

**Addressing Retention in 2007-2010:  
The Challenge**

*A Presentation to the SIU Board of Trustees  
November 8, 2007*

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SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
**EDWARDSVILLE**

# Defining the Challenge

## *Clarifying the Context*

- ◆ The assessment of retention rates is dependent upon the selected comparison group:
  - When the “Custom Comparison Group” used in the annual *IPEDS Data Feedback Report* (by the National Center for Education Statistics) serves as the comparison group, **the six year graduate rate of 46% for Southern Illinois University Edwardsville** compares favorably with the median graduation rate of 39% for the comparison group (please see Appendix A for graduation rate data and members of Custom Comparison Group). Also, SIUE compares favorable to average graduate rates of Illinois Public Metropolitan Universities (42%).
  - However, when the average graduation rate of 57% derived from members of the top ten Midwest “Top Public Universities – Master’s” (in the *US News and World Report 2008 Edition America’s Best Colleges*) is used for the comparison, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville’s graduation rate of 46% does not compare as favorably (please see Appendix B for the graduation rates for the Top 10 Midwest Universities). Also, the SIUE graduation rate is lower than the average graduation rate of all Illinois Public Universities (59%).
  - Therefore, given its standing in the Top Ten of Midwest Universities, **Southern Illinois University’s aspiration six year graduation rate is 57-59%.**
- ◆ Retention involves more than graduation rates. Retention also requires focus on freshman-to-sophomore and sophomore-to-junior persistence rates. **Southern Illinois University Edwardsville’s freshman-to-sophomore and sophomore-to-junior persistence rates have continued to improve over the past five years**, with the freshman (from 72% to 75%) and sophomore (from 59% to 63%) rates increasing. However, the freshman rate is below the 80% average of the other Top Ten Midwest Universities and the decrease from sophomore to junior year must be improved (please see Appendix B for the freshman retention rates for the Top 10 Midwest Universities).

## *SIUE Retention Program Guiding Principles*

- ◆ The Retention Program is designed within the context of the SIUE Strategic Plan and the Presidential Goals (including the August 2006 Presidential Paper on Recruitment, Retention, and Persistence: Appendix C) – short term goals expressed within long-term goals.
- ◆ Retention Program implementation is an *integrated team approach* between The Divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.
- ◆ Implementation is assigned to specific units with timelines.
- ◆ Grounded in a campus culture of assessment, the Retention Program impact will be measurable using evidence-based trend analysis compared against meaningful benchmarks.

## Meeting the Challenge

### *2007-2010 New and On-going Initiatives*

New Initiative	President Poshard Memo* Recommendation Number(s)	Responsibility	Timeline
<i>Student Success Center</i> – a programmatic and physical integration of student support services to most effectively meet students’ academic, personal, and professional needs.	25, 32, 33	Provost/Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs	Integration is being developed for complete implementation in August 2009
<i>Academic Advancement Center</i> – development of a new unit that will effectively integrate creative pedagogy, proactive, consistent, and effective University-wide academic advising, and strategic and focused student support.	28, 31, 32, 34	Provost	Recommendations for the development of the Center will be complete in December 2007
<i>University-wide Advising Plan</i> – to more actively and effectively meet the progression needs of all students including targeted advisement for at-risk groups.	28, 31, 34	Provost /Deans	Specifics of the plan will be complete in December 2007
<i>University Multicultural Center</i> – currently examining opportunities to evolve the Student Opportunities for Academic Results (SOAR) program into a University Multicultural Center.	28, 31	Provost/Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs	Evolution will be complete by August 2009
<i>Office of Educational Outreach</i> – restructuring and reorienting current and planned campus efforts in order to coordinate and expand the University’s academic resources enabling, undergraduate, graduate, and professional students (often limited by preparation, time, place, or resources) to complete their educational or professional goals in credit-based programs. This includes an expanded summer school program to enhance baccalaureate completion.	26	Provost	Restructuring and reorientation will be complete by December 2008

\* SIUE Student Recruitment, Retention and Persistence: An Analysis of the Nation, State and Campus with Recommendations – August 28, 2006

<p><i>Dual Admissions Programs with Community Colleges</i> – to facilitate student preparation and transition to the University.</p>	26	Provost/Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management	Agreement has been developed with SWIC; other agreements are in progress
<p><i>Enrollment Management Council Plan</i> – strategic recruitment and enhanced tracking of students throughout their years at SIUE.</p>	25, 26, 28	Provost/Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management	2007-2008 Planning Model Development
<p><i>Increase Graduate Student Stipends</i> – to retain continuing graduate students.</p>	26	Provost/Graduate Dean	First phase implemented in November 2007; second phase in 2008
<p><i>Selected Academic Unit New Initiatives:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>SNAP</i> – The Student Nurse Achievement Program is a proposed five-year bachelor of science in nursing program designed by the School of Nursing to provide disadvantaged students the tools to reach their full potential as productive citizens through the nursing profession.</li> <li>▪ <i>Strengthening the Fundamentals in Engineering</i> - The School of Engineering provides tutoring to students in the fundamental concepts of statics, dynamics, circuits, and data structures and algorithms to support student success in the major.</li> </ul>	28, 34	Academic Deans	Programs are being implemented throughout FY08

