



THE SYSTEM CONNECTION

Greetings:

If you read the column last time, you know we're picking up where we left off with our tale of the state's ongoing budget saga.

A week ago today, as I sat in the stately gallery of the Illinois House for the governor's budget address, I was assuming there would be some acknowledgement — a mention — of higher education and the straits we find ourselves in at present ... let alone the difficult situation thousands of economically challenged students are facing given the growing uncertainty about the future of MAP grant funding.

There was nary a word.

I was sure at one point that we would at least get a tip of the hat for holding together the state's system of public higher education through this mess. Well into his speech, the governor was appropriately making his case for righting Illinois' listing fiscal ship, saying that if only a portion of his recommendations were implemented there would be resources for investing in ... and then he ticked off a series of things: schools, human services, infrastructure.

I figured we'd all hear "universities" or "college students" next, but that was not to be. It may have been right about that time that Lee Milner — who was over with the press contingent — took a picture that I ended up posting on my Facebook page the next day. Sitting in a section of the gallery that included the presidents from the U of I and Northeastern Illinois University, Ronda would say that I have my "glare" on. Admittedly, I'm not much of a poker player.

Well, it makes no sense to offer you a big summary of the governor's FY17 budget in this space — you can get that from other media sources — beyond saying that his spending proposal would cut all the public's state support by just over 20% from the pre-16 "base," thus reducing SIU's appropriation by \$40 million next year. And a ten-fold increase proposed for performance funding would have the likely effect of transferring somewhere over \$1 million of SIU support to a couple of other institutions (I'll let you guess which ones those might be) favored under the present PF formula. Finally, to top it all off, a provision buried elsewhere in the budget shifts the pension cost from the state to school districts, community colleges, and universities for any increment of employee salary payments above \$180,000 ... the governor's salary level.

We cannot accede to state budgets that gut SIU by \$100 million over two years.

On the legislative front, in the previous *Connection* I summarized four different bills from both parties and chambers that were battling to make their way through the General Assembly. (As an aside: A present challenge is just keeping straight all the bills, proposals for bills, amendments, trial balloons, and other rumors that are floating around right now — and then remembering who is backing what.) Anyway, one of those pieces of legislation I mentioned — Senate Bill 2043 which would have funded MAP grants, and in so doing provided at least a minimal cash infusion to the universities — did pass in the House, but was vetoed by Governor Rauner this past Friday night. (His veto message is [here](#) if you want to read it.) None of the other bills has moved.

So where does that leave us now? Let's try to break some of this down:

- As of this writing, the state appears no closer to passing a budget for the current fiscal year — which is two-thirds gone now — let alone next year. Of course, in Springfield, that might all change tomorrow.

- If a grand bargain could somehow yet be structured to save FY16, there is not enough time left (i.e., three months) to collect funds from a new or expanded revenue source sufficient to cover much spending for HIED this late in the game. Funny idea: I suppose the state could borrow to make up the full year's operating expenses for us, and help replenish our reserves, but I wouldn't hold my breath on that one.
- Given what we see happening at Chicago State, EIU, WIU, and others not far behind, it is clear the universities and community colleges must get some infusion of state cash to make it to the end of the fiscal year. I think it would be politically impossible to simply appropriate a few million bucks directly to a specific institution in crisis, so we all have to get something. Maybe MAP reimbursement alone could get those schools in greatest crisis a path through to June 30.
- The next big legislative move that gets made may tell us something. Will the House get a sufficient number of Republicans — thinking of a few who have state universities in their districts — to join those HDems willing to override Friday's gubernatorial veto of MAP funding? (The Senate should have the votes right now for an override, without any party cross-overs needed.) Will the Republicans try to push their own "clean" bill that gets us operations money for FY16 and maybe a couple of helpful reforms, such as with procurement? As alluded to earlier in the column, there are so many competing proposals out there already, we'll not be taking official positions or working any bill until it is assigned to a committee in its originating chamber.
- Though Governor Rauner has consistently said he won't sign a budget without the reforms he has demanded, in his address last week he took a more conciliatory tone for working together. Consider the opening line of his speech: "I stand before you today with respect for our co-equal branches of government — acknowledgment of our shared responsibility for the future — and a deeply-rooted desire to work with each and every one of you to right our ship of state." But if the governor is signaling to lawmakers they don't have to give him everything he wants, then will he say what he's willing to drop?

