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Governor Pritzker Appoints Dr. Deborah Barnett to SIU Board of Trustees

Carbondale, Ill. — The Southern Illinois University Board of Trustees is pleased to announce that Illinois Governor JB Pritzker has appointed Dr. Deborah Barnett to serve on the board for a six-year term. Dr. Barnett, a lifelong resident of Southern Illinois and advocate for the region's growth and vitality, brings decades of experience in economic development, higher education, and workforce innovation to the board.

Dr. Barnett currently serves as executive director of **Southern Illinois Now (SI Now)**, a regional hub for economic development covering the southernmost 17 counties of Illinois. Since its founding in 2022, SI Now has focused on supporting and expanding businesses, strengthening the regional workforce, and showcasing Southern Illinois as a destination for economic opportunity and investment.

"We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Barnett to the Board of Trustees," said Phil Gilbert, Chair of the SIU Board. "Her deep roots in the region, combined with her leadership in workforce development and economic innovation, make her an exceptional addition to the board as we continue advancing the mission of SIU."

Dr. Barnett is a two-time graduate of Southern Illinois University, holding both a master's and doctorate in Workforce Education and Development. She also earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and completed the prestigious Delta Regional Authority Executive Leadership Program at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Prior to her current role, Dr. Barnett served as director of business incubator programs and associate director of the SIU Research Park in the Office of Innovation and Economic Development. Under her leadership, the university's incubator program achieved record-breaking growth, reaching 100% occupancy with a waiting list — the first time in the incubator's 30-year history to operate at full capacity.

"It is an honor to be appointed to the SIU Board of Trustees," said Dr. Barnett. "As a proud alumna and lifelong resident of Southern Illinois, I look forward to working with my fellow trustees to further SIU's mission and ensure the university continues to be a catalyst for opportunity and progress throughout our region and beyond."

Dr. Barnett's appointment reflects Governor Pritzker's continued commitment to advancing higher education and regional development across Illinois. Her appointment is pending confirmation by the Illinois Senate.

About Southern Illinois University System

Southern Illinois University is a nationally recognized public university system committed to education, research, and community service. With universities in Carbondale and Edwardsville, SIU serves students from across Illinois and beyond, preparing them to make meaningful contributions in their careers and communities.