



THE SYSTEM CONNECTION

Greetings:

Readers of the *Connection* from last time will recall that after focusing (by necessity...exhaustingly) in recent columns solely on the state budget, I promised to take a break and mix it up a little more for today's installment. And since the General Assembly just returned this week from its spring break, there really is nothing new to share with you as I write this column on Tuesday evening.

So it's time for a little potpourri.

Other Stuff in Springfield

Even though there has been no movement to break the impasse on the state budget, the General Assembly hasn't just been sitting on its hands. While focusing on the never-ending stalemate remains our top priority, we also continue to monitor other HIED-related legislation -- to the tune of 211 bills being tracked by our Government and Public Affairs staff in Springfield.

And a few pieces of legislation filed actually make sense.

Generally, we don't take a formal position on bills unless there is some compelling interest related to SIU specifically, or higher education generally. Of course, we talk with our sister publics almost continuously throughout the spring legislative session to coordinate on approaches when there is mutual interest.

I thought you might be interested in a handful of bills we're keeping a pretty close eye on presently:

HB 3703: This would amend the Board of Higher Education Act to require at least 5 percent of public HIED funding to be performance-based -- in other words, based more on completion outcomes, rather than enrollment inputs. The bill would constitute a ten-fold increase in the percentage of PBF under Illinois law currently -- and has the potential of costing SIU in state support dollars given our strong focus on student access.

HB 4446: This proposal has been termed the College Admission Inquiries Act. If this becomes law, colleges and universities could not ask prospective students during the admissions process about arrests where there was no conviction; about criminal convictions that were sealed or expunged; or about an arrest/criminal accusation that was terminated in favor of the individual. In addition, colleges and universities could not ask about or consider information about an applicant's past convictions. Once a student is admitted, we *would* be able to ask about criminal conviction history for the purpose of offering support through counseling and other services. We also would be able to consider the individual's conviction history in making decisions about their participation in campus activities as a student. However, the legislation also says we could not use any of this information to rescind an offer of admission.

HB 4565: This Public University Uniform Admission Act requires public universities to admit first-time freshman applicants if they graduated with a grade point average in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class in one of the two school years preceding the academic year for which the applicant is applying for admission. There are other requirements as well. This legislative language looks to mirror the "Top Ten Percent Rule" in Texas enacted in 1997. The Texas rule has been under big scrutiny lately due to the Fisher case (which I've talked about previously in this space) -- a U.S. Supreme Court case over the constitutionality of the admissions system at UT-Austin. So ironically, it may disappear in Texas.

HB 5729: This bill creates the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act. It includes provisions concerning postsecondary career expectations; a competency-based, high school graduation requirements pilot program; transitional mathematics courses; reading and communication transitional competencies; College and Career Pathway Endorsements and State Distinction programs; and the administrative rules to implement all of that stuff. While I understand what the legislation wants to accomplish -- and why -- with all that we have going on in the state right now, this is a big and complicated bill that would have to have some substantial funding behind it to get off the ground. And I'm not sure where that would come from...

HB6069: This bill is the Credit for Prior Learning Act. Each public university would have to submit its policies and procedures for students to earn credit for prior learning to the IBHE for review and approval. While SIU has taken no position on the bill, it would at least provide a listing of the types of prior learning documentation that are acceptable and the dates of inclusion through which prior learning credit is allowed. That would be helpful.

As you can tell, legislative proposals like these can be a mix of both positive and not-so-great elements and to sort that all out over 200 active bills -- each of which can add amendments and sponsors on almost a daily basis -- is a Herculean task when the General Assembly is in session.

I will say this, though: One of the things our state does pretty well is to provide an interactive website that allows individuals to track any piece of legislation they desire. If you haven't used the website, play around a little with it at www.ilga.gov and click on the "Bills & Resolutions" link. The "My Legislation" tab at the top, then, lets you build your very own bill tracker to follow developments on whatever bills you're following ... such as SB2743, which will *finally* answer the critical question as to whether your yoga studio is considered a private business and vocational school.

Introducing Our WTH Segment

Like so many of you, I try to keep an eye on developments in higher education -- our "industry" -- from around the country. And if you're like me, some of the stuff you see just makes you scratch your head.

So I've decided to add an occasional section -- not for every column, mind you -- but a fun little thing for every so often to help me figure out what in the ... well, anyway, you get my drift. In text messaging parlance, I'll be calling this new feature Our WTH Segment. I know you've seen other similar acronyms, but let's keep it relatively polite, people.

In this week's installment:

- A U.S. House Select Investigative Panel on Infant Lives now wants to subpoena organizations to release names, institutional connection, and the nature of involvement of all those connected with research that utilizes fetal tissue. I absolutely understand that this is an issue that generates strong feelings, both pro and con. But let's remember that fetal tissue research is legal, and holds great promise for finding cures to a variety of debilitating and life-threatening diseases (multiple sclerosis and Alzheimer's among them). Three organizations, including the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities of which SIU is a member, sent a letter to the panel arguing the release of names with their institutional connections "could well lead to individuals being targeted for harassment or worse." Think about the wide range of research that we do, just here at the SIU campuses that someone or group may take issue with. This is a chilling precedent and has the potential of creating a very slippery slope for those engaged in controversial research or scholarship.
- In Tennessee, the legislature is considering a bill that would allow full-time employees of state colleges and universities to carry guns on campuses with a valid permit. I am in agreement with the Tennessee Board of Regents, which has strongly opposed the bill. It is worth noting that the bill would offer colleges and universities immunity from any potential legal action in the event of an accidental discharge. From a March 30 story in Nashville's *The Tennessean*, "That would mean full-time employees who are a valid permit holder could not file a workers' compensation claim if they shot themselves while on campus." To be frank, the added liability would be the least of my worries. Even in the Old West, the cowboys hung up their holsters when they entered a bar. We'll give the folks in Georgia a little more credit for creativity. They are debating a bill that is referred to as "concealed carry light" on college campuses. Instead of a gun you could carry a taser. Well alrighty then.

