

# SIUE looks back to move forward

Segue • SIUE



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On this Sunday's episode of Segue, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's premier radio show on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound, Chancellor Randy Pembroke, PhD, and Chancellor Emeritus Vaughn Vandegrift, PhD, have an insightful conversation regarding the undeniable impact the former leader had on SIUE.

Vandegrift was appointed the seventh chancellor of SIUE in 2004 and served until his retirement in 2012. During his tenure, Vandegrift elevated the visibility of SIUE through national recognition, moved its intercollegiate athletics programs to NCAA Division I and facilitated numerous projects that paved the way for a strong future at SIUE.

Vandegrift received his bachelor's and master's in chemistry from Montclair State University, and was awarded his PhD in biochemistry from Ohio University. He also holds an educational management certificate from Harvard University. He previously served as provost and vice president for academic affairs at Georgia Southern University, dean of science and mathematics at Montclair State University and on the faculties of Murray State University, Illinois State University and SIU Carbondale.

"You were a driving force, the energy and impetus that made a distinct impact on SIUE. What inspired you and motivated you to implement the changes that occurred during your time at SIUE?" Pembroke asks.

"When I arrived on campus in 2004, I immediately determined there were needs that needed to be met," Vandegrift explains. "We needed a new residence hall in order to become nationally recognized, to establish a distinct university brand, and to work on attracting even more students to campus."

Vandegrift's mission for SIUE to achieve national recognition, establish brand identity and attract more students to campus was incredibly successful. Under his leadership, SIUE was recognized by several organizations, including U.S. News & World Report, Washington Monthly and the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Vandegrift was also instrumental in implementing new branding strategies, including emphasis of the lowercase "e" in new wordmarks and designs, and welcoming students and faculty to campus with new entrance signage. In his last year as chancellor, SIUE also attained a record enrollment of more than 14,000 students.

One of Vandegrift's most influential implementations at SIUE involved the transition of the University's intercollegiate sports teams to NCAA Division I from Division II after the 2007-08 season. Since the University's faculty and students were competing academically with and above the level of several universities around the country, he realized that the University's athletics should perform at the highest level as well. He joined forces with former SIU System President Glenn Poshard, alumni and Board of Trustees members Stephen Wigginton, Ed Hightower and John Simmons, Softball Head Coach Sandy Montgomery, and Athletic Director Brad Hewitt to push the University to a higher level of athletic competition.

"All of the people who helped along the way were great players in achieving our goal to become a Division I university," Vandegrift says. "I always enjoyed going to our University's athletic events and other events on campus. I am very proud to be a part of what has been accomplished."

For his dedication to the University's intercollegiate athletic success, Vandegrift was chosen for the 13th class of the SIUE Athletics Hall of Fame. He joined six other individuals and three teams at the special induction ceremony held Saturday, Oct. 14 in the Morris University Center's Meridian Ballroom. When the inductees were revealed to administrators, Pembroke picked up the phone and informed Vandegrift himself of the recognition.

"When you contacted me about this honor, it meant a lot to me," Vandegrift explains. "Having a vibrant Division I athletics program at our University means a lot to those who look at SIUE and characterize what it is. You understood the significance and achievement behind it all and the fact you made the call personally was a great honor."

After eight years as chancellor at SIUE, Vandegrift retired in 2012. Since his retirement, he has dedicated his time to his family, which includes his wife, Sue, three adult children, Beth, David and Mark, and will soon welcome the family's seventh grandchild. Vaughn and Sue now reside in Florida.

"The schedule you led as chancellor was quite busy," Pembroke says. "Once you retired, did you want to continue certain activities or did you look forward to having time on your own?"

"I looked more to have time with my family," Vandegrift replies. "The position of chancellor is a 24-hour job. You are known wherever you go and are responsible for representing the University with everything you say or do."

"After a long career, I decided I would spend time with my grandchildren, read detective novels and enjoy my retirement."

With his educational background in chemistry, Vandegrift keeps up with his frequently evolving academic interests through subscriptions to chemistry and engineering news and science magazines. When it comes to what issues and ideas are emerging in the world of higher education, he stays up-to-date on what is happening at SIUE through Pembroke's University announcements.

The entire conversation between Pembroke and Vandegrift airs at 9 a.m. Sunday, Oct. 29 on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound.

*By Madelaine Gerard, SIUE Marketing & Communications*