

State of the University Address—Dietz
Thursday, September 21—2 p.m.
Center for the Performing Arts

Thank you Senator Kalter.

Students, alumni, friends, and faculty and staff colleagues—good afternoon and welcome. I appreciate your taking the time to join me for my fourth State of the University Address as President of Illinois State University.

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

Members of the Board of Trustees of Illinois State University: Bob Dobski and John Rauschenberger.

President Emeritus, Dr. David Strand.

Leaders in community and state governance: State Sen. Jason Barickman, Rep. Dan Brady, and Rep. Keith Sommer.

Leaders in campus shared governance: Susan Kalter, Ron Gifford, Bob Blythe and Beau Grzanich.

And my Vice Presidential leadership team:

Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, Dr. Jan Murphy

Vice President for Finance and Planning, Dan Stephens.

Vice President for University Advancement Pat Vickerman.

Vice President for Student Affairs, Dr. Levester Johnson.

Thank you all very much for joining us today.

And one final very special introduction—Illinois State University’s First Lady—and my First Lady for many happy years, Marlene Dietz.

I begin this year’s State of the University Address with a simple, two-word message for our students, faculty, staff, alumni and Redbird friends—Thank You. The past two years of political and fiscal gridlock

have taken a harsh toll on all of us who work in Illinois' colleges and universities, and who still believe that public higher education is this state's most precious resource.

And although the impacts of the impasse were much greater at most sister institutions than on our campus, the constant barrage of partisan fingering-pointing and delaying tactics acted as a daily stressor, that constantly rippled through news media, social media and campus conversations.

So thank you—thank you for your patience—thank you for your support—thank you for your confidence.

I have often said that during challenging times, the two things we can control are planning processes and our attitude. Together, the people of Illinois State University controlled both—and today, we stand strong and stable, and poised for a bright future.

My optimism is somewhat tempered by a looming state election cycle that could hold hostage Springfield budget negotiations. Our campus planning processes will include a FY2019 state appropriation, and will also include contingencies in case stop gap budgeting is again the reality.

However, for the first time in three years, we enter a fresh fiscal and academic year with a state appropriation in place.

Illinois' 736-day budget impasse ended July 6, when lawmakers finally passed a fiscal year 2018 spending plan—the action bringing a brief but welcome sigh of relief on college campuses throughout Illinois.

For this fiscal year, FY2018, Illinois State University's state operating appropriation is just over \$65 million.

Although that amount is \$7.2 million less than the pre-impasse FY2015 budget, it is critical and greatly appreciated funding that allows the University to pay a backlog of bills and proceed with stability through the 2017-2018 academic year.

In addition, the University received \$33.9 million in last year, FY2017 funds. When added to an earlier stopgap budget, the final FY2017 appropriation totaled \$72.2 million, equaling the FY2015 level. The state also reimbursed ISU for the millions in Monetary Award Program funds ISU had advanced to its 4,000 students with the greatest financial need.

Still, the impasse was a political and economic storm that left in its wake a great deal of damage. For many institutions, full recovery may be years away—if ever.

In purely financial terms, the two-year impasse left Illinois State with \$51 million less than if state appropriations had simply remained at the FY2015 level.

Almost all of the loss was absorbed in FY2016, when the final state appropriation was \$20.9 million, a 71 percent or \$51 million cut from FY2015. The last year Illinois State received an appropriation of just \$20.9 million was during the 1960s.

One of the many myths about Illinois public higher education is that college and university leaders walk a worn path to the state capital to stick our hands out and ask for increasing amounts of taxpayer money. Allow me today to bust that myth. This fiscal year's operating budget is \$27 million less than in FY2002, and as you can see on the chart, since 2002, Illinois State's state appropriations have, for the most part, remained stagnant or declined.

In the four years I have provided House and Senate budget testimony, I have not once asked for greater amounts of funding. What I have respectfully requested is a measure of predictability, an effort to maintain fiscal stability, and a willingness to engage in bi-partisan conversations about the future of public higher education in Illinois.

In the meantime, I have thanked our Governor and the General Assembly for the appropriations we did receive while the University planned its work around major funding reductions.

Illinois State has managed those reductions by leaving more than 120 non-faculty positions vacant, slowing the pace of non-safety related construction and maintenance projects, postponing or cancelling some large equipment purchases and curtailing travel.

