



THE SYSTEM CONNECTION

Greetings:

As was the case here last time, the column this week will once again be a “potluck” of items — covering a couple of issues about which I’ve felt compelled to weigh in. The next time I’m in this space, then, I’ll work to get more focused on a sole topic! For now, though, here are some not-unrelated things I’d like to touch upon...

Many on the academic side of the house know that in 2013, Illinois P.A. 98-0295 — the Open Access to Research Articles Act, became law. The idea behind the legislation was to promote access to research produced by faculty at public universities as widely as possible, through open access sources. Based upon this Act, the SIU Board of Trustees adopted a system-wide policy in December 2014, focusing on faculty scholarship reported in research articles. Our policy was based on the many months of work by a special task force — with strong faculty representation — that was organized by the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

Since passage of the SIU policy, I have been given to understand that there may be some organizational push in various quarters of our campuses for faculty to publish only in open-access sources (i.e., that waivers would not be “helpful” in tenure and promotion decisions, or that there would be ongoing review of what number of waivers were obtained by which faculty members). I don’t know how widespread that information may have become, but let me say here that participation by faculty never precludes a faculty member from claiming a waiver for any *or all* of his or her articles — a position that has been consistent regarding the law. Contribution — or lack thereof — to open access databases should not be a factor in determining merit, promotion, or tenure. Faculty retain the responsibility for determining and subsequently publishing in the most appropriate venue for their research.

So yes — our OA policy notes that faculty who publish in places that do not provide open access should file a waiver prior to publication. But this requirement is not meant to be onerous — and can be a one sentence memo to the head of the academic unit simply indicating that the publication venue (which is accepting your manuscript) does not allow open sourcing of its publications. An online form for waivers is also to be made available by each campus as well, pursuant to the policy. That’s all there is to it.

Certainly, SIU encourages each faculty member to consider whether an open-access source is available to support your work. This past week, in fact, I received a lengthy letter (along with my colleague public presidents) from the Association of American Publishers promoting opportunities for institutions to work with publishers to develop and implement OA options that leverage existing infrastructure and tools. One of those is CHORUS (www.chorusaccess.org), an initiative launched in 2013 to deliver public access to research articles reporting on U.S.-funded research. In the future, a shared repository among multiple (or all) Illinois HIED institutions could be contemplated — though numerous implementation problems forestall that for now. At any rate, these kinds of approaches might eventually provide good OA venues without increased costs to the universities. However, faculty members should not feel coerced in terms of open-sourcing policy for publication outlets they may decide to utilize.

If, by some chance, the SIU policy proves to be in any way a deterrent to tenure and promotion decisions, I would expect the VPAA Office to bring together — per the policy — appropriate constituencies to examine and recommend any necessary change.

And speaking of research...The federal government's historic investment in basic research has led us to advanced discoveries and new technologies that have become a part of everyday life for all of us (e.g., the Internet, GPS, etc.). Yet, sadly, in spite of the tremendous ROI (return on investment), we are at the stage now where we can no longer take for granted public support of innovative research. Whether talking about just the basic research investment — or all federal expense for R&D — we are at as low a level of research support from the feds as we've seen in nearly a dozen years. Given the commitment of Congress to continuing austere budgets, I don't see anything on the horizon that changes this landscape very soon.

This changed funding dynamic means a couple of things for us at SIU. First, we are going to need to keep calling upon our donors, supporters and other philanthropists in even bigger ways to fill the breach given the ever-shrinking federal research dollar. The role of our affiliated university foundations becomes increasingly important in backstopping funding gaps for research that leads to discovery and innovation...for advanced technologies...improved economic competitiveness...and longer lives. The fact that our donors lend their efforts to helping basic and applied research at SIU is a point of pride for us, but it can't replace government support for that work.

So — additionally — SIU will need to become much more aggressive than it has in recent years in being visible and strongly advocating for support with both elected officials and agency personnel in Washington. The era of "directed appropriations" (read, earmarks) has largely disappeared for universities like ours across the country. As such, we must rely much more on the assistance and counsel of legislative directors, agency liaisons, appropriations staffers and others to keep us in the game on federal research funding. Fortunately, we have a good network of SIUC and SIUE alums working on Capitol Hill. Interestingly, as you would imagine, the University of Illinois has always had a staff person in D.C.; however, you may be surprised to

learn that both NIU and Illinois State have moved recently to hire a federal liaison as well. We have reworked our own staffing within the system's Office of Governmental and Public Affairs to ensure the ability to advance SIU's federal interests on a continuous basis in Washington as well.

SIU cannot put itself in a position where we lose any competitive edge for federal support versus similarly situated institutions. When that happens, our researchers, scientists and others who have built a track record of success at winning federal grant dollars take their talent to other universities. I view it as a critical element of my job to articulate the case of why ongoing and increasing federal investment in the research we conduct across all of SIU's locations is essential.

And finally, speaking of funding...By the time the next *Connection* column comes out, we will all have heard Governor Rauner's first budget address and had a chance to review his spending blueprint for FY16.

Discussions on the campuses maybe have seemed to go quiet on this front for the past couple of weeks — after running through a variety of budget drills on what a 20% cut in state appropriations would look like...and then what a "maintenance budget" would look like...and still later being asked to simply identify whatever amount of current-year state approps we had available to set aside in reserve for stop-gapping Illinois's immediate budget crisis for the remainder of this fiscal year (through June 30). With our sister public universities, we identified about 1% for such a reserve, and that set-aside will not substantively impact operations of any SIU campus for this spring...assuming that 1% holds.

However, do not get lulled by that figure to cover us for the remainder of this year — it is always possible the Governor's Office of Management and Budget will come back to us, as we keep hearing growing discussions of "reallocations" and the governor's use of "emergency powers" to solve the FY15 problem; indeed, some state agencies will exhaust all appropriated funds (for functions such as child care, rehabilitation services, and more) within a very few weeks, so something will have to give. And once we actually hear the budget speech on February 18, we may be back hard on the trail of identifying cuts to address a drastic 10-20% loss of state support. It's not *Chicken Little Redux*: The groundwork that has been done on the campuses thus far largely by our finance and budget staffers — to have some internal working lists of prioritized reductions — unfortunately may not be in vain once we hear what Mr. Rauner proposes.

My guess is that I'll have a topic for the next column...

Randy Dunn