<b>On-going Initiatives</b>			
<i>Early Academic Intervention</i> – Mandatory early academic intervention and focused first-year and transitional advising for early discovery of academic difficulties and targeted advising to keep students on-track for graduation.	28, 34	Provost	
<i>University 112: The University Experience</i> – Involves freshmen in self-reflection, exploration, and discussion of such issues as engaging in academic inquiry, contributing to communities of learners, developing effective study strategies, using University resources, maintaining healthy lifestyles, and valuing diverse people and their opinions.	32	Provost	
<i>Summer Bridge</i> – A six week intensive program designed to aid entering freshmen with academic development needs in building academic skills while developing a sense of belonging to the University community.	29	Provost	
<i>AQIP Action Projects-Reshape New Student Transition and Using Technology to Improve Transition of Transfer Students</i> —Redesign of the transition programs offered to newly entering students and transfer students to provide support they need to succeed.	25, 26	Provost/Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management	
<i>Honors Program Redesign</i> – Based upon the recommendations of the Honors Ad Hoc Task Force, the curricular and co-curricular components of the Honors Program are being redesigned to better reflect the opportunities provided by a premier metropolitan university.	33	Provost	
<i>Females of African descent Modeling Experience (FAME)/Goal-Oriented African American Males Excel (GAME)</i> – programs to support the academic, personal, and professional needs of African-American students designed to increase retention and graduation rates.	25, 28	Provost and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs	
<i>New Freshman Seminar</i> - goals of the New Freshman Seminars are to: assist new freshmen in making the transition to college level work and expectations; orient students to the resources and culture of the University; and engage students in an intellectual community of students and faculty.	25, 31	Provost	

<p><i>Strategic Advancement of Graduate Education (SAGE)</i> – Initiate Phase II to revise and reinvigorate graduate programs to provide high quality programs that meet students’ educational and professional needs.</p>	26	Provost and Dean of the Graduate School	
<p><i>Targeted Student Support Programs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Commuter Student Support and Engagement Program</i> – programs will engage commuter students and encourage their campus involvement to reduce the potential of feeling marginalized.</li> <li>▪ <i>Chancellor’s Leadership Academy</i> – to cultivate underclass leadership and development to engage students early in their college careers and increase their bonds with the University.</li> <li>▪ <i>Second Year Success Program</i> – focus on the unique curricular and co-curricular needs of second year students.</li> <li>▪ <i>QWEST</i> - Experience program for students who have not declared a major.</li> <li>▪ <i>LASSI</i> - Learning and Studies Strategies Inventory tool for students with academic difficulties.</li> </ul>	31, 38	Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs	
<p><i>Faculty Fellows</i> – designed to increase faculty-student interactions outside of the classroom setting.</p>	37	Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs	
<p><i>Living &amp; Learning Communities</i> – designed to provide academic, social, and career support for students living in residence halls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Focused Interest Communities</i> – clusters of student pursuing the same major.</li> <li>▪ <i>Horizons First Year Experience Program</i> – ease transition into university life and develop success strategies.</li> <li>▪ <i>Second Year Experience Program</i> – programming designed to alleviate the “sophomore slump”.</li> <li>▪ <i>Sophomore Village</i> – increase engagement and a sense of community for students living in Cougar Village.</li> </ul>	25, 26, 28, 31	Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs	

<p><i>Selected Academic Unit On-going Initiatives:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Rapid Intervention Initiative</i> - The School of Dental Medicine employs a rapid notification system to ensure that dental students who are experiencing significant academic difficulties in passing coursework are contacted by the Office of Student Services to provide a tutor.</li> <li>▪ The School of Pharmacy applies an early warning system to faculty course coordinators notify the Office of Student Affairs when students are performing work below the grade of “C” at midterm. The Office of Student Affairs encourages the student to meet with faculty of the course or to develop individualized strategies.</li> <li>▪ The School of Business requires an “academic intervention” between student and advisor when the student GPA falls below the 2.25 minimum.</li> <li>▪ <i>ABle Program</i> - The Department of Sociology in the College of Arts and Sciences retention program directed toward African American students to assist them in timely progress within their degree.</li> </ul>	28, 34	Academic Deans	
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## Proposed Costs of Meeting the Challenge

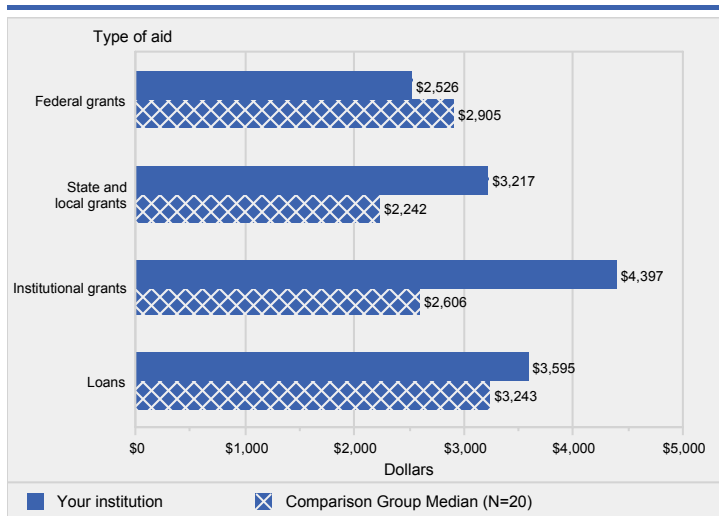
### *New Initiatives (2007-2010)*

<b><i>Student Success Center</i></b>	\$18,600,000
♦ Construction and on-going operations costs	[Building: \$16,600,000] [Operations: \$2,000,000]
<b><i>Academic Advancement Center</i></b>	\$100,000
♦ Director, General Studies	\$70,000
♦ Clerical	\$25,000
♦ Support	\$5,000
<b><i>University-wide Advising Plan</i></b>	\$481,880
♦ Salary equity	\$66,880
♦ Additional Advisors	\$390,000
♦ Clerical	\$25,000
<b><i>University Multicultural Center</i></b>	\$100,000
♦ Assistant Director	\$40,000
♦ Campus-wide Tutors	\$50,000
♦ Programming	\$10,000
<b><i>Office of Educational Outreach</i></b>	\$195,000
♦ Director of Summer Session	\$30,000
♦ Director of School Relations	\$50,000
♦ Clerical/Staff Support	\$60,000
♦ Off-site Delivery	\$50,000
♦ Equipment	\$5,000
<b><i>Increase Graduate Student Stipends</i></b>	\$250,000
♦ Phase I (2007)	\$125,000
♦ Phase II (2008)	\$125,000
<b><i>SNAP – The Student Nurse Achievement Program</i></b>	\$250,000
♦ Faculty, advisor, tutors, staff and delivery support	
<b><i>Strengthening the Fundamentals in Engineering</i></b>	\$8,640
♦ Tutors for Core Classes	

