



THE SYSTEM CONNECTION

Greetings:

With finals underway and a slew of commencement ceremonies not far behind, SIU is in the midst of one of its busiest times all year — a period that's both exciting and exhausting. That "feeling in the air" on every campus each spring is special, and it somehow reminds many of us who work in academe why we do what we do.

Likely you might figure that I would write this week — in my penultimate column for 2015-16, by the way — about the stopgap funding measure passed almost two weeks ago and signed by the governor on April 25th. And certainly, I will speak to that a little later on.

However, I must admit to having other, more individual considerations on my mind this week that will take the column in a little different direction for me. Regular readers know that I don't use this space very often to talk about personal or family matters, but I'm bending that practice some this time. Today's column will closely parallel one I wrote just over five years ago now — upon the occasion of my first daughter's marriage — when I was working at Murray State. (It was a *weekly* column there, in contrast to my biweekly one here; I guess I've gotten a little smarter over the years, if nothing else.)

So the second of my two daughters is getting married this weekend, and the upcoming event has filled my thoughts this week. There aren't too many more of these Big Life Events left when you're within shouting distance of your sixth decade of life — but this is indeed one. Admittedly, I am experiencing a little bit of melancholy as well — not an unhappy feeling at all, but instead a sort of pensiveness or thoughtfulness before we approach all the goings-on in a couple of days.

It may be that only a parent (or a parent-surrogate who stands *in loco parentis* for somebody getting married) can understand the spiritual aspect of nurturing a life where you watch the first steps taken with arms outstretched toward you ... to that point where the life is now foremost intertwined with someone else. I hope that every one of our SIU students who has yet to tie the knot is blessed with someone who will feel this same way for them when that day comes.

It may be that some of my melancholy feeling also stems from growing notions of mortality that I've noticed have started creeping in a little more often during these major celebrations. As alluded to above, I can well remember both girls' first steps — taken over 30 years ago now — like they happened maybe ... seven years ago or something. In that same interval of time going forward, I'll be

staring as 90 starts to come into focus (I hope!). Trust me, though, that does grab your attention for a minute.

The future son-in-law is a wonderful guy from a great family, and everybody gets along very well. He made the trip down to southern Illinois from Chicago — in the course of a weekday evening, mind you — to formally ask for my daughter's hand in marriage. Of course, I knew what was coming, so I tried to give him the out and save him the trip by hinting we could do this over the phone given our schedules. But he wouldn't bite. You have to respect that. Plus, we have enough in common so we can easily talk about more than just sports or the weather. That's helpful too whenever you add a new family member.

Obviously, I'm looking forward to the party aspect of this weekend — and like so many of you with friends and family scattered around the country, it will turn into a big reunion. The weather forecast for this outdoor soiree, which will be held at an area winery, is perfect so far. (Rain on your wedding day is said to bring good luck, but others assert that is simply an old saw invented to make brides feel better when it rains on their wedding day ...)

I look forward to walking the bride down the aisle, although I'm a little more nervous about the traditional father's toast I will be called upon to do, welcoming everyone to the reception. (I know, I know ... there is some disbelief among you about me ever being hesitant to talk ...) You only have one shot at getting those few words right — being both tasteful and meaningful — and no FOB wants to blow that.

I'm also trying to come up with some piece of poignant advice to leave with the newly married couple as they depart the festivities and thus commence their new life together. I haven't quite decided on that yet, but I've got a couple of ideas. I'll figure it out as I go through the ceremony and watch them ... it will come to me.

Alright, enough on this. I'll be back to my more routine and mundane topics on May 18 — which will close out *The System Connection* for this academic year. For now ... my daughter is getting married ...

A week ago Monday, Governor Rauner signed into law SB2059 that authorized \$600 million of stopgap funding to the state's universities, community colleges, and MAP grants amid the ongoing budget impasse. The \$54.5 million share coming to the SIU System — a chunk of which, including the FA15 semester of MAP reimbursement, has already been pushed out to us — releases pressure on cash flow and does provide that necessary summer "bridge" funding for us to keep University operations sustained and viable through that period. (That's more than what we've seen with some of our sister schools, if you've followed statewide media in the wake of the bill.)

