



THE SYSTEM CONNECTION

Greetings:

So ... we're baaack! It does seem a bit odd to talk about the "beginning" of a new term for both SIUC and SIUE this week, when actually, SIU has a "rolling start" that leads us into each new academic year. Pharmacy and dental medicine students have been hard at work at the Edwardsville and Alton campuses respectively for a few weeks now. Law students in Carbondale have a week of classes under their belts already. And if you really want to see a logistical challenge in the annals of academic scheduling, get ready to be impressed by the School of Medicine's master four-year **calendar** for their year-round programs with each class.

But yes, for thousands of SIU undergrads and graduate students -- and the world at large -- this week marks the start. Interestingly, it's not every year that the Edwardsville and Carbondale campuses even start and finish on the same weeks. While each campus sets its own academic calendar, you would think it might be more convenient from a system perspective whenever the two main campuses follow the same semester schedule. It really makes little difference except in the most limited circumstances where there is shared academic programming. Well, that ... and the fact it's tougher for me to decide where I need to be on commencement weekend when an identical schedule is followed.

As I always say in this first column of the year, if you don't get a little excited by the anticipation that comes with a new school year -- especially the enthusiasm conveyed by those first-time freshmen (whose parents are usually either really happy or really sad) -- then maybe another line of work would be more appealing. For those of us fortunate enough to toil in the fields of higher ed, you almost have to work at not having at least some of that energy rub off on you when another fall rolls around.

For our returning faculty and staff -- many of whom on the academic side of the house have been away during the summer months -- we've missed you. I hope the summer months have been rewarding, productive, restful, or whatever you've wanted them to be -- and we are glad to have everyone back safe and sound. And for all our new employees joining SIU this year, let me add my voice to the many I'm sure who have already welcomed you to our corner of the world. We are grateful and proud that you have chosen to share your talents here -- whether that be for a few years on a longer trajectory, or for an entire career. If you are about student success and completion ... developing new knowledge and creative activity ... the stewardship role that great public universities play ... then we are fortunate to have you at Southern Illinois University.

Among those new people at SIUE this fall is Chancellor Randy Pembroke. Randy, who began his chancellorship on August 1, comes to Edwardsville having served as vice president for academic affairs at Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, for the past five years. Randy had a 20-year run at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, where he started as an assistant professor of music education and advanced through the ranks, ending with six years in the deanship of the UMKC Conservatory of Music.

With two degrees in piano performance from SIUE, it is anticipated that the chancellor will liven up any number of parties and events on the Edwardsville campus; what is unknown at this time is

whether he will be placing a tip jar on the top of the piano to offset his campus's previous budget cuts.

As announced last year at about this time, work will commence within the next couple of weeks to launch a national search to select the permanent chancellor for the Carbondale campus. It is anticipated that this important task will take the lion's share of the academic year to come to fruition, with a contract offer made to the selected candidate; the search process utilized will parallel that followed at SIUC during the previous search in the spring of 2015, and will be reflective of extant policy and contract requirements governing selection of a chancellor. With Chancellor Pembroke's hiring, the selection of SIUC's top administrator will complete the staggered approach settled upon by the SIU Board of Trustees a year ago to fill three of the top four administrative jobs in the system (including Dean & Provost Jerry Kruse at the SIU School of Medicine).

What would my biweekly column be without a state budget report?

I considered sending a summer update on this in early July, but the campuses did some internal communication to you then, so I figured there wasn't much more for me to contribute at that point, and any of my musings could wait until we cranked up the ol' *Connection* for another year.

But unless you've been on a desert island without internet these summer months, you are aware that the Illinois General Assembly passed -- and Governor Rauner signed -- what we've taken to referring as a "Stopgap #2" appropriation providing approximately \$106 million to the SIU System and, for all intents and purposes, bridge funding to SIU and our sister public universities through January 2017.

Unfortunately, though, the current level of approved funding remains far below what is necessary to sustain a comprehensive, high-quality program even for another academic year. To put this into the most simplistic perspective possible: In the two stopgap payments we've received in lieu of an enacted state budget (the first stopgap passing last April), SIU will receive only about 80% of its typical annual, *12-month* state appropriation ... but that funding must now cover us for *18 months* (i.e., all of FY16 and at least half of FY17). If you want to say it yet another way: For minimally an 18-month period, Illinois is providing the SIU campuses with a level of state support that is only 53% of what we would have expected given our "normal" FY15 funding. It could go on longer and get worse.

You don't have to be a CPA to divine the fact that this is not sustainable for the Illinois system of public higher education. The operating premise in state government right now may well be that if HIED won't cut its costs (especially administrative costs, which have been a particular target of the governor and other elected officials) and reduce obsolete or non-viable programs, then an alternative approach may instead be to "starve the beast." A member of the legislative leadership even acknowledged this earlier in the year, albeit employing the term "squeeze the beast."

While starving the beast has been long-recognized as a political strategy to reduce government spending by withholding (or in Illinois, not appropriating) revenue ... it is lousy public policy.

And there still remains the problem of revenue for our state, even assuming there exists a political consensus to provide some additional level of state spending for postsecondary education. As of yesterday, the website of Illinois Comptroller Leslie Munger showed a bill backlog for all vendors of the State of Illinois -- not including state agencies like SIU which are owed payments -- of \$8.256 billion. Yes ... that's with a "b".

