

SUAA/SIUE Chapter Newsletter

Meet Our New Chapter President



John Jennetten (L) hands off Chapter Leadership to Keith Becherer (R)

SIUE Chapter Meeting

Our meeting on June 6 was well attended with welcome & SIUE enrollment updates by Provost and VC for Academic Affairs Dr. Denise Cobb, speakers Illinois Comptroller Manager of Outreach & Community Affairs Ross Breckenridge and Managing Director Madison County Transit SJ Morrison. SUAA Executive Director Linda Brookhart gave brief updates of legislative session. John Jennetten was recognized for his 12 years years as Chapter President followed by announcement that Keith Becherer will take the leadership role effective July 1, 2023.

Campus News

Many of us were saddened to hear of former SIUE Chancellor Vaughn Vandegriff's passing on July 11. During his 2004-2012 tenure SIUE experienced national recognition as an up-and-coming university, transitioned to NCAA Division I, facilitated numerous infrastructure projects, and reached all-time high enrollment in 2011. Memorials can be made to the Vaughn and Sue Vandegriff Chancellors Scholarship <https://tinyurl.com/2y5vxk8h>

SUAA State Annual Meeting

Brief summary of the annual meeting held June 14 & 15 in Springfield:

Jo Gibson, Keith Becherer, and John Jennetten attended as delegates. Randy Dunn attended as a SUAA Board of Directors member. Nobby Emmanuel and Keith Becherer attended meetings the previous day. Nobby was elected to serve another year as SUAA Foundation Treasurer.

A total of 67 delegates were in attendance. This is significantly lower than in years prior to the pandemic and a concern for the SUAA Board in getting critical information out to the chapters.

The decline in statewide membership was a concern voiced throughout the meeting. Delegates were urged to increase efforts to attract and retain members.

Andrea Aggertt, Capitol Architect, gave a presentation on current and future plans for renovations of the state capitol, and the grounds surrounding the capitol. Great visual slides which generated a lot of interest and questions from the audience.

Jim Reed, Executive Director, Illinois Community College Board of Trustees, gave a presentation about the role of Illinois community colleges. He referred repeatedly to the goal of enabling community colleges to grant bachelor degrees in a limited number of degree majors, especially applied sciences. He stated that 25 other states, mainly in the West, currently offer BA baccalaureate degrees. He stressed the role of community colleges in attaining the goal of increasing the percentage of Illinois residents with associate, bachelor, or other certifications.

David Merriman and Alex Hawley of UIC gave a detailed presentation of the state pension's Tier II and the implications for the Safe Harbor provisions of Social Security. The retiree with the average pension under Tier II will not be affected. Data continues to be reviewed to identify potential retirees who will be impacted. There are two very recent reports out that detail the problem and outline potential solutions. SURS is issuing one of those reports. They referred to 401K proposals as a fallacy and not a retirement plan. State employees need a secured pension plan, not 401K plan as a substitute. [Click Here to watch the video](#)

Illinois Representative Stephanie Kifowit, Chair of the Pensions Committee, spoke passionately about HB4098 to fix Tier II. She has bi-partisan support and has been working with the pension systems and Governor Pritzker's office to get input to fine tune the legislation. She also stressed that state employees need a secure pension system, not a 401K plan. She also made a statement that any proposal to tax retirement pensions would not get a single vote. [Click Here to watch the video](#)

Andy Manar, former Illinois Senator now Deputy Governor serving Governor Pritzker, gave the luncheon address. He focused on the many benefits for Illinois in the state budget that was just adopted. Higher education and funding for state MAP grants were noted as well as the state paying the backlog of debts. The outstanding bills for the state dental insurance are not yet cleared up but they are working to do so. [Click Here to watch the video](#)

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Lou Anderson, SUAA Action Chair, gave a pitch for increased contributions for SUAA Action.

Andy Small, Membership Co-Chair, urged delegates to increase efforts to gain new members.

Elliot Dudnik, Foundation Chair, gave the Foundation report announcing the new officers. Alice Medenwald, Vice Chair, spoke about the Foundation Scholarships and professional development grants.

Larry Kloc, Treasurer, gave the financial report indicating SUAA is in good shape with regard to revenue and expenses.

The candidate slate for open Board seats were unopposed and elected by voice vote. Cristina Milliken (SIU School of Medicine) Vice President; Betty Zeedyk (Parkland College) Secretary; Linda Guinn (Kankakee College) Regional Director Community Colleges, Region 3; Bernard Rowan (Chicago State University) Regional Director, Universities Region 1; and Barb Dallinger (Illinois State University) Regional Director University, Region 2.

In a surprise announcement at the conclusion of the meeting, Linda Brookhart announced her retirement effective Dec. 31, 2023, after serving 17 years as Executive Director of SUAA. SUAA President Steve Cunningham announced a search committee would be formed ASAP. Randy Dunn advised that he notified Steve Cunningham of his interest in serving on the search committee.

SURS

New hires (originally hired and certified in SURS on or after 7/1/23) will be automatically enrolled in SURS Deferred Compensation Plan (DCP). This is a 457(b) plan that complements the SURS core retirement plan. The contribution rate will be 3% of income, deducted before taxes from their paychecks. <https://surs.org/retirement-plans/dcp/>

SUAA Action

Members are encouraged to contribute to this important arm of SUAA so our lobbyist can stay active connecting with candidates and legislators heading into the next election cycle(s). <https://www.suaa.org/suaaction>



Keith & Andy Manar, Illinois Deputy Governor of Budget & SIUE Alum

State SUAA Office

The Fall Meeting is scheduled for October 25th at ISU Alumni Center in Normal.

All available SUAA speaker videos are available in Members only section of the SUAA website.

Did you know that SUAA is on Facebook? Connect at State Universities Annuitants Association (SUAA) – like and share!

Stay Up to Date Checklist

✓ Visit SIUE Chapter website often www.siue.edu/suaa

✓ Call the State SUAA office (217) 523-4040 with all contact updates ESPECIALLY your email address so we can communicate more directly with you and limit the Chapter expense of mailings.