We weathered the political storm better than most. Quarter-century enrollment records, low debt burdens and careful spending provided a safety net for our academic enterprise. We kept faculty in their classrooms and student support staff members in their offices. We managed without layoffs, furlough days, program eliminations or building closures.

Our Board of Trustees held the tuition, fee, room and board package at last year's levels, and we even managed a modest salary increase for faculty and staff. Simply put, we placed our students first while also making our faculty and staff a high priority.

This year, we will seek once again to invest in our students, our faculty, and our support staff. We will invest more than \$12 million to supplement the state's Monetary Award Program, ensuring all of our

students have the necessary financial resources. In addition, I have doubled the budget in a University College program that provides tools to help raise the retention and graduation rates for underrepresented, first generation and financially at-risk students. These tools are based on our already successful student support services program that offers highly individualized attention for assistance, counseling and mentoring. We will also invest in additional merit-based scholarships to attract and retain new students from Illinois and beyond.

Meanwhile, I am discussing with our financial and academic leadership, initiatives to make further investment in our outstanding faculty and staff during this academic year. Right now, the salaries of full and associate professors at Illinois State lag significantly behind those at many of our peer group institutions.

My goal is to begin closing that gap—a gap that has resulted in salary compression and inversion issues on campus. One mechanism we are investigating is to enhance the promotion increase for those who have

been elevated from assistant to associate professor and associate to full professor while serving at Illinois State.

Finally, as I did last year, I will seek to provide a modest, mid-year, merit-based salary increase for all eligible faculty and staff members. I stress that none of these initiatives are as of yet written in stone—but you will be likely be hearing more about them at the college, departmental and divisional levels during this academic year.

One of the hallmarks of Illinois State is the dynamic teaching and caring support services offered by our faculty and staff members—and all of you deserve to be compensated to the best of our financial ability.

(pause)

If you have heard me speak before, you know I'm fond of saying, 'Let's plan our work—then work the plan.' As with any University planning process—I always begin by consulting our overarching strategic plan—

Educating Illinois.

Educating Illinois was first adopted as the University blueprint for success back in 2000, and it has since been updated three times—in 2004, 2008 and 2013. One year ago, I appointed a task force to once again review and revise this most important operating document.

During the spring 2017 semester, that task force asked the University community for input, and you responded in force, with some important recommendations.

Among the emerging feedback themes are:

- Staying true to who we are, and growing where we can
- Keeping enrollment as a priority
- Recruiting and retaining “talent”
- Cultivating innovation
- Focusing on the core values of Diversity and Civic Engagement
- and, Taking bold new steps

Recently, the planning task force electronically distributed a draft of the revised strategic plan throughout campus. You can find it online at the

Educating Illinois website. Once again, they ask for your review and comment throughout this fall semester.

The updated plan proposes some ambitious new goals and strategies. It also offers two new core values. One is Collaboration—a commitment to our internal dedication to shared governance, as well as our outward partnerships with industry, government and education.

The other proposed new core value is Respect—the ideal that differences of belief and opinion can be expressed with civility, and that we can address mutual concerns as a community. I honestly cannot think of a more critical time in our nation’s recent history for this particular core value.

In addition, the word Inclusion has been added to our core value of Diversity, reminding us that quality cannot exist without diversity and that diversity will only thrive through inclusion.

Finally, the draft offers a new look—and a new name:

Educate, Connect, Elevate.

What's in a name? Our task force believes Educate, Connect, Elevate reflects the tone and tenor of responses from the campus community during the spring '17 consultation phase.

The new title seeks to communicate the University's broader aspirations, building on 17 years of achievement under *Educating Illinois*.

While we pause to read, reflect and comment on the proposed new plan, I want to thank all of you for engaging in this process. I particularly want to thank our task force for the terrific work they have done thus far in bringing the document forward for consideration. Could members of the task force please stand for acknowledgement?

(applause)

Thank you.

Taking time to revise our strategic plan does not mean other plans are placed on hold—in fact we are quickly moving forward on a very busy 2017-2018 University agenda.

Two significant events took place just last week. One—we formally broke ground for a major renovation of the Bone Student Center. The Bone Center is our most highly-used non-instructional building for the campus and community—welcoming up to 5,000 guests each day and hosting more than 4,500 meetings and events annually. The 43-year old facility has never undergone a significant remodeling—so we are anxious to make progress this year.