## **Appendix A**

# IPEDS DATA FEEDBACK REPORT

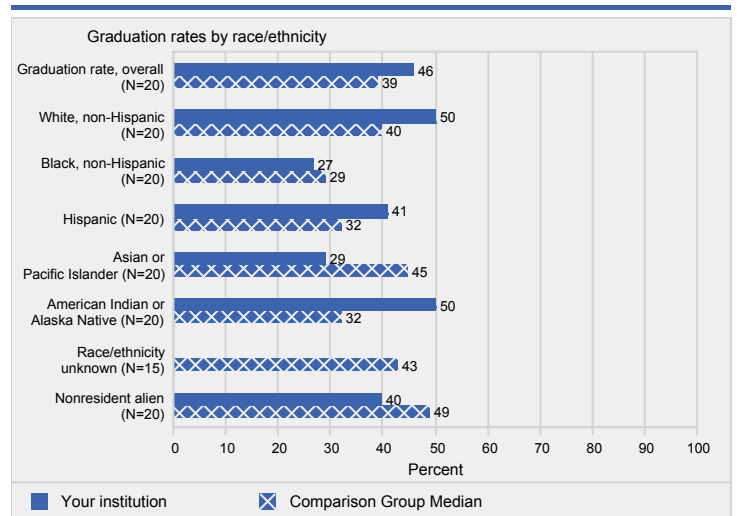
**Figure 5. Types and average amounts of financial aid received by full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates: 2005-06**



NOTE: Average grant (or loan) values were calculated by dividing the total grants (or loans) awarded by the total number of recipients in each institution. N is the number of institutions in the comparison group.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS): Spring 2007.

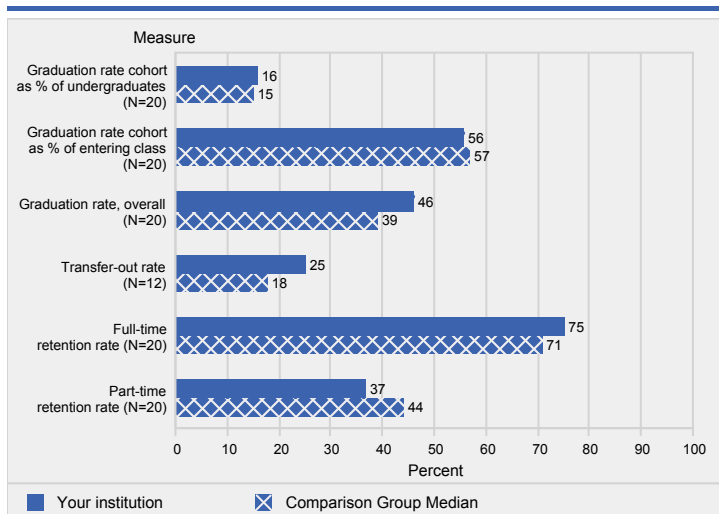
**Figure 6. Graduation rates of full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates within 150% of normal time to program completion, by race/ethnicity: 2000 cohort**



NOTE: The graduation rates are the Student Right-to-Know (SRK) rates. For more information see the Methodological Notes at the end of the report. N is the number of institutions in the comparison group.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS): Spring 2007.

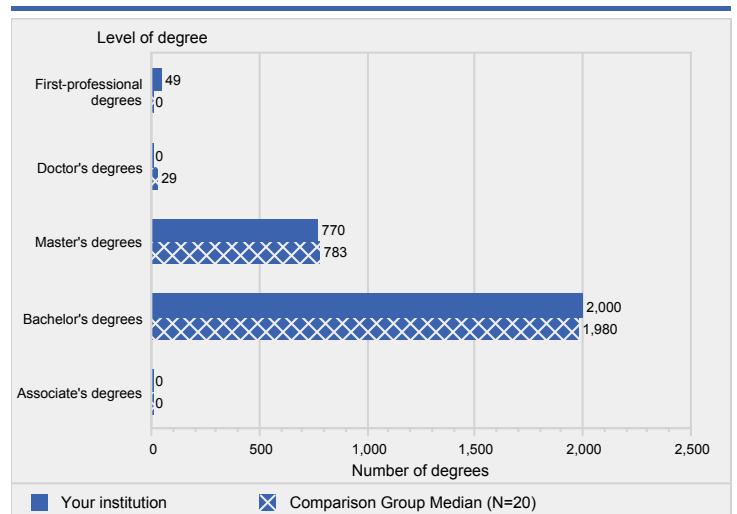
**Figure 7. Graduation rate cohort as a percent of all undergraduates and as a percent of total entering students (Fall 2006); graduation rate and transfer-out rate (2000 cohort); and retention rates (Fall 2006)**



NOTE: Graduation rate cohort includes all full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students. Entering class includes all students coming to the institution for the first time. Only institutions with a mission to prepare students to transfer are required to report transfers out. Graduation and transfer-out rates are the Student Right-to-Know rates. 4-year schools report retention rates for students seeking a bachelor's degree. For more information, see the Methodological Notes. N is the number of institutions in the comparison group.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS): Spring 2007.

**Figure 8. Number of degrees awarded, by level: Academic year 2005-06**



NOTE: N is the number of institutions in the comparison group.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS): Fall 2006.

