

Meet SIUE Chancellor Pembrook on WSIE



SIUE Chancellor Randy Pembrook

Welcome back, Segue! Southern Illinois University Edwardsville will kick off the 2016-17 season Sunday, Sept. 18, at 9 a.m. on WSIE 88.7 FM, as College of Arts and Sciences Dean Greg Budzban, PhD, extends a warm welcome to SIUE alum and new Chancellor Randy Pembrook, PhD.

A first generation college student who grew up in rural Greenfield, Pembrook brings an interesting perspective to the SIUE administration as an area native. Upon graduation from Greenfield High School, Pembrook received his associate's degree in music from Lewis & Clark Community College before transferring to SIUE, where he received both his bachelor's and master's in music education.

Pembrook went on to obtain a doctorate in music from Florida State University. He was a faculty member at FSU for several years before moving on to the University of Missouri – Kansas City (UMKC), Baker University and Washburn University to pursue a career in higher education administration. He credits his academic and professional successes to the superb interactions he had with faculty mentors across institutions.

“Attending SIUE was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made,” Pembrook shares. “It turned out to be a great fit for me.”

Pembrook has made quite an unusual ascent through the administrative ranks. Listen this weekend to hear of the interesting events that transitioned his career toward returning to SIUE.

Having now built an impressive vitae in administration, Pembrook received a wealth of knowledge in his time at UMKC, where he gained experience as an assistant professor, associate professor, department chair, associate dean, dean, faculty senate representative and faculty representative to the University of Missouri System president's office. He served as provost at Baker University and as vice president for academic affairs at Washburn University.

“I’ve served in a lot of different roles, which has been a truly rich experience for me,” Pembrook says. “They were all quite helpful as I think about university life, university work and university politics.”

Pembrook discusses the special relationship he has with SIUE, drawing upon many similarities between himself and the University.

“This campus was started in 1965, so I arrived on campus about 10 years into the university's life,” he explains. “SIUE was chartered in 1957 – about the time I was born. That's extremely young for a university. It's ironic for me to think about all the things I went through while aging and maturing, and the University did, too!

“When I arrived in 1976, the central part of the campus existed. Rendleman Hall, the Morris University Center, Dunham Hall, Science East, Lovejoy library, Founders Hall, Peck Hall and Alumni Hall were here –but that was basically it. There was a live cougar on campus – Chimega.

“When I left SIUE in 1980, I came back to campus once in 1985, and again for the interview in 2016. I was looking around, and it was interesting – some places were almost exactly like I remembered them, while other places were completely gone. So, there were a lot of changes when I came back in 2016. All of the residence

halls, the Vadalabene Center, the childcare center, the SIUE Athletics intramural facilities and the Metcalf Theater are all new experiences for me.

“Everything has grown – the trees, the quad – student enrollment has grown dramatically, and the reputation of the University has grown. The University is in a much better place now – a higher profile than it was when I was here.”

Pembroke further discusses the characteristics of SIUE that set his alma mater apart from others.

“When I applied for the position, I obviously liked the thought of coming home,” he says. “My family is still in the area, so that was a draw for me as well.

“But what I was really excited about is that SIUE has something that not a lot of places have: location in a beautiful, suburban environment, but the campus itself is only about 20 minutes from downtown St. Louis. We have 2,600 beautiful and spacious acres in a suburban area, complete with gardens, trees and wonderful open spaces – that’s just astounding, for a university campus.

“St. Louis is so important to the future of this institution, because it’s a metropolitan base. So, there are a number of people we can serve. It also has wonderful opportunities for student internships and field experiences, and the ability to interact with community leaders. Having all of that just 20 minutes away from our beautiful campus gives us the best of all worlds. The University is positioned well to interact with leaders and do exciting things.”

The administrators also weigh in on the evolving relationship between SIUE and the Carbondale campus, as well as unique opportunities the institutions have to service the vast southern part of the state.

“In the middle of the 19th century, people at the Carbondale campus had a vision to plant a seed in the Metro East environment,” Pembroke explains. “From that, we see the SIU School of Dental Medicine in Alton, and a vibrant East St. Louis Center doing important things in the community.

“As SIUE matures, it has a little different role now, because both campuses are at roughly the same enrollment and have different identities. For example, Carbondale has the School of Medicine and the School of Law. We have the School of Dental Medicine and a School of Pharmacy. Both of them have certain elements, but they’re two institutions now that are fully functioning on their own as high profile universities.

“When you analyze the SIU System as a whole and its footprint in Illinois, we are the public universities that serve the people of this area south of Springfield. That’s a large responsibility, but it also gives us a great excuse to work together, and do things to serve the students and the people of this part of the state.”

Budzban agrees with Pembroke’s statements, making his own assertion about the growing opportunities for collaboration and cooperative degree programs between the two universities.

The men also discuss rapidly growing relationships between SIUE and local partners. Pembroke elaborates on the importance of community collaboration and the impact such relationships have had on activities such as the leasing of the Cougar Lake Pool and The Gardens at SIUE, while Budzban describes a National Educational Endowment of the Arts Grant and other current initiatives in process between the two entities.

“There’s such a cross-fertilization when a university exists in an environment like this,” Pembroke shares. “When the University has special events on campus, that gives the people of Edwardsville a great chance to participate. When things are happening in Edwardsville, our students have the opportunity to take advantage of those events. I’ve talked with some local individuals on how we can build partnerships and work together on things that are mutually beneficial.”

Discussion continues on maintaining the momentum propelled last year by the SIUE Congress in making difficult budgetary decisions, as well as the upcoming process of filling SIUE administrative positions that are currently in interim phases.

Pembrook bids listeners farewell by sharing, “My wife and I just moved to Edwardsville and are feeling right at home. We’re happy to be back.”

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 Marketing & Communications.