Upgrades will include a new, two-story welcome center that will offer an excellent view of the Quad. For most prospective students, families and visitors—the Bone Student Center is the first stop, and we want to make a more attractive first impression. This addition will not only offer a more welcoming space—it will showcase the Quad—which, of course, has always been a big selling point for the University.

Another major goal of the upgrade is to open up the facility—knocking away some concrete and bringing more natural light to the space. In addition, the renovation will add more dining options and reconfigured event spaces.

This revitalization project has a price tag of \$33 million—but I am pleased to say that tax funds are not part of the investment, and that student fees have not been raised, and will not be raised, to pay for the project. In fact, this upgrade is funded almost entirely through on-hand cash and investments, and very little associated bond indebtedness.

Meanwhile, just yesterday, we celebrated the formal ribbon-cutting for the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning. When I delivered my First State of the University message in the fall of 2014, I called on the campus community to develop such a Center. Thanks to the tireless work of a great many people, this project has come to fruition.

The new Center, located in the former Honors Building at the corner of North and Fell, is perhaps the most tangible evidence of our Civic Engagement core value. It ties many of our existing service programs together, and partners with other University initiatives such as the American Democracy Project, the Stevenson Center and the Office of Sustainability. Under the leadership of Interim Director Dr. Jan Paterson, the Center serves as a point of contact for faculty, staff, students, and community organizations interested in learning more about campus and community engagement activities. The Center also serves as the lead department on campus in pursuit of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Today, I also want to update you on the work of our Climate Assessment Task Force, which has completed its final report and will soon launch a new website. The website will include implementation updates, accomplishments, and resources that promote the mission and vision of our inclusive campus community.

Several of the Task Force’s short-term recommendations have been or are being implemented, and mid and longer-term recommendations are in the discussion and planning stages.

One includes a new, campus-wide Diversity Executive Council, which I see as a clear step toward the institutionalization of diversity on campus.

We are all a reflection of our University values, and the establishment of the Diversity Executive Council reinforces this core value while sending the message that diversity and inclusion must emanate from every office and every individual on campus. I believe the creation of an executive council offers the chance for everyone to have a voice that will lead us to become a stronger University.

I am grateful to the Task Force, its Steering Committee and its sponsoring leadership—as well as everyone who contributed to the report and its recommendations—and I look forward to the unveiling of the new website this fall. If any members of the Task Force are in the audience today, could you please stand for recognition?

(applause)

Thank you.

At a time when political and economic bottlenecks are an obstacle to progress, Illinois State University continues to plan forward and move forward. At a time when faith in the state of Illinois is questionable, confidence in Illinois State remains high.

We will move confidently through the 2017-2018 academic year with several significant initiatives. The University's new Cybersecurity major is available this fall, with courses focused on defensive and offensive security, and a combination of security incident and event management with forensics. Illinois State is the first University in Illinois with a Cybersecurity major, and the initiative has received a \$3 million vote of confidence from our corporate partners at State Farm. Their gift establishes an endowed chair position that will provide leadership for the newly-created major in the School of Information Technology, as well as funding for program enhancements and renovation of existing space to strengthen the learning environment for students.

Meanwhile over the past several months, I have been engaged in discussions with faculty members from several departments and schools to determine the feasibility of establishing engineering programs in select areas at Illinois State. So far—the areas of Engineering Physics and Mechanical, Electrical and Systems Engineering show promise. Faculty have already examined employment outlook data for various engineering specialties and have drafted some plans of study. Next steps for our faculty include visits to several universities with existing programs to better understand the resources, facilities, equipment and personnel needed to launch engineering programs.

You may remember that during last year's State of the University Address, I announced a goal to increase our international enrollment to 5 percent of total enrollment within 5 years and 10 percent of total enrollment within 10 years. These percentages are consistent with most Universities of our size and mission, and would not adversely impact State of Illinois students who wish to attend ISU.

I am pleased to tell you today that we have entered the partnership development phase with INTO University Partnerships, an organization focused on expanding higher education opportunities for students worldwide.

INTO is an experienced entity that has a wide international recruiting network, a proven business plan, and a track record of results that will enable the University to strengthen international student preparation programs, extend global marketing efforts, and deliver an exceptional international student experience.

Representatives from INTO have visited campus four times to meet with working groups of faculty and staff members to discuss and determine admissions processes, majors and related curricula, as well as financial and legal matters. We expect a final agreement with INTO will be signed before the end of this semester and the first group of international students will be enrolled in the program for fall 2018.

