



THE SYSTEM CONNECTION

Greetings:

As this is my first *Connection* column in more than a month — and my inaugural one for 2015 — let me start by giving a welcome to all for the new year and the new academic term. I hope you enjoyed the holiday break with family and friends, and had some opportunity to recharge your batteries in preparation for that long spring semester stretch now before us.

Though we have a variety of challenges to work through together — not the least of which will be financial, given the straits of the State of Illinois budget — 2015 still holds great promise for all three of our campuses ... primarily thanks to your passion and commitment to our students and the region we serve.

The column this time is a kind of potpourri (which I will do on occasion), and may run a little longer than usual (so kudos to everyone who sticks it out to the end), but I need to 1) seek the input of the broad SIU community on a couple of Board of Trustees-related matters, and 2) provide an update on an Executive Order recently issued by Gov. Bruce Rauner.

This past fall, our Board indicated its desire to review the reporting relationships of the system's four "first-professional" schools: Medicine, Law, Pharmacy and Dental Medicine. For a number of reasons, and considering the distinct scope and operations of these academic units, the Trustees have asked for an analysis and recommendations that the dean of the School of Medicine be a direct report to the System president, and that the deans of Law, Pharmacy and Dental Medicine report to their respective chancellor. Presently the medical dean reports to the SIUC chancellor, while the other deans report to their provosts.

It is probably helpful, for a moment, to talk specifically about the potential change in reporting for the School of Medicine. The change, if enacted, would do nothing to alter other organizational and governance aspects of the SOM. It would not create a free-standing medical campus, nor change its structure or function; it would remain a unit of the Carbondale campus as it is now with respect to its operating and support systems. No staff or programs would relocate due to this altering of the reporting line. Rather, the magnitude of the SIU Healthcare business — a \$100 million operation — and such elements as the in-depth relationships with multiple hospitals, the interface with municipal government, and the extreme regulatory environment, all contribute to the continuous involvement of the president and the president's office in the ongoing affairs of the School of Medicine.

Toward the end of enhancing and informing its deliberations on this potential reporting change, the SIU Board of Trustees has requested impact statements from any internal and external constituencies,

groups and individuals affected by changes in the reporting lines of the deans of our first-professional schools. The Board is desirous of receiving as much guidance and comment as it can — both pro and con — in regard to this matter that would impact both the SIUC and SIUE campuses. All statements, letters, comments, thoughts, advisory votes or other communication received from all parties will be included as part of the record as a recommendation comes back to the BOT for decision making later this spring.

The Trustees and I thank you in advance for taking the time to review the impact of these possible actions. All written communication (email and attachments are fine) can be directed to my office or to that of Misty Whittington, executive secretary to the Board of Trustees. Please clearly indicate identifying and other contact information on whatever documents you may choose to send forward in response to this request.

Again, the only change proposed here is in the reporting relationships; all four schools will remain administrative units of SIUC and SIUE, and their operations will proceed in accordance with that — no matter how the Trustees may vote on the reporting lines question.

Even more of your advice and comment is needed: The Trustees also are interested in hearing from you regarding a comprehensive planning process they have underway. It has been a dozen years since any sort of system-wide long-term or strategic plan has been in place. Some of the more-veteran SIU faculty and staff may recall the *2020 Vision* plan that was advanced in 2002 — developed for the SIU System by a national panel of leaders in higher education, business and government. While that plan was relevant for its time, our circumstances ... and reality ... at SIU are now very different, and we have needed to respond and reposition ourselves to different regional and state needs, as well as to a changing national conversation surrounding HIED.

Our Trustees earlier determined that — to get out of the gate and start things moving again on planning — they would function as a committee-of-the-whole to put an initial “work plan” in place to guide what they believe to be their most important efforts and initiatives over the course of the next couple of years. Over time — and once they get some tangible progress underway — the Board is committed to then expanding to a more inclusive and deliberative process for the next iteration of a System plan. But for now, I can tell you there was a strong desire on the part of our Board to start somewhere in fulfilling this important governance function for the near-term. I, for one, applaud their returning focus on planning and improvement processes ... it is among the most critical work that any governing board undertakes.

A working draft of the BOT’s new *Strategic Improvement Plan* is now available on the Board’s [website](#), and you will note a new web presence for the system office in the process of doing that review. Let me digress here by offering my appreciation to SIU’s Governmental and Public Affairs Office in Springfield, working with folks at both SIUE and SIUC, for bringing the BOT’s site (and mine as well) into the 21st century.

The improvement plan link is on the left-hand side of the page and when you open it, what you’ll find is a document that is substantive yet concise. Remember, it is in DRAFT form and is a plain-looking, text-only document for now. In part incorporating extant Board policy, it has a mission statement, a statement of scope, values, a brief explanation of the larger three-level planning process we will use in the System office, and then four fundamental strategic themes that will guide our efforts: Promoting

Student Satisfaction and Success, Innovating to Transform our State and Region, Building a Stronger System, and Developing Our People and Our Places. More specific goals are then listed under these themes. Specific action steps and some general reporting metrics will be developed once the Board adopts a final version of the plan.

Since accommodating this “rapid restart” of the system-level planning process necessarily required a heavily Board-directed plan to begin, the Trustees need your review and comment — good and bad — about any or all aspects of the draft. As with the call above regarding the first-professional schools, written communication can be sent by external or internal constituency bodies, interested groups or individuals to myself or Misty in whatever form is convenient.

Please provide your input for both the first-professional schools’ reporting change and the strategic improvement plan draft no later than Friday, March 20 — and don’t hesitate to contact my office if you have questions. I anticipate the Board will take up these matters (and as always will allow for public participation and testimony accordingly) at its regular meeting on April 16 at the Edwardsville campus.

A final note (for those who have hung in this long): Many of you I’m sure had noted Gov. Rauner’s Executive Order 15-08, which was issued on Jan. 12 and covered directives related to procurement, property, contracts, personnel, travel, spending for essential operations, and other issues. Subsequent guidance from the Governor’s Office of Management and Budget made explicit that the Executive Order “applies to all ... community colleges, universities, and any other entity to which an appropriation has been made in the Fiscal Year 2015 budget.”

SIU has been seeking clarification from GOMB, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, state government staffers and others on many of the details related to meeting requirements outlined in the EO. But until campus administrative and fiscal officers could get some better direction from us at the system level, I have been telling anyone who has asked to use your professional discretion and best judgment in response to the governor’s order as you continue in your day-to-day operations. However, I anticipate having a directive or some sort of clearer guidance to share from my office within the next couple of days, which we will be sending to a wide variety of campus leaders. Given the way we handle our budgeting generally on the campuses — and the source of funds for numerous expenditures (local income versus state appropriations) — I believe we will be able to show a high degree of compliance with 15-08 without drastically impeding our operations throughout this spring.

Enough said I think ... until next time!

Randy Dunn