## COMPARISON GROUP

This custom comparison group for Southern Illinois University Edwardsville includes the following 20 institutions:

- ▶ Grand Valley State University (Allendale, MI)
- ▶ Northern Kentucky University (Highland Heights, KY)
- ▶ Oakland University (Rochester Hills, MI)
- ▶ Portland State University (Portland, OR)
- ▶ The University of Texas at El Paso (El Paso, TX)
- ▶ The University of Texas at San Antonio (San Antonio, TX)
- ▶ Towson University (Towson, MD)
- ▶ University of Arkansas at Little Rock (Little Rock, AR)
- ▶ University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center (Denver, CO)
- ▶ University of Missouri-Kansas City (Kansas City, MO)
- ▶ University of Missouri-St Louis (Saint Louis, MO)
- ▶ University of Nebraska at Omaha (Omaha, NE)
- ▶ University of Nevada-Las Vegas (Las Vegas, NV)
- ▶ University of New Orleans (New Orleans, LA)
- ▶ University of North Carolina at Charlotte (Charlotte, NC)
- ▶ University of North Carolina at Greensboro (Greensboro, NC)
- ▶ University of North Florida (Jacksonville, FL)
- ▶ University of South Alabama (Mobile, AL)
- ▶ Wichita State University (Wichita, KS)
- ▶ Youngstown State University (Youngstown, OH)

## **Appendix B**

## The Top Public Universities-Master's (Midwest)

Institution	Freshman Retention Rate	Graduation Rate
1. Truman State University	86%	66%
2. University of Northern Iowa	81%	65%
3. University of Wisconsin-La Crosse	87%	62%
4. University of Michigan-Dearborn	81%	51%
5. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire	81%	58%
6. Washburn University	67%	62%
7. University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point	78%	58%
8. Grand Valley State University	81%	51%
<b>9. Southern Illinois University Edwardsville</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>46%</b>
10. University of Minnesota-Duluth	75%	48%

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From: U.S. News & World Report, 2008 Edition, *America's Best Colleges*.

## **Appendix C**



SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

August 28, 2006

TO: Vaughn Vandegrift  
Chancellor, SIUE

FROM: Glenn Poshard  
President

SUBJECT: SIUE STUDENT RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE:  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE NATION, STATE AND  
CAMPUS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

The following analysis was prepared by Vice President Haller and is intended as a “thought piece” for you and your senior administrators. While I am sure there may be elements of the document that you and/or others might disagree with, the intent is to elicit a constructive dialogue, not an argumentative response. My hope is that it will be read in the spirit intended and result in a productive discourse.

#### The National Picture

Recruiting students is something that colleges and universities have been doing since their establishment. However, *keeping* students has not always been as important an institutional objective, nor has it been given the same level of attention. This is because, for many decades, the assumption of most college and university faculty and administrators was that in any freshman cohort, a given percentage of students were simply not expected to finish—the result of either the students’ inability to handle the institution’s academic requirements, or the unfortunate result of the students’ or the families’ financial condition. In either case, the loss of these students was thought to be “outside” or “beyond” the area of institutional control or responsibility.

We know now, of course, that this is tortured logic and that colleges and universities have a great deal to do with the factors that enter a student’s decision to leave academe, even for short periods. We also know that our “lost” students, whether they leave academe entirely or simply transfer to another institution, represent a significant loss for the institution. This includes tuition and fees, income from books and services, alumni contributions, etc. We know, too, that these same students, particularly if they completely withdraw from the educational pipeline, lose substantially more in terms of personal income, lifestyle, and life skills.

With more than fourteen million students now attending institutions of higher education, the issue of student recruitment, retention, and persistence has become magnified many times over. The fact that approximately one-half of the students entering postsecondary institutions do

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not meet established admission standards and are not ready for college-level work has become an embarrassing part of the equation.

Equally troublesome is the fact that remedial work, however defined, increases the cost and the time spent earning a degree. Presently over a third of postsecondary students fail to complete their degree requirements after six years, and only about one-half eventually meet their goal of a bachelor's degree. Because a large proportion of these fourteen million students receive some form of financial aid, including government-sponsored grants and loans, retention and cost have become major issues in Washington and in our state capitals.

Over the last decade, we have placed numerous obstacles on the pathway to higher education. We are operating within a fractured set of systems across P-20 where a student's coursework in one system does not necessarily connect to the expectations of the next system, and where existing student data fail to track across all systems. These fissures between K-12 and postsecondary education are serious and profound. They are fissures that are historical, cultural, and structural in nature and therefore do not admit to easy solution. These systems not only compete with one another for funding but are guided by policies exclusive to each of their respective sectors. College readiness requires that both K-12 systems and higher education remove the disconnected standards and data systems that divide them. Their collective goal should be to create a seamless transition from one system to the other. Unless corrected, these obstacles will seriously affect the educational goals and expectations of our nation's children.

Those of us who were the beneficiaries of the G.I. Bill, the National Defense Education Act, and the Higher Education Act that created the Pell Grant were the products of a generation of enlightened legislators and taxpayers who saw in higher education the creation of an engaged citizenry and the preparation of a workforce able to thrive in a world economy. By 1992, nearly 77 percent of high school graduates were enrolling in some level of postsecondary education. This was up from 55 percent in 1972.

Despite this remarkable transformation in education from World War II into the early 1990s, all is not well. Within the last decade we have seen the slippage of the United States from its ranking as the leader among industrialized nations in the proportion of its citizens who earn a college degree. By taking the "public" out of public higher education financing and by resorting to increasingly onerous loans and higher tuition and fee costs, we find ourselves in the process of making higher education a more remote possibility for students from low-income backgrounds and other at-risk groups that are still significantly underrepresented in our colleges and universities. Over the last twenty-five years, tuition and fees in our public and private colleges and universities have increased faster than inflation, faster than per capita personal income, faster than consumer prices, and even faster than prescription health care. Perhaps the greatest challenge to our institutions is to find a way to stabilize the cost of education in an environment of slow or no growth in public revenues.

The privatization of higher education financing, which has been aggravated by the diminution of state and federal funding, will keep more than two million low- and middle-income families from sending their sons and daughters to college. As a result of bad public policy, we are spawning an underclass within our population that, because of its educational shortfall, will be unable to support itself in the global marketplace and, instead, will become an expensive drain on our nation's resources.