As we look to diversify our enrollment, I believe we also must further investigate and consider online degree programs. Today, Illinois State is missing out on portion of the population – nontraditional students—for whom physical attendance in a classroom is not feasible.

I have asked Interim Provost Murphy to prepare a business plan that will identify resources needed for Illinois State to successfully launch online degree programs in majors that make sense for the University, and to establish a reasonable timeline to implement this strategy.

I can assure you we will be deliberate and diligent in conducting our research and determining a model that is right for ISU.

Illinois State Athletics is also taking bold new steps to grow on the national scene, thanks to a first-of-its-kind partnership with Learfield, the leading company in representing collegiate programs in the sponsorship marketplace.

The partnership guarantees almost \$20 million over the 10-year period of the agreement that will help support Redbird Athletics academic programs for its student-athletes. Fans and alumni all over the country will also have the opportunity to watch Illinois State sporting events, as Redbird Productions has plans to broadcast a record number of events during the 2017-18 season via The Valley on ESPN3 platform.

Thanks to a partnership with our School of Communication, student broadcasters and crew members will continue to be utilized in the broadcasts which stream live online to millions of followers via their computers, smart phones, tablets and smart TVs.

Clearly, the Illinois State University community has a lot to be excited about this year, and we are fortunate to be moving forward in a more stable higher education environment.

Our freshman enrollment numbers moderated slightly this fall after three years of quarter century records—but our overall enrollment is very strong at 20,784.

I want to thank in particular, our terrific staffs from Enrollment Management, Admissions, Registration, Financial Aid, University College, and Housing, along everyone connected with recruiting and retaining students to Illinois State University. Fewer students are graduating from Illinois high schools, competition from out-of-state universities is intense—and a two-year budget impasse made students and their families question the value of public higher education in the state of Illinois.

Still, Illinois State has 20,784 students—and given the current state climate, I think that is remarkable. Our classrooms and learning laboratories are full, our residence halls are at or near capacity, and our campus is clean, safe and active.

The Illinois State brand remains strong, and our metrics of excellence continue to draw large numbers of high-achieving students to the heart of Illinois.

Our success arises from our talented faculty and caring staff, our motivated student body—but it also comes from the support of our alumni, retirees, corporate partners and Redbird friends.

This past weekend the University publicly launched Redbirds Rising: The Campaign for Illinois State, the most ambitious fundraising campaign in ISU's history. Redbirds Rising is a \$150 million dollar fundraising initiative that will provide financial resources to scholarship and academic excellence, educate tomorrow's leaders, and spark creativity and innovation throughout our campus.

Given our strengths and recent accomplishments—now is the time for the University to take our next big step so we continue to thrive in the years ahead. Now is the time to build upon our successes, to secure the future of our University, and help our students rise to new levels of academic excellence.

So how do we advance the university and continue on this positive trajectory? We asked that very question of our leaders throughout campus, our vice presidents and deans of each college.

The answer is to advance three objectives, which are the pillars for Redbirds Rising:

Scholarship [Student and Faculty Support]

Leadership [Programming and Experiential Learning]

Innovation [Creative Workspaces and Technology]

With the public announcement of Redbirds Rising, the campus emerges from what in fundraising is called the “quiet phase” of the campaign.

During our quiet phase, we learned that our alumni and friends are ready to help advance Illinois State to bold new heights. The last four years represent the most successful era of private gift support in ISU’s history, building tremendous momentum.

In fact, to date I can announce that we have raised more than **\$103 million dollars** toward our campaign goal to reach the \$150 million mark by June 2020.

I am asking Redbirds across our campus—students, faculty, staff, and/or alumni— to join in support of Redbirds Rising. The Campaign for Illinois State. I urge you to tell your Illinois State story to others, sharing how your life has been changed by your experience.

Share the news of the campaign with other alumni and friends in your network, and inspire others to give.

And now, I'd like to share the campaign video that debuted last Saturday night at the donor kickoff event, featuring the voice of Illinois State alum, and Steppenwolf Theater co-founder Jeff Perry.

(VIDEO)

(applause)

Well thank you Jeff—and thank all of you for your time and attention this afternoon. I hope this is another great year of working together and meeting our victories and our challenges in a spirit of community.

Together we make Illinois State a great place to work, live, teach and learn.

Thank you all so very much.

