



THE SYSTEM CONNECTION

Greetings:

You will note that my column this week is a day later than usual due to Wednesday's Veterans Day observance. Though SIUE and the School of Medicine were open yesterday, SIUC's holiday schedule had the campus closed. Since the Stone Center follows the Carbondale calendar, our "production schedule" was thus affected.

And speaking of schedules, we'll be doing just two more *Connections* after today to close out the fall semester: November 25 and December 9. After a brief hiatus over the winter holidays, we'll pick back up for spring on January 20, 2016. But certainly, if any major developments warrant on the budget front or otherwise during that period, I'll make sure to get email updates sent accordingly.

With SIUC now in the capable hands of Interim Chancellor Brad Colwell, I have been able to again turn my full attention as president to those matters that more impact the entire system. Among those priorities — and especially noted recently by the Board of Trustees — is the ongoing effort to enhance diversity and inclusivity at all of our SIU locations.

I've described for you before that it's serendipitous how events sometimes seem to coalesce at a particular point in time, such that it makes the selection of a topic for this column almost a foregone conclusion. That's been the case this time as well. But at the outset, I should say that I was planning to devote this week's space to a discussion on diversity ... *prior* to the recent events at Mizzou that culminated in the resignations Monday of the University of Missouri system president, in addition to the flagship campus chancellor. A little more on that later ...

The last time I wrote on this topic, in my Feb. 25, 2015 [column](#), I ended it by saying, "The journey never gets completed." Due to the confluence of circumstances alluded to above, this seemed to be an appropriate time to revisit the journey.

One stream in the confluence: A couple of weeks ago, with us meeting at the Edwardsville campus, I brought together our three chief diversity officers for a much-needed conversation to think about some big strategies that could help us be more effective in advancing diversity and inclusivity values across all of SIU. While their official job titles are slightly different across each location, my thanks goes to SIUE's Venessa Brown, SIUC's Linda McCabe Smith, and Wesley McNeese from the School of Medicine in Springfield. I learned a great deal from these three about the challenges they deal with on a daily basis ... the tools they have available ... ways to better target our resources ... and related issues that will help us to organizationally invest toward more diverse and inclusive campuses.

Without getting chapter-and-verse into our very frank discussions, let me say that the ideas generated by our CDOs were many and exciting (to turn a phrase, our words were colliding in mid-air!) — and it was clear that we have a lot of work to do in the coming years for our actions on diversity to catch up with our words.

Another stream: During their meetings in September — as well as in their previous discussions about long-range planning — Trustees expressed a strong desire that diversity be elevated to more of a central element as we finalize a system strategic plan ... our first in 15 years. While diversity has always been a stated value throughout SIU, it clearly became a topic of greater and immediate consideration during the Board's ongoing discussions about the appointment of a new dean for the medical school.

As many readers are aware, that senior-level hire for the School was done absent a search, instead

using a process of campus consultation prior to making a hiring recommendation to the Trustees. While I believe we came to the best decision with the hire (indeed, sometimes the role of presidents and boards is to determine when it makes sense to arrive at a decision in a manner that deviates from general practice), the Board as a whole was keenly concerned that in taking this hiring action by direct appointment, it could suggest that diversity is somehow not a priority for SIU.

That is not their belief, of course ... nor mine ... nor is it the impression that anyone wants to portray. So when Trustees meet on the Carbondale campus on December 9-10, they have instructed me that diversity planning and initiatives are to be a major topic of discussion during their work session time. And as you would imagine, we'll be pulling in our three SIU chief diversity officers to push Trustees' thinking in this regard on projects, assistance, or whatever support can add value from the system level.

I guess the last thing grabbing my attention, and cementing my column topic for this week, was generated from recent items we've all read in the HIED press nationally. There was Yale's announcement earlier this month — many of you may have also seen it — of a \$50 million faculty diversity initiative (yes, you read that right ... \$50 million) that certainly caught my eye. Obviously, we don't have Yale's financial resources, but that does not mean our commitment should be any less. As we figure out those things that can move us in more positive directions toward inclusivity, resources will need to be identified to support efforts on every campus. There's an old saying: You do what you budget for. Well, that's no less true for diversity.

Also, in the November 8 edition of *The Chronicle* was a long feature [article](#), "The Invisible Labor of Minority Professors," which prominently highlighted numerous faculty from the Carbondale campus while explaining the "cultural taxation" that so many faculty of color have to pay. At a small reception earlier this week I by chance had an opportunity to hear directly from faculty just how real this "tax" is (and it hits especially hard on new faculty who are trying to build a tenure record or, if non-tenure, have heavy teaching loads).

I know — the cynics will say that Yale got into the game in such a major way only because Yale students have been protesting strongly about what they view as that administration's indifference to racial incidents on campus. And in Columbia, some may argue the football players' strike is what finally culminated in Missouri's leadership resignations, setting aside the intense student action that had preceded that strike. I'm not aware of all the factors playing out on these campuses; like most of you, what I know of both situations comes from stories in the higher education and mainstream media. But even from a distance, they reinforce the need for us to be culturally aware of, and responsive to, the concerns of *everyone* who calls themselves members of the University Community.

As Linda McCabe Smith reminds me repeatedly: Diversity and inclusivity take work *and* resources, and the commitment must be visible. Without it ... nothing happens.

Randy Dunn

Faces of SIU



In addition to introducing you to colleagues around the system — if you are a regular reader you already know that I also like to use the "Faces" segment of the *Connection* to highlight signature or unique programs that may not regularly capture the spotlight. That certainly applies to the School of Medicine's Physician Assistant Program.

Wayne Mathews is one of the folks who has played an important role in really growing the PA program at our family practice clinic in Decatur. A native of Omaha, Neb., and Navy veteran, Wayne is an assistant professor of family and community medicine. He was recruited to SOM — and Decatur specifically — in 1999 to develop a PA clinical training site there. For several years, he taught our future PAs on a half-time basis, and also ran a rural emergency department in Monticello. As Wayne points out, there were only two physician assistants in Decatur at the time. Today, there are more than 50 ... and most are SIU graduates!

He has been in Decatur full-time for the past three years, and is part of our family medicine residency practice. About 30 percent of his time is devoted to research, mostly in population medicine. Wayne noted that it was from this research that the Downstate Partnership Against Antibiotic Resistance was created in 2014. He explains: "We have participated in collaborative research with the Illinois

Department of Public Health on methods to influence prudent antibiotic prescribing, and we are incorporating it into the Family Medicine and Physician Assistant curriculum.”

Along with his research, Wayne teaches PA students and coordinates their clinical rotations, and he sees patients at the clinic three days a week.

Wayne and his colleagues have developed a first-class program that makes a major difference in the quality of life of our friends and neighbors in Decatur and across the state.

“The PA program has demonstrated a huge impact on the health of Illinoisans, ranging from rural clinics to urban tertiary care hospitals,” Wayne said. “Our program has a very respected reputation, such that when Carle Clinic and Hospital in Urbana developed a system for PA and nurse practitioner students to do clinical rotations, they wanted to pattern it after the SIU program, because our faculty are closely involved with the clinical teaching throughout all of their rotations, and the quality of our graduates was desirable for them to recruit. All in all, I cannot think of a more purposeful and satisfying position than what I am currently doing.”