Distribution of funds is scheduled to take place running through July at the latest — but again, the total amount received accounts for only about 30% of a "regular" annual appropriation (except in the case of Chicago State, which got about 60% of its normal take). Obviously, this can't be the end of the discussion because we still need a final budget for FY16 as well as 17! For those who've somewhat cynically said this is all we'll see for the current fiscal year, we must continue our work to prove them wrong and keep holding our elected officials' feet to the fire of the bipartisan pledge to get full budgets enacted.

While last week's action provides some breathing room for those with the "thinnest liquidity and

pressured student markets” — in the words of the public financiers — it doesn’t get us out of the woods. Only something close to a regular budget(s) can do that.

Between now and that last column on the 18th, our staff at the Stone Center will be taking a close look at updated financial projections which I hope we can extend out to the end of the calendar year to get a keener sense of our fiscal position given this latest funding ... assuming we’re still waiting for a budget deal until after the November elections. Once we get a little more comfortable with those numbers, I would hope to share more detail in two weeks about where we go from here.

However — and this may be the most compelling question on everyone’s mind right now — *I no longer anticipate having to move forward anytime this summer with a declaration of financial emergency or exigency*, whether it be for a single campus or the whole system. SB2059 has allowed us to take that consideration off the table temporarily. But we’ll have to be right back in Springfield to get the rest of the loaf, and that is my #1 intention all the way through to the scheduled end of session on May 31 ... and beyond if need be. Even after the *Connection* is done publishing, I’ll make sure to keep you apprised as developments warrant.

Randy Dunn

Faces of SIU



When Marcela Rodriguez earned her medical degree from Libre University in Cali, Colombia, she was named “Most Promising Student” based on attaining the highest cumulative grade point average. Fortunately for us, she initially brought her skills and passion to our School of Medicine when she served her pediatric residency from 2005 to 2008.

She followed her residency with a three-year pediatric infectious diseases fellowship with the Washington University School of Medicine. Then, as she puts it, she came “back home” to Springfield in 2011.

“I was impressed by the mission of the School of Medicine in assisting people with their health care needs through education, patient care, research and service to the community,” she said. “I came here for my pediatrics residency and I loved the program, the people and the friendly environment.”

Marcela is an assistant professor of pediatrics who specializes in infectious diseases. She sees patients ranging in age from newborns to 18 at St. John’s Children’s Hospital, treating them for a wide range of conditions, including fever of unknown origin, complicated pneumonias, osteoarticular infections, meningitis, Kawasaki disease, sepsis and others

“A major benefit of working in infectious disease is that not only I am involved in the cure, I am also involved in the prevention, which is an essential role for any pediatrician,” she said.

“We get consults on patients who are not getting any better after initial treatment. Why isn’t a child getting better? What is causing a persistent fever? I have never been a type of person who can ‘just let things go.’ I am always striving to solve the puzzle and understand the true underlying nature of every disease. The integration of clinical history, physical findings, lab work, and microscopic

examination to formulate a final diagnosis is a puzzle that I always enjoy solving.”

Marcela knows there are parents who are reluctant to have their children vaccinated against various diseases, but she hopes to convince them otherwise. “Vaccines are made by knowledgeable people after very thorough studies,” she said. “We have all the tools to prevent devastating diseases – meningitis, polio, for example. We have seen severe cases that could have been prevented by vaccines.”

In addition to treating patients, Marcela teaches third- and fourth-year medical students as well as residents who rotate through the pediatrics infectious diseases clerkship. She does clinical research in Community Associated *Staphylococcus Aureus* skin infections and in congenital Cytomegalovirus with collaborators at Washington University in St. Louis and the University of Alabama.

“I am part of a great school and I feel my work is appreciated,” she said. “I love working with our students and residents; I enjoy training them.”

Thanks for your commitment, Marcela. Your patients and your SIU family are glad you returned “home.”
