



THE SYSTEM CONNECTION

Greetings:

For my faithful readership over the past two issues of the *Connection*, you know I'm (thankfully) finishing a three-part series on post-secondary education finance and funding — a sort of poor person's primer on the political economy of higher ed. I won't do any more here to rehash those previous columns, but if you missed them and want to "binge read" to catch up with this final installment, they are archived [here](#).

As I am given to say on occasion, I can predict everything but the future. Nonetheless, the purpose behind today's piece is to force myself to step out there a little bit and speculate some on what the shifting sands of the public higher education funding model — which I did my best to outline in those last two columns — will mean in terms of future impact upon SIU.

Just to provide you advance warning: None of my meanderings that follow are especially insightful or penetrating or even original — but they are surely the natural outcomes of so many of our systems of state support for HIED ... given long-standing patterns of state disinvestment, unstable appropriations, and federal response via financial aid policy.

So in no particular order of effect, here are a few thoughts that come to mind:

- It will be demanded that public universities lower administrative, operational, and subsidy expenses by finding new efficiencies and shared services wherever possible. During my State of the System talks last week, I offered my thinking of how we must do more of this from a system perspective — primarily with "back office" services — to better control costs and plow attendant savings back into the campuses. But there can be savings across a variety of functions, even within the academic enterprise. While it likely wouldn't work for us at SIU given the geographic distance among our various locations, one of the more intriguing [examples](#) of this I've seen recently is the joint Library Service Center between Emory and Georgia Tech as reported by The Lincoln Project, which I described in this column last time.
- As state appropriations continue to shrink, pressure will stay strong for student tuition and fees of the publics to keep increasing, which in turn will force a further reliance on federal grant and loan programs ... which in the end has the effect of pushing HIED pricing even higher. I talked before about how the states have withdrawn from their funding responsibilities over the past 30-plus years. Should anyone be surprised that tuition was then raised to keep the universities afloat? As explicitly stated by Adam Davidson in his article for the September 8 issue of *The New York Times*, "Midtier public schools ... tuition increases are being driven largely by state governments' unwillingness or inability to raise per-student financing." Though as I also mentioned in my SOS address, we've now just about reached the practical and political ceiling on what we're going to be able to do to push tuition much higher.
- We will see a continuing reallocation of resources to follow changing enrollments, and programs, services, and activities will concomitantly get realigned in response to those new enrollment patterns. Of course, the hope is that ALL of our academic, research, and service programs across SIU can continue to expand, with that growth warranting retention of a larger percentage of their income generated going forward. But there is no doubt that budget choices will be made in the future in ways that reprioritize investment around specific opportunities for development and excellence, while always recognizing we must meet the critical needs of SIU as a whole.
- The disparate relationship between the public universities and the best of the private institutions (and I think this will be particularly true in the national research sector) will only

escalate — and we will find ourselves losing ground in the competition to hire the most talented faculty, recruit stronger students, and maintain outstanding physical facilities. To again quote LSU President King Alexander from his recent paper that I cited two weeks ago:

For example, senior faculty at Babson, Wellesley, Santa Clara, and the University of Richmond make more on average than senior faculty at the University of Virginia and the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. Senior faculty at Chapman University in Anaheim are earning more than senior faculty at the University of California at San Diego, UC Santa Barbara, and UC Irvine.

This private school advantage will also play out more generally with regard to per-student spending (Alexander reports a \$30,000 public/private gap based upon 2010 data) — and here in Illinois all of this might directly serve to increase the voices calling for privatization of our statewide public university system. As I've shared with many of you already at different SIU venues, Sen. Bill Brady of Bloomington has indicated that he will run a privatization bill during the Spring 2016 legislative session (which no doubt will be the subject of one or more future columns in this space!).

- Entrepreneurial strategies and strategic partnerships will gain even greater currency as we look to business and industrial enterprises; municipal governments (e.g., Saluki Way at SIUC); other universities and large nonprofits, such as hospitals or museums (e.g., Memorial Center for Learning and Innovation at the School of Medicine in Springfield, as you will see referred to below in the “Faces” profile for this week); high-end donors, be they individual or corporate; and numerous other approaches to broaden our resource base. Included in all this, too, will be a much more liberal consideration of alternative sources of income for increased revenue generation.

So we are indeed entering a Brave New World. I feel certain that we're going to witness here in Illinois all of the trends outlined above at some point — we are right now! — but what I'm not so sure of is the exact form or fashion these fundamental changes may take. They will unfold in front of us over the years to come. Our challenge will be to face these major disruptive changes in a way that gives confidence to the citizens and taxpayers of our state to not only maintain, but maybe even someday to again *enhance*, their investment in Illinois' vital system of public higher education.

And now: Two quick items if I may...

--- I would be remiss if I didn't take just a moment to thank the many of you in the SIU System who took time out last week to be present at one of my State of the System addresses. I didn't expect the numbers to be as large as they were at each of the locations, and I am appreciative of the attention to the big ideas I did my best to share with you. I may change the approach or format up from year to year — we'll see — but thank you to those who provided follow-up comments, ideas, and words of encouragement.

--- There has been no movement — none, zero, nada, zip — to unfreeze the state budget stalemate over these last two weeks. Neither the Illinois House nor Senate is scheduled to convene in full session again until late October. Advocacy efforts among all the public universities individually and collectively continue unabated to move HIED funding off dead center. While the public presidents and chancellors have met as a group with the legislative leadership, and continue to provide testimony and evidence whenever requested (in fact, I'll be appearing in front of the Senate Higher Education Committee when they meet at John A. Logan College tomorrow), our group's opportunity for a face-to-face meeting with the governor will take place in about three more weeks. Meanwhile, all of the institutions have critical choices to make in the days ahead as we prepare for the spring semester.

Randy Dunn

Faces of SIU

After my State of the System address last week at the School of Medicine in Springfield, I visited the Memorial Center for Learning and Innovation on the Memorial Medical Center Campus. Although common knowledge in Springfield, SIUC and SIUE colleagues may not be familiar with our partnerships with Memorial and St. John's Hospital. These are vital to our students' training, and the new center — it opened in May — provides SIU medical residents and students, Memorial staff and community health partners opportunities to develop and strengthen their clinical skills and knowledge.



In fact, Chris McDowell calls the center “a transformative space.” I can safely say that’s an expert opinion – for the past three years, Chris, associate professor in the Division of Emergency Medicine, served on a team that developed the center. He was named medical director last year and along with overseeing the SIU components there, he provides content expertise in medical education and simulation.

As he points out, our School of Medicine has been internationally recognized for its pioneering work in medical education. Memorial’s new center, he says, adds “an exciting platform to continue this heritage of educational innovation” and is a great example of the Memorial Health System’s commitment to the SIU School of Medicine.

Now, Chris adds, “It is incumbent upon us to use this building to transform and accelerate medical education.”

Chris is a proud alum of our School of Medicine, earning his degree in 2005. He spent three years at the Indiana University School of Medicine where he served an emergency medicine internship and residency. Chris returned to the SIU School of Medicine in 2008 as part of the team that developed a new emergency medicine residency. The program recently graduated its third class – it has six residents for three years. Chris, who is program director, says it has been “tremendously rewarding to watch our graduates join our faculty and even join the emergency medicine community in Southern Illinois. These graduates are truly fulfilling the School of Medicine mission.”