Getting more Americans into our colleges and universities is becoming an ever larger challenge as well as an important public policy issue. While lawmakers are prodding colleges and universities for greater accountability—something that higher education needs to accept as a

given—we must not allow this increased scrutiny on performance indicators to deflect our attention from the privatization of our public education system which is burdening students with increased indebtedness and causing many potential first-generation college students and their families to forego the cost of an educational investment. The issue of educational pricing for low- and moderate-income students and their families is most urgent. There must be public recognition that if students can't afford to go to college—and we see this happening in increased numbers—the nation will lose its competitive edge.

We know that any number of barriers act as restraints to the successful recruitment, retention, and persistence of students. They include:

- Insufficient and/or hard-to-understand financial aid packages
- Inadequate test (SAT/ACT) preparation and success
- Inadequate parental involvement
- Lack of a connection between prospective student and institution
- Alienation and insecurity of first-generation students and parents
- Low expectations
- Inadequate or poorly defined support systems (i.e., bridge, orientation, mentoring, tutoring programs)
- Separation of career counseling from early support systems
- Inadequate academic and career advising/counseling
- Failure to connect institutional values with recruitment, retention, and persistence efforts
- Inadequate reward system for faculty and staff efforts in recruitment, retention, and persistence
- Failure to inculcate a “holistic” model of faculty and staff responsibility for recruitment, retention, and persistence

The solutions to increased student recruitment, retention, and persistence are not self evident. We cannot use the same cookie cutter in addressing our institutions of higher learning. While there is much that we have in common with each other, there are still numerous factors that distinguish our student cohorts and create special issues or challenges from one institution to another.

Moreover, since part-time students account for an increasing share of our universities (i.e., one-fourth of the undergraduates at our public four-year colleges, *AASCU*); and since nontraditional students have become the “majority” student at many institutions; and since as many as 60 percent of students who earn a bachelor’s degree attend multiple institutions, it stands to reason that our institutions and state coordinating boards must have the power and flexibility to address these issues.

In recent years, “engagement” has become one of the linchpins of student success. Research tells us that unless students have a sense of connection to their institution, an issue that is especially difficult for nontraditional and part-time students, they will have fewer reasons for staying the course. The research also indicates that improvements often require changes in the composition of the student body and in the fundamental ways that university personnel and students interact. In other words, improvements require institutional change, and unless colleges and universities are willing to make the necessary adjustments to their culture and structure, nothing is likely to happen in the way of positive results.

We know that successful recruitment, retention, and persistence strategies require a buy-in from *all* members of the academic community, including its faculty. Making this a part of a

faculty's teaching, research, and service expectation can be difficult but needs to happen. It requires creating a culture that links the university's merit system to student success and showing, by example, that student success is everyone's responsibility—from groundskeeper to board member. In essence, there cannot be success without the commitment and accountability of *all* who are engaged in the academic enterprise. Commitment and accountability are a function of institutional culture and require a linkage between people, program productivity, evaluation, feedback, and reward systems.

The most successful recruitment, retention, and persistence programs recognize the role that cognitive, social, and institutional factors play in student decision-making and that it is more effective to address them holistically rather than piecemeal. This means looking at financial aid packages and course availability and content, as well as support systems such as tutoring, mentoring, and career counseling in an integrated manner. All aspects of campus life connect to what students do in the classroom. The best evidence of this integrated approach is in the popularity of residential learning communities where students live together based on common interests, attend the same courses, and often experience their co-curricular activities as a group. This adaptation in the mode of education has been shown to enhance students' feelings of connectedness.

### Issues in Illinois

We in Illinois are currently faced with two commanding issues. The first is the lack of transparency between the graduation requirements of high school students and the admission requirements of our universities. The second follows from the first and represents the prevalent lack of student preparation for college-level coursework.

Public Act 094-0676 (Amendment to School Code), which was part of the Governor's *Higher Standards/Better Schools* initiative, strengthened high school graduation requirements by phasing in an additional year of instruction in mathematics, science, and English. Passage of the new graduation standards came three years after the Board of Higher Education proposed a college-preparation curriculum for all high school students as part of its recommendations contained in the *Gateway to Success* report of the Committee on Access and Diversity.

Under the *old* graduation requirements, students were required to have three years of language arts; two years of mathematics, one of which may be related to computer technology; one year of science; two years of social studies; and one year of music, art, foreign language, or vocational education. Under the *new* graduation requirements when fully implemented in 2008, high school graduates must have four years of language arts; two years of writing intensive courses, one of which must be English and the other of which may be English or any other subject; three years of mathematics, one of which must be Algebra I and one of which must include geometry; two years of science; two years of social studies; and one year chosen from music, art, foreign language, or vocational education.

Unfortunately, even with Illinois' new high school graduation requirements there remains a disconnect with the admission requirements of our public universities. Illinois students who graduate with the minimum course work stipulated in the new high school graduation standards continue to be out of step with the admission standards of our public universities.

Given this disconnect, admissions officers find themselves having to weigh the probability of success using combined ACT scores and class standing; the acceptance of CLEP or AP courses in deficient subject areas; redistribution of excess high school units; and

individualized academic advisement. The level of K-16 interaction needs to change at both the state and local levels. This entails a reinvigoration of the Joint Education Council staffed by the IERC, and at the local levels, regular meetings between faculty and administrators and their counterparts at feeder institutions. Faculty need to align their curricula along with their system of assessments and requirements, and data must be collected consistently across K-16 and used to drive policy decisions.

Students who lack college readiness skills face the severest challenges when they enroll in college. More than ever before, K-12, the community colleges, and the four-year universities must work together to improve student preparation and to provide a clear and uncomplicated route to college-level readiness. High schools, community colleges, and universities must align their courses and assessments before we will see improvements in college readiness. Not only will this require significant structural change to succeed, but it will also require the faculties in these respective systems to work more closely together on curricula and assessment.

