



THE SYSTEM CONNECTION

Greetings!

All of us who work for the SIU system have seemingly survived the opening of school for yet another fall — kicking off what I hope will be a rewarding and enriching 2014-15 academic year. For those of you (more likely on the academic side of the house) who may have more recently returned to campus from an idyllic summer break filled with fun and excitement — or possibly with research...writing...summer teaching...consulting...practicing...or other work — then welcome back. And for those of you who, like me, labored throughout the summer months on SIU's behalf, I hope you were at least able to get some time to take advantage of the season in whatever way you enjoy most. Even for all of us on 12-month appointments — though we bemoan another summer's approaching end — there is still a sense of renewal that comes with the start of a new term as our students make their way to campus and we all fall back into the familiar routines.

That's a benefit for all of us who have the good fortune to work in a higher education setting — the regular rhythm of the academic calendar offers each one the opportunity to reset...or even reinvent.

So you may have figured out at this point that I'm starting a column — on a biweekly basis for now — for all SIU System faculty and staff. Sometimes what you may see in this space could turn out to be more prosaic (lacking imagination or excitement) than prolific (marked by abundant inventiveness or productivity)! No matter, I think it's still critical in my role to share information, provide updates, report good news, break bad news — and even offer opinion sometimes — to all of us who “are” the university. I have a strongly held belief, honed over my years of serving in different kinds of administrative leadership roles: **Communication** is the lifeblood (other writers refer to it as the “mother's milk”) of any well-functioning organization. As System president, I'm going to continue looking for a variety of ways to fulfill that responsibility I have for our organization...SIU.

You can see from the template being used to deliver this missive to your Inbox that I'm calling the column *The System Connection*. More than being a not-so-catchy name, though, this label bespeaks the fact that most of the time I'll be focusing on System-wide issues and items of interest or concern that cross all of our SIU campuses and locations. Please rest assured this will not be a news amalgamation site, reporting on various campus events or happenings. That news is important no doubt, but it can already be had from numerous other sources if you are so inclined.

Rather, this will be a means for me to talk to the broader university community about myriad things that impact us all...well, most of the time anyway. I've been writing a similar type of employees-only column in every position I've had for the past decade. It's funny, but the single column that I received the most feedback on ever, bar none, was a column I wrote back in March 2011 as I was preparing to marry off

my first daughter. That column had not one thing to do with university goings-on — nonetheless it was apparently the most popular piece I had ever written! Maybe there's a lesson in that, and so sometimes I'll just write about the ebb and flow of life itself...when the mood strikes me.

For now, *The System Connection* will simply be my column and maybe a few other odds-and-ends thrown in on occasion. Back in the day — a goodly number of years ago now — the System used to publish a newsletter in hard-copy format, the *Focal Point*. Some of you will remember it. That earlier publication included such standards as a Board of Trustees report, summaries of new books released by the SIU Press, Illinois Board of Higher Education news, and other items of that ilk. It may be that at some future point, the *Connection* can expand in a similar way...we'll see where all that leads.

Too, I will sometimes use this space to highlight a particular faculty or staff member at one of our many locations around the state. Today's note in that vein is a sad one...marking the passing of distinguished scholar and a longtime physics professor at SIU Carbondale, F. Bary Malik. I knew Bary from my time previously as a prof on the campus — and he epitomized faculty leadership. There will be a memorial service this Saturday, Sept. 13, at 11 a.m. in the Rotunda Room on the third floor of Morris Library for anyone who may wish to attend. Sympathy from the SIU family is extended to Dr. Malik's family members.

And finally, before I lose your attention in my inaugural column, let me mention a last few items. In the spirit of wanting more communication instead of less, I use Facebook (Randy J. Dunn) and Twitter (@SIUPresident) to report and comment on all-things-SIU. I maintain just one Facebook account for family and friends, in addition to the SIU stuff that's put up, so be prepared to see a little bit of everything there if we "friend" one another. Twitter for me is almost solely for postings that are job-related, though I must confess I'm not as diligent about tweeting as I should be. I think it's sort of a generational thing, but I'll pledge to get better in using it for various updates on SIU-related topics. Also, later this fall, we're hoping to have a re-do underway of the System's web presence — starting with the home page, my page, and that of the Board of Trustees. Some renovations to other pages for units within the president's office will follow from there.

If you have any ideas for future columns, or simply want to send me an email, please don't hesitate to do so at rdunn@siu.edu. (I read all of my own email.) I'm usually not at a loss for things to report to you on here, but if you think of current, System-focused topics that hold potential for interest across the campuses, let me know. You may read about your idea in a future column...

Ronda and I want to extend our gratitude to so many of you for the tremendous "welcome home" we've received at all kinds of events and venues since assuming this job in May. The kindness shown has touched us both and we are appreciative of all the comments, notes, and calls that were shared. Thank you for what you do for SIU!

Randy Dunn