And so it goes.

Budget staffers from across the SIU System convened in Edwardsville Monday to build upon the earlier reductions made at our campuses heading into *this* year — establishing plans to minimally cover the estimated aggregate loss of state support under the Rauner FY17 budget: SIUC, \$25.39 million; SOM, \$9.34 million; SIUE, \$14.24 million; and SYSTEM, \$897,000. Further, I have instructed the campuses to draft additional cut lists that they deem essential to keep the campuses open and core operations underway (supporting as many academic programs as feasible, and ensuring critical student services) through December 31 ... *in the event no state budget deal is arrived at until after the general election in November 2016.*

Implicit in the paragraph above, certainly, is that SIU — along with almost every other state university — is now in full-on fiscal triage mode. We will have to disclose these reduction plans in detail as part of our appropriations testimony that begins in Springfield within the next few weeks. Appropriators have made clear they need to know what is lost from each campus under the governor's budget as proposed ... and so we'll explain all that stands at risk for SIU.

While there won't be time sufficient to do much in terms of collaborative or joint planning with the typical constituency groups prior to the public release of these lists, we will do our collective best to get as much information as possible shared with the campus community, short of hearing it for the first time in the media.

None of this is intended to trump or derail the ongoing program reviews and reprioritization processes currently underway at both the Carbondale and Edwardsville campuses. No matter how and when we come through the state budget battle, decisions emerging from that work can have value not only for supplanting the worst of the triaged cuts we'll be announcing, but also for identifying savings and efficiencies to supplement the regular operations of the campuses.

In the meantime, we can't waiver from our task of slogging through every day to do what we do for SIU to keep it viable and thriving ... not just surviving. When an environment is so uncertain and stressed, that is damn hard to do, both individually and organizationally. But we have to.

What has been most rewarding to see in all of this, though, is the activism everywhere to draw attention to our plight and that of the other public institutions. Thank you to everyone involved in those efforts — and particularly our students! Not to single any group out, but when I was in the Capitol last week, I ran into a group of SIUC Chancellor's Scholars who trekked up there to observe the process

and visit their home legislators on behalf of campus. Three of those students have started a great social media campaign #“I need a budget because...” that you can check out at <https://www.facebook.com/I-Need-a-Budget-Because-1052089341495848/>

Believe me, the cumulative effect of these kinds of efforts does make a difference to elected officials.

As usual, I’ve gone on too long. Let me close with this:

I received a message yesterday from a good faculty friend of mine on the Carbondale campus who I trade thoughts with via email on an occasional basis. Here’s what she sent me:

I know (department) is one program and there are many, many that require attention and decision making. Just feeling a bit lost and overwhelmed right now. Understand I am not trying to add to the burden you and upper administration must carry but know that I am following developments and will continue to do all I can on behalf of my program and SIU.

Indeed, that is all anyone can ask.

Randy Dunn

Faces of SIU



One of the things most folks notice – and remember – about Jeff McGoy is his infectious enthusiasm for SIUC. He is a Saluki through and through, having earned both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in speech communication, and he wants students to have the same amazing experiences he did.

A Cairo native, Jeff is on his second professional “tour of duty” on the Carbondale campus. From 2005 to 2010, he worked in Undergraduate Admissions and New Student Programs; he moved to Shawnee Community College in 2010 to serve as director of Student Support Services. Jeff returned to SIUC in 2013 as assistant dean of students.

Together with many others, Jeff focuses on our students’ welfare. He chairs Saluki Cares, which provides students and their families with assistance in a coordinated way to help students with issues and during crises. More than 2,500 students have benefitted from the program, which connects undergraduates and graduate students with resources to help them deal with virtually any issue they may face. The program started in 2009.

Jeff also oversees SIUC’s Night Safety Transit program, hiring student workers to serve as drivers, dispatchers and department managers. He occasionally emcees open houses and New Student Orientation sessions, and he speaks at sessions on student involvement and engagement for students and their families.

“I enjoy working with others not only on campus but in the surrounding communities,” Jeff said. “I also enjoy empowering our students to learn skills that will assist them in their future endeavors and professionally.”

He calls his experiences at SIUC “very fulfilling and worthwhile,” and he clearly is dedicated to making that happen for current and future Salukis. Thanks, Jeff, for being such a great advocate for our students.
