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New Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs named



SIUE photo

Dr. Jeffrey Waple.

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Segue/Logan Cameron |

In this week's segment of Segue, SIUE Interim Chancellor Dr. Stephen Hansen hosts new Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Jeffrey Waple, PhD.

Their discussion introduces Waple in his new role, focuses on goals he has for the University – both present and future, the evolving face of the student population and recruitment methods, new projects that are in the works, and how he plans to further the bond between students, faculty and other members of the campus community.

The SIUE leaders present several statistics as they relate to University growth, campus diversity, academic success and student retention. Hansen's infectious personality presents itself in several instances, making light-hearted remarks toward Waple such as "Let me thank you for calling me common," and "I know you're not a very good dancer, and I know you aren't a very good soccer goalie, either."

A Cincinnati native, Waple came to SIUE from Northern Kentucky University (NKU), having served the Cincinnati-based University for seven years. Waple has worked professionally in higher education for 22 years, having progressively served in similar positions at five major universities.

Waple's career has been driven entirely by student involvement, having served as an assistant director at Illinois State University, associate director of dining and housing at Bowling Green State University, director of campus life at Clara University, dean of students and assistant vice president for student engagement at NKU, and now vice chancellor of student affairs at SIUE.

In this week's show, Waple, who officially began his duties in July, expresses his excitement about joining SIUE's student community, while also discussing goals and challenges of implementing new initiatives to improve student retention and academic success.

Waple explains his smooth transition to SIUE, crediting its similarities to NKU and explaining that the familiarity of his duties made the job change rather easy. His appointment brings fresh ideas and perspective to the SIUE community in the area of student involvement, stating that he brings a new motto that his division has quickly internalized: "Make a positive difference in the life of a student."

He and his team have ample opportunity to do just that, touting a laundry list of campus departments for which Waple assumes responsibility. "I oversee traditional student affairs, general student engagement, student services, the Kimmel Student Involvement Center, the Morris University Center, Dining Services, Textbook Services, University Housing, Campus Recreation, the SOAR (Student Opportunities for Academic Results) program, Disability Services, Health Services, Counseling Services, The Alestle campus newspaper, Student Government, student conduct, student fee processes, the Early Childhood Center and the vice chancellors' office," said Waple. Certainly, the new appointee has numerous resources to aid in the development of new programs and student services which will help to enhance the campus community and the overall quality of student experiences.

Waple discusses several large projects that are currently within the scope of his initiatives. Those major decisions include renovations of the Morris University Center, relocation of SIUE Textbook Services into the Morris University Center, expanding field space and installing artificial turf at SIUE's Rec Complex, and introducing new programs, which cater to the underserved student populations, which are becoming more prominent on campus.

"The goal for the Morris University Center is to open more space for meeting areas, bring in textbook services and connect it with the bookstore in some way, and provide more modern dining facilities," he explains. "It's an exciting project that involves the entire campus.

"We will be creating 'town halls,' if you will, of faculty, staff, community members and students and asking 'what should this new building look like? What should be in it? What needs to be done and what needs to be discontinued? Do we need any more food franchises on campus?' Things of that nature."

Waple hopes to generate additional institutional revenues through the installment of artificial turf, providing a more attractive opportunity for sports summer camps and conferences, while also catering to the needs of SIUE's rapidly growing campus recreation and club sports population.

“As for recruitment, our University just touted its largest African American enrollment in history and our largest Latino enrollment,” he describes. “Further, more than 60 percent of SIUE students are first generation students, and 400 students may be ‘at risk.’

“There’s also a growing LGBTQ population on campus. We need people who can come in and serve as resources to those communities, and we must develop programs and services around them to improve student retention and engagement.”

On the hottest of topics, Hansen and Waple discuss the new vice chancellor’s unique and unorthodox approach to engaging SIUE students, which they feel will quickly enhance the sense of community that surrounds SIUE students on a daily basis. A man who’s known for his YouTube video dancing with freshmen students during Freshman First-Night, Waple professes “I love it when faculty and staff have an ‘ah-ha!’ moment when they come in contact with students and engage with students and realize ‘this is it; this is why we’re here.’

“I really want to encourage faculty and staff members to take a walk across campus. Get out of your office, walk across campus on a nice day, see our students and engage them in their environment. Too often, we want them to come to us, and we don’t go to where they are.

“Instead of having faculty hours in the offices, why don’t we have them in the quad? Or in the Morris University Center? Or somewhere else? We’re all here for the same goal: to help students succeed, get them involved, help them to graduate and lead them toward successful lives.”

Hansen supports him by stating, “Our sense of community on campus is so strong, because we allow people. We invite people. We all belong, feel wanted and feel part of it.”

Tune in to WSIE 88.7 FM every Sunday at 9 a.m. as weekly guests discuss issues on SIUE’s campus.

By Logan Cameron, SIUE University Marketing & Communications