

State of the University Address—Dietz
Tuesday, September 17—2 p.m.
Center for the Performing Arts

Thank you Senator Kalter.

Students, faculty, staff—members of the Board of Trustees, elected officials, alumni and Redbird friends—good afternoon and welcome. I appreciate your taking the time to join me for this year’s State of the University Address, and I thank our Academic Senate for sponsoring today’s event.

The last time I stood on this stage I announced a \$12 million gift for the naming of a College and a School—so we have 5 more colleges along with a whole bunch of Departments and Schools left to name, and I want you to know, I am willing to come back here as many times as necessary.

I would like to take a few moments to make several introductions. When I introduce you, please stand and remain standing. Members of the audience, please hold your acknowledgements until all have been introduced.

From the Board of Trustees of Illinois State University: Chairperson Julie Jones and Trustees Bob Dobski and Sarah Aguilar.

Leaders in state and community governance: Senator Jason Barickman, McLean County Clerk Kathy Michael, and Normal Mayor Chris Koos.

Leaders in campus shared governance: Academic Senate Chair Dr. Susan Kalter, Civil Service Council Chair Stuart Palmer, A/P Council Chair Dr. Ron Gifford and Student Body President Samiat Solebo.

Also with me today and most every day is Illinois State University's First Lady—and my First Lady for many happy years, Marlene Dietz.

Please help me recognize all of those standing.

This is my 6th State of the University Address—and for 6 years I have used a phrase to describe Illinois State University—3 words that I know you have heard me say many, many times. Those words are Strong and Stable.

I chose those exact words several years ago for a specific reason. At that time, Illinois public higher education was in a crisis of political gridlock and economic chaos. Illinois' operational spending on public universities had dropped to 14 percent of overall university budgets, capital funding was non-existent, and we all suffered a two-year budget impasse.

Universities were being attacked by our own political system, which exacerbated the growing problem of the outmigration of Illinois students to universities in other states.

Enrollments plummeted at most of our sister institutions, and the resulting financial implications triggered layoffs, furloughs, residence hall closures and academic program cancellations.

And so, I consciously chose the phrase Strong and Stable, to assure our students, prospective students and families, alumni, and our campus community that such was not the fate of Illinois State University, particularly in the areas of enrollment and finance.

Indeed, over the last 5 years our enrollment has averaged 20,776 students and that included 3 consecutive years of quarter-century freshman enrollment records.

We became the third largest educator of students among all 12 Illinois public universities. We achieved national rankings in a dozen publications that rate universities for their quality and value. Just two weeks ago, *Washington Monthly* ranked ISU number 66 among all national universities. Unlike some publications, *Washington Monthly* rates universities based on their contributions to the public good in three broad categories: social mobility, research, and promoting public service.

Also within the past two weeks, Illinois State retained its top 100 public national university ranking in *U.S. News and World Report*, and for the 5th year in a row the *Chronicle of Higher Education* named Illinois State a “Great College to Work For,” placing us once again on their Honor Roll and ranking the University in 11 separate categories.

Although, over the past several years, we left about 120 administrative-related positions vacant through resignations and retirements, ISU laid off no one, furloughed no one, and no academic programs were cancelled. Indeed, we expanded academic program offerings in high-demand areas. We kept our professors in the classroom and our support staff in their offices, all while our residence halls remained at or near capacity. We managed to keep our tuition and fee package in the lower half of Illinois public universities, and provided modest salary increases during most years.

We didn't panic. We stayed in control of two very important factors—our planning process and our attitude, and we stayed true to our motto, “Gladly We Learn and Teach.”

Clearly, the people of Illinois paid close attention and responded in great numbers.

This year's freshman class is the largest in 33 years at 3,860—up 5 percent from last year. We have 2,628 graduate students, up 12 percent from last year.

We welcomed the largest Honors class ever 441 students—almost doubling our numbers of Presidential and University Scholars. And our total enrollment is a formidable 20,878 students.