I'll use the next column on September 7 to go into some additional background on all that, as well as talk more about what this means for the SIU campuses as we head into the new year.

I know I'm running long (nothing unusual if you're a consistent reader here!), but I probably need to mention a growing issue of concern regarding our statewide health insurance program.

You may have seen media reports or even been party to growing discussions in higher education circles statewide about worries over the potential of significantly higher costs for possibly lower health insurance benefits.

The State of Illinois has been in contract talks with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) union. Negotiations between AFSCME and the Rauner Administration broke off about eight months ago with a key disagreement between the parties about whether impasse had been reached. For lack of a better way to explain it, you should also know the health insurance agreement reached in bargaining with AFSCME becomes the “pattern agreement” that covers not just the represented state employees, but all public universities’ employees as well -- since we are also enrolled in the state’s health insurance program.

Now I won’t dive into a primer on Illinois labor law at this juncture, but a declaration of “impasse” has a critical legal meaning. If impasse is truly reached, that status provides authority for an employer (in this case, the State of Illinois) to impose its last, best, and final offer. AFSCME has indicated that it wants to continue negotiating in the belief that the elements of impasse have not been demonstrated, while Governor Rauner’s team has declined further bargaining on the contract, declaring impasse. In June, the Administration requested an expedited ruling from the state labor board as to whether impasse indeed exists.

A spokesperson for the governor’s office previously indicated that the Department of Central Management Services—the state agency which administers the health plan—is “busy developing new, affordable health insurance options to offer all state employees” (*Champaign News-Gazette*, “Possible hike in UI insurance costs a ‘gut punch’”, 6/30/16).

What we believe is the case presently is that the state is developing a multi-tier system for covered employees to determine the level of coverage and premium they can accept. We may potentially see up to four separate tiers of coverage ranging from no additional cost to a doubling of current premiums. All plans would need to meet the “Minimum Essential Care” mandates of the Affordable Care Act and still provide coverage for spouses and dependents.

Further, there is additional concern that any increased premium costs could be retroactive to July 1, the effective date of a new contract agreement with AFSCME. If that becomes the case, we’d have to figure out a way at SIU to handle that situation to mitigate the financial impact on employees as best we could.

That’s really all we know at this time. Keep following your preferred source for state news to get any updates on this -- and of course, as we know more, we’ll provide updated information when it becomes available. My thanks to Summer Murphy and the benefits team from SIUE’s Human Resources shop who shared some of this background in an all-users email to staff last month.

Last thing: In addition to our “Faces” segment -- which yes, I know is the more-highly preferred portion of the *Connection* each time -- we are piloting a short news amalgamation section that you’ll see below. The idea of this is not to gather up articles that you can read in the HIED trade press or other education-focused outlets for yourselves (e.g., *InsideHigherEd*, *The Chronicle*, *Hechinger Report* et al.), but rather, to share broadly focused pieces that are part of the national higher education conversation appearing in well-regarded outlets.

See what you think and give me your feedback.

Lots more I could talk about in this edition given other developments over the summer ... the *Fisher* decision upholding race-conscious admissions ... or the Trump v. Clinton college affordability proposals ... but it’s always good to have some fodder for the coming months.

Randy Dunn

Faces of SIU



We often say -- with good reason -- that serving others is part of our university's DNA. One great example is SIUE's East St. Louis Center, and its Project Success and Latchkey programs, which play a critical role in the lives of our friends and neighbors in that community.

East St. Louis native Janina Turley, who earned her bachelor's degree in Business Administration-Management from SIUE, has worked at the center since 1987. She started out as a project specialist/teacher, and then became director of the Project Success and Latchkey programs.

Those two programs serve the most vulnerable among us -- children. Project Success, which is funded by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, serves children ages 5-14 living in the greater East. St. Louis area. The children are in protective custody or in families that have an open DCFS case. All of the children are referred by DCFS caseworkers.

Project Success operates after school during the academic year and all day during June and July; it serves an average of 70 children per month.

"This program promotes the welfare and safety of each child," Janina said. "We have tutorial services in all disciplines and provide nutritious meals, we promote emotional and physical development, and we provide socialization as well as cultural experiences."

As you would expect from its name, the Latchkey program provides a safe place for children ages 5-12 while their parents are working, in school, or in an educational training program. It operates in East St. Louis' Dunbar School from 3:30 to 6 p.m. during the school year and is staffed by certified teachers. The children receive a daily meal and participate in various activities and field trips. Funding comes from the Illinois Department of Human Services.

These two programs provide a safe and structured child care program for economically disadvantaged, at-risk children.

"By doing this, we will produce healthy, intelligent and well-adjusted students who will appreciate the love and care that they have received from our programs," Janina said. "We make a difference."

That you do, Janina. Thanks to you and your staff for your commitment.

Other Voices in HIED

New York Times: [How Think Tanks Amplify Corporate America's Influence](#)

The Pew Charitable Trusts: [More States Start Funding Colleges Based on Outcomes](#)

Slate: [Forgiving All Student Loan Debt Would be an Awful, Regressive Idea](#)

Good Call: [President Obama: Dean of Higher Education Reform?](#)