We know, for example, that of those Chicago Public School graduates who enroll in postsecondary education, only 39 percent attend community colleges while 61 percent seek admittance to four-year colleges. Given that more than one-third of CPS graduates scored below 14 on the ACT, placing them at approximately the 9th percentile of the national distribution, and that two-thirds of CPS graduates scored 17 or below, it is evident that our public and private colleges and universities are being forced to shift precious resources away from degree-level programs to college readiness courses and support services. It is troubling to see high school students wasting their final year before graduation by choosing less demanding courses in place of college preparatory mathematics or other rigorous courses. It is equally troubling to see community colleges aspiring to become baccalaureate-granting institutions when it is apparent that their energies should be more focused on preparing college-ready students. This diminished emphasis on academic work forces the universities to shift more of their scarce resources to remedial math and writing classes as well as support programs.

Although many of the courses (including electives) needed for graduation are available to high school students via the Illinois Virtual High School (IVHS), the obstacles to its effective use are many. This Internet educational service delivers high school class content to Illinois students and is administered by the Illinois State Board of Education and staffed by the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy (IMSA). IMSA bills the school for the course, and the school, in turn, pays for the course or has its costs reimbursed from parents. Certified instruction is calculated in ADA reimbursement to the school district. Currently there are 475 participating high schools in Illinois. For reasons of pride, job protection, lack of computers, inadequate broadband telecommunication grids, and unanticipated costs, many school districts in southern Illinois choose not to participate in the program. We know, for example, that many school districts face financial obstacles when offering IVHS programs. The course cost can be a factor to already financially strapped districts, and since students must still be under the supervision of a certified teacher during each period of the instructional day, the additional costs of the IVHS program must be considered. In some districts, access to computer labs can be an issue as facility space for existing course offerings may prevent the scheduling of an entire lab for a few students.

In the mid-1990s, the Illinois Board of Higher Education approved a dual enrollment program whereby high school students could enroll in courses that could be counted for high school graduation credit as well as community college credit. This program has grown in recent years and today represents a robust growth area in the high school curriculum. These courses are popular among students planning to attend college and whose class rank is in the top quartile.

While popular in high schools in the collar counties of Chicago, it is not much evident in the southern counties of Illinois, including the Metro East area around Edwardsville. Currently the ability for high schools to participate in dual-credit courses is dependent on whether or not the local community college has been aggressive about seeking dual-credit agreements on courses with area high schools. For example, while Lewis and Clark Community College offers a significant range of dual-credit course opportunities to local high schools, neighboring Southwestern Illinois Community College does not. Another obstacle is the community college requirement that a high school teacher teaching a dual-credit course must meet the same educational requirements as the community college staff. In most cases, a high school teacher must have a master's degree in the content area being taught. Many high schools will not have staff with advanced degrees in the specific department in which the course originates or may have staff with advanced degrees in secondary education only, a certification which does not usually meet the standard for teaching in a dual-credit class.

The High School Feedback System, mandated by state statute under Chapter 110 Higher Education, provides annual feedback to the principals of every Illinois high school as to how well their graduates perform on selected courses (the first college English, reading, mathematics, and natural science courses) taken in their freshman year at a four-year public institution. One copy of the report is produced for each high school in the state and mailed to the principal of that high school. Superintendents of Illinois high schools are notified when the reports are sent to their schools but do not receive the report. Neither the community colleges nor the private colleges and universities are included in the report; nor are parents and parent organizations routinely made aware of this information. In other words, across the education systems, there is a gap in the public reporting of student progress and success. The High School Feedback System remains a strong data information system but with questionable impact given its present limitations.

The Shared Enrollment Data System, introduced by IBHE nearly twenty years ago, allows higher education institutions in Illinois to track high school graduates as they transfer in and out of our Illinois institutions, providing us with ongoing information on their persistence and graduation rates. Unfortunately this system is poorly funded and, at present, includes only two private colleges and universities. To be effective, this system needs to be fully funded, and Illinois private and for-profit colleges and universities, as well as colleges and universities in neighboring states, must participate in the database.

In order for us to act on these issues, it is first necessary to get a fuller understanding of our student populations, and this means information that is complete and timely. The following questions offered by Watson Scott Swail in his "Seven Guiding Questions for Student Retention" (*Educational Policy Institute*) are important starting points to the challenges that await us.

1. Do we understand the nature of the problem?
2. Do we know why our students leave?
3. Do we know what our institution is already doing to ameliorate these issues?
4. Do we know how effective these programs or strategies are?
5. Do we know what programs and strategies may be worth considering?
6. Do we have evidence that there exists significant support on campus to do something about this issue?
7. Do we understand the institutional change process?

Careful analysis of data can help to solve many problem areas if it is used in a proactive rather than reactive mode. Most of our P-20 institutions are privy to a wide range of data that

permits close monitoring of a student's academic progress. Unfortunately, few institutions make good use of this information because of the structural or incomplete nature of this information. In point of fact, many institutions lose students because they are unaware they are about to lose them.

### Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

- SIUE does not now have a recruitment problem except insofar as it seeks to identify students most likely to persist through graduation. Given that its present retention rate is inconsistent with its student profile as well as with its goals and objectives, the campus should embark immediately on a strategy to rectify this problem.
- The long-term challenge for SIUE is to identify its optimum student population and campus infrastructure and to make a convincing argument to the SIU Board of Trustees as well as to its political supporters in the Metro East area that it need not simply allow for unlimited growth. This will require a full campus dialogue and incorporation into the university's long-range strategic plan.
- Along with identifying an optimum campus size and infrastructure that protects its established quality and character, SIUE needs to build a more robust *off-campus* presence in the Metro East region to offset growing competition from other colleges and universities.
- In the recruitment of students, SIUE's leveraging ability is limited to (1) tuition waivers controlled by IBHE's 3 percent cap; (2) approximately \$425,000 in need-based support; and (3) approximately \$1.275 million in scholarship money. For a university with robust plans to climb in the national rankings, this amount of support is inadequate. To be competitive in recruiting high-quality students as well as those worthy students who are in need of financial aid, the campus must make a concerted effort to build on its endowment.
- SIUE should give consideration to rethinking its vision statement: "SIUE, as a premier Metropolitan University, will be recognized nationally for the excellence of its programs and development of professional and community leaders." Do students, parents, and the campus' feeder institutions understand the meaning of the term "metropolitan university"? Is there a better way to frame the campus' vision that would include the role of the liberal arts and sciences? Would the campus be willing to seek status as a premier public liberal arts college or a variation that would incorporate its professional schools?