Financially, the Governor and General Assembly began reinvesting in public higher education, adopting a fiscal year 2020 operating budget for Illinois State of about \$69.6 million—a 5 percent increase over last year's appropriation.

They also increased to \$25 million, funds for the Monetary Award Program, or MAP, which assists our students with the greatest financial need, and added \$4 million in funding for the new Aim High Program, which provides students some merit-based funds at the state level.

In total, Illinois State will provide \$66 million in aid, including student employment, benefitting more than 17,000 students.

In addition, a capital bill was proposed including \$62 million for the Fine Arts Complex renovation and construction, \$82 million for Milner Library, and \$40 million for a host of capital renewal and deferred maintenance projects. These are projects that will span the next six years. Although it is unknown at this time if and when capital funds will be released, I am appreciative of the first capital bill in almost a decade.

While Illinois State continues on an upward trajectory, public higher education in Illinois still faces significant challenges. I want to manage our expectations by remaining cautious and frugal in our spending approach.

As the charts on your screen illustrate, even though the state of Illinois is investing in higher education at the highest level in recent years, universities sustained deep cuts over the past two decades—in capital as well as operational funding—and the recovery will be slow.

I will continue to carefully review and personally approve all hiring, and we will still look for savings realized through non-faculty retirements and resignations.

I am pleased to announce today, that we will once again provide a modest, mid-year, 2 percent merit-based salary increase for employees who don't already have negotiated contracts. Further details about salary enhancements, which will take effect in January, will be announced later this semester.

Meanwhile, Illinois State has 16 separate bargained contracts, many of which are currently being negotiated. While I do not discuss publicly the specifics of that which is appropriately discussed at the bargaining table, I **do** respect every employee of Illinois State and I am grateful for the excellent job each of you do.

Just as I trust the education of students to our professors, and the safety of our campus to police and security staffs, I delegate the negotiation of contracts to those who are experienced and qualified to do so.

I was pleased to learn that just yesterday, AFSCME Local 1110, which represents our 365 Grounds, Building Service, and Event Management, Dining and Hospitality employees, ratified a new contract. They join Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 99, who approved their new contract on July 24th. I also know that progress is being made on several other contracts, and it is my hope that all can be negotiated successfully.

While it is important that Illinois State remains strong and stable this year and every year, the chair of our Board of Trustees, Julie Jones, suggested I might try to create a new phrase to capture the essence of Illinois State and augment the tag line I have been using for so long. And of course, since Julie is my boss—I have thought a lot about this great idea.

When I consider Illinois State’s great success, I reflect on the people responsible—an outstanding faculty, a caring and committed support staff, a talented student body, an engaged alumni, friends and elected officials. You are the ones responsible for our remarkable achievements.

But behind that success, there is an important foundation. You are also the architects of our strategic plan—Educate*Connect*Elevate, a document based on values that guide us to plan our work, work our plan, and create our vision.

So at its core— Illinois State University is an institution of Values and Vision.

Our value of **Learning and Scholarship** has brought us an exciting new Cybersecurity major and a significant investment in that vision from State Farm Insurance. We plan this fall to begin a project that will provide space for faculty and the 300 students in the Cybersecurity major.

Meanwhile, the University continues to investigate the addition of engineering programs, most likely in the areas of electrical and mechanical engineering. A campus task force has completed its work on a business plan and facility needs.

The next step is hiring an architectural/engineering firm to help us determine the approximate size of facility we need and programs that could share space with engineering programs.

Grants and contracts are another important component of our Learning and Scholarship vision. This past year, our faculty and staff scholars received over \$28 million in external funding, a 17.7 percent increase over the previous year.

And just this morning we announced that ISU is part of a \$10 million grant that will protect idle farmland and provide extra income to farmers. The grant will allow Illinois State Genetics professor John Sedbrook to domesticate a plant into a winter cover crop that can be used to produce biodiesel, jet fuel, and animal feed.

I wanted to introduce Dr. Sedbrook to you this afternoon, but he is in the classroom at this moment—so congratulations to Dr. Sedbrook, and to all Illinois State’s researchers and scholars.

