not Enough For Working Class Kids To Get Into College](#)

Bloomberg: [Colleges Could Lose Billions If They Defy Trump](#)

Washington Post: [Universities respond to new executive order on immigration with concern](#)