### Recommendations

#### ISBE

1. High school principals should be required to provide their high school feedback information to school superintendents and in aggregate format to parents and parent-teacher associations. In addition, the data system should be expanded to include Illinois community colleges as well as private and for-profit colleges and universities. Given their students' performance as

communicated via this high school feedback system, high schools need to direct their efforts on changing their curricula to improve student readiness.

2. ISBE should institute financial incentives for high schools to participate in the Illinois Virtual High School and in dual-enrollment programs as a way of better preparing our students for college.
3. High school students in Illinois have unequal access to college-level courses. This applies both geographically and programmatically. Although some high schools offer AP credit and concurrent enrollment with a local community college, there are few incentives. Currently only community colleges are reimbursed for providing college-level courses to high school students. There is a need to expand dual-enrollment opportunities to four-year universities and to provide incentives to them for making these courses available.
4. ISBE, along with the ICCB and IBHE, should seek to build a fully integrated education system with curriculum alignment and assessment. The Illinois Learning Standards should be better aligned with the college admission system. The current subject area requirements and cumulative grade point average does not necessarily assure that students will have the knowledge and skills to be successful in college.

#### IBHE

5. Efforts should be taken by IBHE to minimize the obstacles to greater participation of high schools in the southernmost counties of Illinois in the dual-enrollment program. Incentives should be made to both community colleges and four-year universities to provide this opportunity to college-ready high school students.
6. It is imperative for IBHE to have the means of tracking students and monitoring their success. This means building strong High School Feedback and Shared Enrollment Systems; using its statutory powers to bring all of Illinois public and private education into a common database; and preparing and distributing appropriate reports. For example, we need to know how students who take college preparatory courses in high school perform in our colleges and universities. We also need the ability to track students across the educational spectrum.
7. The participation of Illinois private colleges and universities in the Shared Enrollment System should be required on the basis of their acceptance of MAP dollars and new program approvals.
8. For those Illinois students who are admitted to one of our public universities but who are still in need of remediation, IBHE should encourage local community colleges to teach remedial coursework on the public university campuses and make this a transparent process for the students involved. It is unfortunate that too much energy is currently being expended by the community colleges to become baccalaureate-granting institutions while failing to focus sufficiently on their role in student readiness.
9. Permission should be given to those Illinois public universities located near the state's borders to offer in-state tuition reciprocity as a way of offsetting student migration.
10. Consideration should be given to creating a common admission application across public higher education, thereby allowing students to identify their top public institutional choices and to enhance more effective enrollment data collection.
11. The Joint Education Committee, or comparable entity, must undertake as its highest objective the task of building a more seamless transition across P-20's various systems. This will

require much greater policy integration, significantly improved coordination and cooperation between levels, more effective data collection, and greater accountability.

## SIUE

### Recruitment

12. SIUE should inform the academic community of the fiscal implications of its retention and persistence numbers. It is important for the good of the institution to inculcate both an individual and corporate sense of responsibility.
13. Academic departments should assume a stronger role in the recruitment of undergraduate students for their disciplines and with soliciting funds for scholarships from companies and alumni associated with their field.
14. SIUE should consider “improvement” as part of its ethos. It should be continually asking whether there are better ways to reach out to students and improve their learning environments. This requires continuous monitoring and assessment. The university should conduct interviews with current and prospective students to get their opinion about the campus and how it ranks against other Illinois schools. It needs to find out what is unique to them about SIUE and share this information with departments and senior officers.
15. First and foremost, any recruitment plan must start with the right students. SIUE needs to have a campus dialogue on its student profile and whether that profile is appropriate or should change. The campus also needs to take a more holistic review of students’ academic merit and potential to succeed in college during the admissions process.
16. SIUE needs to strengthen its relationships with feeder schools. Accordingly, consideration should be given to having an office of school relations with responsibility for building a stronger relationship between the university and academic advisors and counselors at its feeder high schools and community colleges. The activities of this office should include the publication of a newsletter that conveys information pertinent to counselors for their college-bound students and the convening of counselors’ conferences, transfer admission workshops, and adult re-entry workshops.
17. SIUE should undertake an examination of its current admissions policies. What are the costs/benefits of serving each of its quintile groups? Are there more effective data elements such as school attendance that should be factored into the acceptance of at-risk students? Are there other alternatives? What are the implications of such alternatives? Does the campus have adequate support systems in place to help at-risk students succeed?
18. SIUE should make more use of dual-admittance or co-admission programs (see Wisconsin model) that require certain students identified as having potential but who are unprepared academically for a traditional four-year experience to enroll at a community college *before* entering the university. SIUE should consider arranging a “contract” with these students to assure them of admittance provided they achieve specified academic objectives. It should also assure them ready access to the campus’ academic and career advisors before, during, and after arranging such contracts. Such a program should connect them to the university to ensure a seamless transition as they go through the process of academic preparation before transfer.
19. For those students who are admitted directly to SIUE but who have course deficiencies or remedial needs that need to be addressed, the campus should consider arranging with its

nearest community college to provide this coursework *on campus* and make this a transparent process for the students involved. This will entail the respective faculties in math and English to better coordinate their curricula as students move from remedial to credit-bearing courses. It also will entail closer cooperation with the respective offices of financial aid.