Faculty success will also be on the move this year as the Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology moves temporarily to Williams Hall, while a permanent CTLT home is created at Milner Library. Most Centers such as CTLT are located within libraries, and we believe Milner will create a good home for the Center.

And, of course, our faculty demonstrate their vision of Learning and Scholarship every day in classroom, laboratories and studios across campus.

For the value of **Diversity and Inclusion**, our vision for this year begins with freshman enrollment. Thirty-two percent of our new class is racially diverse, with LatinX enrollment jumping 7 percent, African-American enrollment rising 3 percent, and international student enrollment going up 13 percent.

Our INTO Illinois State international program added 73 new students for a total of 123 students from 18 different countries. In total, Illinois State educates 558 international students from 74 countries.

More diversity success—the Student Government Association this year welcomes our first all-female, majority African-American Student Government Association Executive Board. Students also re-elected a Latina student trustee, and the Board of Trustees elected its first African-American and female Board Chairperson.

You may remember that during my first year as president, I commissioned a campus Climate Assessment that led to a Climate Assessment Task Force.

That group generated a long list of recommendations, many of which have already been implemented. One is the new Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council, which is advisory to the President, which holds its first meeting of the semester tomorrow. I look forward to working with the council and I am pleased it is now part of the fabric of ISU.

You may have read or heard recently in the media a very unsettling story about Illinois State students who have been rejected and financially abandoned by their families after coming out as LGBTQ.

Although their stories are upsetting, there is relief in the form of an emergency aid fund for these students through the Prairie Pride Coalition in the Dean of Students Office. If you are moved to contribute to that fund, you can find more information at a link off the giving.illinoisstate web page.

In early August, our vision for the value of Diversity and Inclusion received statewide notoriety as ISU won the Outstanding University Award from the Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce.

Illinois State earned the honor for forging new relationships and establishing several new contracts with African-American firms, and ISU was the only public university recognized in this manner.

Also top of mind this year will be the establishment of a Multicultural Center on Campus. Throughout the last academic year, the Multicultural Center Campus Task Force collected and analyzed data through focus groups held across campus. Last spring, the task force made recommendations to the President's Office with regard to the spaces, services, and staffing for the Center.

Given our strong desire for this community to fully embrace our value of Diversity and Inclusion, our vision is to have this facility in place and functional by fall of 2020. Therefore, we have identified an existing building, the current Instructional Technology and Development Center, to become the Multicultural Center.

The Center will feature student organization office spaces, event and meeting rooms, a full kitchen, a meditation room, gathering spaces, administrative offices, and satellite student support services.

We look forward to this exciting new space coming to fruition over the course of the next year, and I'd like to thank everyone involved for turning this vision into a reality.

The value of **Respect** was added to our core values when the campus community updated and renamed our strategic plan over the past two years. I believe the addition was born of a contentious political and social climate rippling throughout the country, with some symptoms of that climate appearing on this very campus.

I have often said that the largest room in the world is the room for improvement, and I believe achieving mutual respect for every individual and every group on campus is always going to be a work in progress.

Still, there are many ways Illinois State attaches a vision to the value of Respect. The Culturally Responsive Campus Community Conference is a partnership between the Dean of Students office and faculty from the College of Education, Social Work and other disciplines.

The vision for this conference is a goal of educating faculty, staff, students and community members on how to create a socially just campus environment for everyone.

This year's conference, is entitled "Building Solidarity Across Movements"—it will be held November 18th and 19th, but proposals are due next week—so please get to their website and get involved!

Leaders of Social Change is a week-long, immersive program that takes students to a city to examine leadership through the lens of social justice movements—movements which are key to the value of Respect. While on-site, the students participate in community service, meet activists from that community and learn the historic context on activism.

Our respect for veterans and active duty service men and women is well-known and well documented at Illinois State.

The University is consistently recognized by VIQTORY Media, and we are rated among the country's best universities for veterans by College Factual and *Military Advanced Education & Transition*.

Although we say it publicly every year during Veteran's Day ceremonies, we should be grateful every day for the service and sacrifice these heroes who make our freedom possible.

