

SIUE leaders share excitement for new year



Segue • SIUE

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At the beginning of each season of Segue, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's premier radio show on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound that focuses on issues on campus and within the community, College of Arts and Sciences Dean Greg Budzban, PhD, likes to sit down with Chancellor Randy Pembroke, PhD, to speak about his hopes for the academic year.

When the state of Illinois passed its first budget plan for higher education in two years this July, Pembroke and other university leaders from around the Prairie State breathed a collective sigh of relief.

"We were anticipating what could have happened and developed possible scenarios to be ready for anything," Pembroke says. "When we got the news that we had a budget in the first week of July, it was a relief. The news that came out was better than any of the scenarios we had talked about."

Now that the state's higher education budget has been passed, SIUE can finally plan for the future as funding for both the 2016-17 and 2017-18 fiscal years are set. Students eligible for MAP grants do not have to worry about how they will pay their tuition. The University's largest building project, renovations to its Science East building, should wrap up construction before the summer of 2018.

"That building in particular not only holds a lot of our faculty offices and classes, but it also is designed so that as we do renovations in other buildings on campus over the next few years, we

can temporarily move faculty into Science East, while we make those changes,” Pembroke says. “That’s quite a big deal for us.”

“I can’t tell you how much the renovation in Science East is going to mean to the College of Arts and Sciences,” Budzban remarks. “It will change the complexion of our math and physics programs. In addition, our colleagues in the STEM Center will be housed there as well, only increasing the collaboration possibilities between STEM and the Arts and Sciences. It’s great news for the College and for the entire University moving forward.”

“It created a sense of stability,” Pembroke replies. “In the contiguous states, universities with programs in the math and sciences—it’s become a competitive business. Illinois has lost approximately 15,000 to 20,000 students annually to other universities out of state. To have Illinois commit to a higher education budget also gives students a great deal of confidence that we’ll be able to deliver programs at a quality they expect.”

Instead of hunkering down, Pembroke, as well as other university administrators, are once again able to explore opportunities for growth and innovation. As the strategic plan for 2013-2018 comes to a close, leaders will head back to the drawing board to see what accomplishments were made despite the fiscal environment and how to continue to strive for excellence in the future.

As the new academic term begins, some University faculty and staff will adjust into new roles, just as Pembroke did one year ago. Southern Illinois University Carbondale just welcomed its new Chancellor, Carlo Montemagno, PhD, with open arms. Pembroke and Montemagno haven’t had the chance to meet, but plan to get to know one another at September’s Board of Trustees meeting.

“He sounds like quite an interesting person,” Pembroke says. “He was in the Navy, was a first-generation college student, and he’s also been a chair and dean in higher education. The part I found most interesting about him is that he has an engineering background. He refers to himself as a builder.”

“He is an engineer in nanotechnology, and I believe that building and restructuring at Carbondale will certainly be on his agenda,” Budzban replies.

State funding for higher education is anticipated to be a continuing challenge. Pembroke hopes to foster new relationships with corporations and government entities in both St. Louis and southwestern Illinois to allow both SIUE and its students to grow well into the future.

With one year as chancellor under his belt, Pembroke hopes that he and the rest of the University community can continue to make big things happen at SIUE for many years to come.

Catch the entire conversation between Pembroke and Budzban at 9 a.m. this Sunday on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound.

By Madelaine Gerard, University Marketing & Communications