20. SIUE should consider using its lower- and upper-division students as ambassadors and recruiters for campus programs. Even a freshman student returning to his/her high school over a vacation break can make a significant impression on friends and acquaintances. Those who were high school leaders will have an even greater impact. SIUE should create a bond between prospective freshman and the campus, and one way to accomplish that is to put them in touch with other students or alumni to help them establish a personal connection.
21. SIUE should consider creating a “contract” signed between the entering student and the university. Such a contract could itemize the mutual roles and responsibilities of each. What is it that we should be willing to guarantee our graduates? For example, should we offer them the opportunity for an internship/externship or international experience in their major? Should we guarantee that they will have good oral and written communication skills? Should we help them prepare a job portfolio? Should we commit ourselves to connecting each of our graduates with his/her first professional or career goal? What should students and their parents expect from their investment? And what, in turn, should we expect from them?
22. SIUE should update the ways in which it markets and communicates with prospective students. It is much too late to wait until students are juniors and seniors before they learn about the university. The campus needs to host more open houses and other recruitment events *off-campus* to create a sustainable presence throughout the state. Today’s students and parents are looking for more personalized communications between them and the institution. It is the cumulative communication effect of all those interactions that influence a student’s choice to enroll.
23. SIUE should consider updating its recruiting methods if it is to compete for the best and brightest. This means expanding its recruiting into areas where SIUE has had little or no previous visibility.
24. SIUE should offer more scholarships and tuition discounting methods to attract more top-quality students. This is a marginal cost issue and can be arranged outside the 3 percent waiver cap.

### Retention and Persistence

25. The pathways to student success require that SIUE informs students from the day of their arrival of its institutional values, what successful students do, and how they can take advantage of the campus’ many support resources. Having students succeed academically and in life is a fulfillment of our mission. Every member of the university community should be working toward this goal.
26. SIUE needs to assess whether the resources earmarked for recruitment, retention, and persistence are compatible with its educational mission, its student characteristics, and what it knows to be the strengths and weaknesses in its student support systems. Resource decisions should be mission driven and informed by data. In the end, SIUE must know what each particular investment produces in terms of student success and be willing to move resources as appropriate.

27. Consideration should be given to recruitment and retention strategies that call for greater parental involvement. This means emulating those private universities that encourage students to waive their privacy rights in order to keep parents better informed of student progress.
28. SIUE should take measures to ensure that its students stay on track academically. This is a responsibility for both faculty and staff alike and requires a strongly integrated advising system that monitors students, identifies problems *before* students fall behind, reaches out with appropriate support intervention, and approaches the student with an assortment of strategies. The implementation of “early warning systems” must be early and quickly carried out by faculty who should notify counselors, advisors, or tutors of students experiencing difficulties in their classroom. Any lag can turn a good intention into a failure. It is essential for students to receive timely feedback from faculty on how well they are doing in a class prior to mid-semester evaluation. By then it may be too late.
29. SIUE should establish summer “bridge” programs that provide students with a transition to college and, in the process, serve as an effective mechanism for grooming at-risk students to do college work or for addressing academic development needs.
30. All recruitment, retention, and persistence initiatives should be substantiated by data and critiqued against other normative and best practice groups. The level of their effectiveness should determine the level of university support.
31. SIUE should maintain an inventory of best practices to see if they can be replicated in part or in whole to benefit the institution. Certain best practices that merit study include freshman seminar courses, limiting class sizes, offering sufficient financial aid packages, peer mentoring, mandatory tutoring, and learning communities.
32. SIUE should consider establishing a “University College” that would provide a wrap-around support system for new freshmen and undeclared students. One important ingredient of this college would be to build curricular and co-curricular experiences that seek a balance between traditional lecturing and classroom discussion; use faculty and students as facilitators in the learning experience; and include group projects and co-curricular activities to develop student knowledge, leadership skills, and civic engagement.
33. As SIUE looks to improving student quality, it might be an opportune time to examine the feasibility of an “Honors College” with the possibility of its own residency hall. Such a college could be marketed to compete with the private universities in Missouri as well as pitched to facilitate undergraduate research and thus target students who have serious research interests and capabilities.
34. SIUE’s institutional retention efforts should be sustained through graduation and not simply through the freshman year. Gatekeeper courses in the junior year stop many students from reaching their educational goals. At-risk students may need additional departmental academic support to succeed in these critical program courses.
35. SIUE should consider ways to expand its undergraduate research opportunities, internships, co-ops, and externships as a means of building stronger relationships between students and faculty and a stronger correlation between students’ academic success and their career objectives.
36. The SIU Board of Trustees should be kept informed via statistical and other data as to the problems its institutions confront and be able to measure their performance over time and compare them with peer and aspirational institutions. More institutional accountability is needed if we are to improve our poor retention record and graduation rate.

37. The role of the faculty is paramount in any successful retention plan. Faculty have the most direct contact with students, and they have the opportunity to develop the most meaningful relationships with students by integrating them fully within the academic community.
38. Social integration or life outside the classroom is crucial to students' happiness and their willingness to stay in school. SIUE needs to expand its campus programming and encourage student participation in a greater range of campus activities and events.

## Sources

### Web sites

New Student Orientation—The National Orientation Directors Association provides education, leadership, and professional development in the fields of college student orientation, transition, and retention. [www.nodaweb.org](http://www.nodaweb.org)

First-Year Seminars—The National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition provides numerous resources on first-year seminars. [www.sc.edu/fye/resources/fyr](http://www.sc.edu/fye/resources/fyr)

Residence Education—The Association of College and University Housing Officers-International is the preeminent professional association to support and promote collegiate residential experience. [www.acuho-i.org](http://www.acuho-i.org)

Academic Advising—The National Academic Advising Association is the association working to enhance the educational development of students. [www.nacada.ksu.edu](http://www.nacada.ksu.edu)

Learning Communities—The Washington Center at Evergreen State College still provides numerous resources on its web site. [www.evergreen.edu/washcenter](http://www.evergreen.edu/washcenter)

Summer Common Reading—The National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition provides resources and web links to summer reading programs. [www.sc.edu/fye/resources/fyr](http://www.sc.edu/fye/resources/fyr)

Peer-Assisted Study—Supplemental instruction is an academic assistance program on how to integrate course content and study skills while working together in difficult courses. [www.umkc.edu/cad/SI](http://www.umkc.edu/cad/SI)

Undergraduate Research—The winter 2006 issue of *Peer Review* is a good source on undergraduate research initiatives. [www.aacu.org/peerreview](http://www.aacu.org/peerreview)

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