A Final Meandering

The last piece for today's column surrounds the growing debate over the type and nature of education we should offer in a university. In the SIU System, and at many institutions nationally, we are preparing our students for career success by providing them with specific skill sets to help them pursue their career goals. But I also think we are united in a commitment to making sure our students have the benefits of a classic "liberal" education to help fire their imaginations and enhance their critical thinking skills.

As we know too well, there is significant pressure for HIED -- particularly in the public sector -- to concentrate itself much more heavily on the acquisition of specific job skills. An article in the online version of *The Chronicle* that's now posted even refers to this skill base as the "New Canon" for the university. There is tremendous pressure currently being exerted by elected officials, policy makers, taxpayers, and other opinion leaders for public higher education institutions to focus on transferable skill outcomes linked to jobs and careers needed in the future.

I have been holding onto an [article](#) from *InsideHigherEd* that appeared in that electronic daily publication last November. I was intrigued by it and figured I could work it into a column someday.

The Montana State University Faculty Senate had rejected a proposed hospitality management program for MSU because the Senate feared it would take resources away from other needs in high-demand, high-quality programs -- such as engineering, agriculture, math, the humanities and social sciences -- to instead support a program that was viewed as more applied or even "vocational" in nature. If you've ever been to Bozeman, you can guess that the proposed hospitality program had strong industry and community support ... so of course the administrators supported it too. And in the interests of full disclosure, I believe I probably would have as well.

Nonetheless, the strength and commitment to the principle -- and practice! -- of shared governance put the brakes on that program at Montana State, a program that by all accounts would have served its region amazingly well and been a success in terms of enrollment.

Safe to say this debate isn't going away anytime soon. Part of the transactional relationship for public postsecondary institutions to continue receiving state support in this fiscal environment will include continuing the development and growth of these career-based degree programs. Will that pressure erode the broad latitude traditionally given to faculty for deciding which programs are allowed to move forward and which aren't? Even well-heeled donors -- both individual and corporate -- now seek to "sponsor" academic programs. (The closest example of that for us may be the new Carle Illinois College of Medicine at Urbana-Champaign.) Can the value of shared governance withstand that kind of force? Should it be allowed to?

I don't know, but I'm certain we'll see many more examples of this play out in the coming years. I believe this: SIU best serves our region, state and nation -- and our students -- by offering a broad array of programs and degrees that enable our graduates to make the best use of their talents in solving the challenges of tomorrow. What those exact programs and degrees are ... will continue to get hashed out on a case-by-case basis.

Randy Dunn

Faces of SIU



Growing up in Ames, Iowa, Joe Schafer dreamed of being a police officer. In fact, he ended up working in a lot of non-sworn capacities for agencies in Iowa and Michigan. And though he never did don a uniform -- he became more interested in research and teaching -- Joe is an important resource for police agencies nationally and internationally, along with students at SIUC.

A member of the faculty since 2000, he has served as chair of the Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice since 2011. He specializes in policing, the future of crime and justice, criminal justice management and administration, policy and program evaluation, police leadership and organizational change.

Joe is a former president of Police Futurists International (PFI), and he is a member of the PFI/FBI Futures Working Group, which focuses on emerging and future trends in crime and policing. He recently was named a member of the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies.

Joe also has served as a visiting scholar in the Behavioral Science Unit of the FBI Academy and the Centre of Excellence in Policing & Security in Australia. Earlier this year, he testified before a Canadian House of Commons committee.

As you would expect, Joe has some insights into recent/current challenges facing law enforcement and the communities the police serve.

“Is there a relationship of mutual trust? Do citizens have reasonable insight and input in the operations of their local agency? Is policing something that is done WITH the public rather than TO the public?” he said. “Many of the agencies that are facing the current challenges most acutely have not enjoyed a strong historical relationship with the community. When a crisis occurs, there are fewer chances and less social capital for the agency to rely upon to help mediate and mitigate that situation.”

The rapid pace of social and technological change over the past few decades is a contributing factor.

“Government agencies of all types, including the police, struggle to keep pace with those changes,” Joe said. “The future of policing is navigating the challenges that reality creates, while capitalizing on the opportunities it also provides to improve the profession.”

In the classroom, Joe enjoys teaching students about the complex nature of crime and justice, especially matters related to policing.

“To the general public, matters of crime and justice are simple and straight forward,” he said. “Upon further examination, what we often see is a lot of complex legal, social, economic, political, cultural and historical forces that shape crime and society’s response to crime. I enjoy helping students learn more about what research tells us about crime and how police organizations and personnel can provide more effective, efficient and equitable services within their communities.”

Thanks, Joe, for sharing your expertise near and far, and in our classrooms.