The value of Respect goes beyond the way we behave toward each other—its vision extends to the way we treat our campus environment.

In addition to the well-known Sustainability Expo on Earth Day and the Fell Arboretum/Tree Campus USA recognition, Illinois State works to respect its environment through a variety of activities.

This year, the university will invest in projects to improve the comfort of students, faculty, staff and visitors while at the same time saving energy and water.

Over the last 10 years our campus energy use per square foot has dropped by 11 percent and our water consumption per square foot has dropped by 7 percent.

This year, as in last, an enormous number of items will be diverted from landfills and donated from our residence halls to local organizations during spring move out. The program is called Pass It On- a joint effort involving Housing and ROTC.

In addition, student respect for recycling efforts led to work with the community in securing off-campus recycling for multi-family apartment dwellings. The students were a large voice in this initiative and it would not have happened without their efforts.

I also want you to know that I have met personally with county election officials, including County Clerk Kathy Michael, who has been very helpful. With input from university and county staff, our student's right to register and vote in a timely and efficient manner will also be respected. We will need to help get as many students as possible pre-registered, but we will double our voting venues, and will have more voting machines and election judges.

Examples of our vision for the recently added value of **Collaboration** abound, touching our programs and facilities and reaching out to the local community and well beyond.

Just recently, Illinois State began a collaboration with the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, joining over 200 member institutions of higher education.

The Center provides free access to a comprehensive collection of faculty-designed webinars, online short courses, and other resources to support the professional development and retention of pre-tenure and tenured faculty, doctoral students, and post-doctoral scholars.

Our Board of Trustees recently approved the lease for an Illinois State start-up incubator to be located in Uptown Normal. Combined with the University's collaboration as a hub of the new Illinois Innovation Network, the establishment of a facility to support student, faculty, and community start-ups will help to realize the University's vision to grow and diversify the local and regional economy.

After months of negotiations between Illinois State and Bradley University, our Public Radio Station WGLT, assumed management of Peoria's Public Radio station - WCBU - on June 1st .

This collaboration ensures public radio will continue to be heard in Peoria, and it provides a platform for Illinois State University to be more of a presence there.

Our collaboration with CORE Construction, their sub-contractors and our University staff has led to an amazing transformation through the Bone Student Center Revitalization.

Already completed elements of the revitalization include a new west entrance and circle drive, the relocation of Barnes & Noble Bookstore, the Atrium welcome and presentation center, three new retail venues: Qdoba, the Landing and yes—a Starbucks—for which Student Affairs Vice President L.J. Johnson is eternally grateful.

Improvements scheduled for this year include an exterior grand staircase and ramp, a new faculty/staff lounge, an enhanced Prairie Room and two additional dining venues—Timbers Grille and Star Ginger, both to be located in a large seating area called the Nest. There will also be many improvements to the first and second floor concourses.

Meanwhile, a separate project is providing additional enhancements to Milner Library.

Across campus from the Bone Student Center our collaborative efforts resulted in the completion just last month of the Culinary Support Center at Watterson Towers. The Center includes a full-service bakery, cook-chill production system, a smoker, test kitchen, private dining room, and provides a venue for classes in Food and Nutrition.

And, as you have probably noticed the exterior of the facility also features prominent Red signage facing east along North Street to help distinguish the area as another doorway to the Illinois State campus.

This new facility will allow Event Management Dining and Hospitality to enhance food quality in dining venues across campus, expand current menu options, improve food safety and consistency, and provide students with opportunities to contribute feedback on current recipes as well as ideas for new ones.

Just one month ago, Illinois State announced a private-public collaboration with a Rhode Island developer to construct a new 1,200-bed student residence to occupy the space where the Atkin-Colby residence hall once stood.

The demand for on-campus housing for freshmen and sophomores is growing, and we know that spending two years in on-campus housing enhances the student experience academically and socially while contributing to higher retention numbers.

In addition, our collaboration with the Town of Normal for an art gallery in Uptown Station was complemented late last month with a second gallery opening at the Central Illinois Regional Airport in Bloomington.

(pause)

Our value of **Individualized Attention** is what I would call Illinois State's "signature" value.

During the 8 years I have served the University, I have heard literally hundreds of times from alumni and from current students, how their professors and support staff members treated them as individuals—not just as another face in the classroom. Individualized Attention isn't just a phrase we print on a brochure and hand out at recruitment time.

It is real, and it is well-known among the hundreds of high school guidance counselors throughout Illinois who recommend Illinois State University to their students.

Individualized Attention is an important reason why Illinois State has averaged an enrollment of over 20,700 students for so long.

This year, we have taken it to a new level with a 33-year record enrollment. For that, I am grateful for the efforts of Enrollment Management, Admissions, Financial Aid, Housing, the Registrar's Office, the Graduate School and so many others.

Today, I also want to recognize a special group of students, who offer Individualized Attention to our prospective students and their families during campus visits—the Admissions Tour Team.

These are the terrific students who act as ambassadors, tour guides and housing tour guides, and who meet every week to add to their already vast knowledge of Illinois State. Along with our move-in volunteers, they are the front-line providers of Individualized Attention.

I have the pleasure of speaking to the group at the beginning of each school year, but I wanted you to meet them today.

Along with their leader, Traci Andracke, could our Admissions Tour Team please stand for recognition?

Through our attention to prospective students, we have experienced positive progress in our recruitment efforts, bringing academically motivated students to campus each fall. It is our priority to focus on the success of all students to ensure we retain them through graduation. We are enhancing efforts to help students thrive in college from admission to commencement, and to develop the skills and career readiness they need as Redbird alumni.

Meanwhile, our vision for Individualized Attention extends throughout the University, in places such as the Julia N. Visor Academic Center, Career Center and our culturally-based graduation ceremonies—and there are dozens of other examples. I don't know all of them, but I do know that the vision arising from our value of Individualized Attention is something that separates Illinois State from every other university in Illinois and beyond.

The vision that arises from our value of **Civic Engagement** is also unmatched in Illinois.

We were the first public university with an academic minor in Civic Engagement, we are **the only** public university with a Center for Community Engagement and Service learning. In addition, we were national trailblazers in the American Democracy Project and Political Engagement Project.

In March 2020, Alternative Breaks will celebrate its 20th anniversary. The first trip occurred over spring break in March 2000 with approximately 20 students. Now, Alternative Breaks encompasses spring, winter and summer breaks, as well as several weekend trips each year. During the last academic year, 194 students completed 21,904 hours of service. Also notable is the ongoing partnerships with organizations like Living Lands and Waters, which works along the Mississippi River, Camp Summit in Paradise, Texas, and Living Positive Kenya in Ngong Hills, Kenya.

In April of this year, the Illinois State and Illinois Wesleyan University joint Habitat for Humanity Campus Chapter completed construction of the 25th house in the chapter's 24-year history.

The latest home-build was a major milestone for the nationally award-winning chapter, and we are so proud of the engagement our Habitat faculty, staff and students from ISU and IWU have demonstrated for almost a quarter-century.

This past summer marked the 10th faculty cohort for Civic Engagement Course Redesign. Nearly 70 faculty members have now restructured a course to incorporate civic learning through a program offered by the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology and the American Democracy Project.

And, just last month, for the second year, The Community Consulting Board—a partnership of 12 local community organizations—met to advise our Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning as it works with local organizations and enhances Illinois State University’s service learning practices.

One more I want to mention—this year, Gamma Phi Circus marks 90 years of engagement with the campus and greater community.

Just last month, Gamma Phi was selected to sweeten Uptown Normal's Sweet Corn Festival by lending its name to the event and offering several performances. Gamma Phi will extend that engagement during this year's Homecoming celebration with the theme "Come One—Come All."—and they will perform at Herald Square during the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in front of 50 million television viewers. Along with their director Marcus Alouan, we have a group of Gamma Phi students joining us today. Could you please stand so we can recognize the oldest and finest collegiate circus in the country?

The final core value is **Integrity**, and you have heard me say on many occasions that Integrity binds all of our values together. As we plan the vision that is driven by our values, Integrity must also be constantly and consistently present. Today, I'd like to close with two examples of our vision of Integrity.

Illinois State student athletes have two lives—that of a full-time student and that of a full-time athlete—either in competition or in training for competition.

Although some student athletes are rewarded with scholarships, not all are—but all demonstrate a high degree of integrity. They are assisted by an outstanding group of coaches, staff members and often faculty mentors. 2018-19 was a banner year for Redbird Athletics, as Illinois State regained its spot at the top of the Missouri Valley Conference All-Sport Trophy standings. The Redbirds won six team titles during the 2018-19 season, which resulted in the Redbirds being crowned as the MVC All-Sports Champion for the 13th time overall.

But as successful as the Redbirds were on the field, they were equally as proficient in the classroom.

Illinois State student-athletes set a new semester departmental grade-point average record of 3.31 during the Spring 2019 semester, topping the previous record of 3.24 set during the previous two semesters.

Additionally, 93 student-athletes posted perfect 4.0 GPAs during the spring semester.

Along with coaches and staff members, several Illinois State student athletes have joined us today. Could you all please stand for recognition?

Thank you.

Finally, I want to talk briefly about *Redbirds Rising*, our tremendously successful comprehensive campaign. While many institutions are planning for next week, or next year, Illinois State's vision for Integrity demands we look further into the future to ensure generations of scholarship, leadership and innovation. That's the mission of *Redbirds Rising*, a campaign that aimed high and has already surpassed its lofty expectations.

As we enter the home stretch of *Redbirds Rising* the campaign has shattered the original goal of \$150 million to already over \$163 million and counting. Nearly 52,000 people have contributed to *Redbirds Rising* and almost 24,000 of them are new donors. For fiscal year 2019, Illinois State received record gift commitments of over \$37 million.

This is simply spectacular, especially when you consider that a few years ago, we were raising about \$10 million annually.

And, as I said earlier, we have announced the naming of the College of Fine Arts and the School of Art in recognition of the generosity of alumna Wonsook Kim and her husband, Thomas Clement, another historic first for Illinois State. This represents the largest cash gift in the University's history.

Gift commitments to Illinois State come from alumni, corporate partners, friends, and even members of the University family. This afternoon, I'd like you to meet two special retirees, Drs. Joe and Charlotte Talkington. Joe served Illinois State with distinction for 29 years as a professor and then chair in the Department of Industrial Technology.

Upon his retirement, Joe's family and friends established the Joe Talkington Scholarship for students majoring in Technology—an endowment that Joe has continued to build and grow.

Charlotte is an ISU Home Economic alum who served as a professor at Illinois State for 26 years. Charlotte has generously established three student scholarship funds and one faculty professional development fund at Illinois State to provide opportunity, support and encouragement for students and faculty.

Joe and Charlotte, can you please stand and accept our deepest gratitude for your generosity?

Thank you both.

As we enter the final year of *Redbirds Rising*, our fundraisers are hoping to finish with 15,000 new donors in an initiative called “Redbird Strong.” Across campus, the impact of *Redbirds Rising* investments can be seen from more than 180 new student support funds, to new endowed professorships designed to recruit top notch faculty, to enhanced learning spaces that promote innovation and collaboration. “Redbird Strong” aims to provide a stunning finale’ to this amazingly successful campaign.

I close this year's address in the same fashion I've done each year—with a simple and humble thank you for the support you have afforded me and Marlene since we became President and First Lady five-and-a-half years ago.

It is a pleasure, a privilege and an honor to serve you—and it is the personal and professional highlight of our careers.

Illinois State IS a University of Vision and Values. It is a phrase you will probably hear me say quite often along with Strong and Stable—both fit Illinois State quite well.

I thank you for your time and attention today, and for all you do to make Illinois State-Illinois' first and finest public University, and, of course, GO YOU REDBIRDS!