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I want to thank Chairman Shah, Members of the Board, and President White for the opportunity to speak with you this afternoon. As an alum of the University of Illinois and the mother of another alum, I have a deep appreciation for the good work you do and the significant contribution you make to the well-being of the state and its citizens.

I am particularly gratified to be able to discuss with you this afternoon, the **Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success**. In my view, the Public Agenda is the most significant development in Illinois higher education in perhaps a generation. It has the potential to place higher education at the forefront of the state's agenda.

What is the Illinois Public Agenda?

In simple terms, it is a roadmap to the future. It will be a guide for our higher education system, the legislature and Governor.

The Illinois Public Agenda is the product of a thoughtful, deliberative, and collaborative process, which is described on this slide. It yielded a set of goals, recommendations, strategies and specific action steps that will affect the lives of Illinois residents, and the state's future economic and social well-being, for a generation or more.

We intend for the Public Agenda to change higher education as we've known it. It will drive the Board's policy, budget recommendation and legislative agenda. We anticipate it will alter in meaningful ways the priorities of our colleges and universities. We believe it will have a significant impact on how the General Assembly regards P-20 policy and the allocation of scarce state resources.

We cannot do this alone. For this agenda to achieve its potential, we need – and frankly expect – the full participation and partnership of every college and university in Illinois.

Why we did it.

The short answer is: The General Assembly asked us to do it. In the Spring 2007 session, the legislature passed House Joint Resolution 69, which directed the IBHE to set up a task force to oversee a major master planning initiative for Illinois higher education and the state.

But the fact is, we asked for it. And the real purpose was two-fold:

First, too many legislators don't get it – they don't understand what is obvious to all of us: higher education matters. It matters to the state's economy and the state treasury, to our workers and employers, to our quality of life, our civic engagement and cultural vitality. Higher education matters to the future of Illinois, and the Illinois Public

Agenda for College and Career Success will help more legislators get that.

Second, Illinois is in trouble. The most significant conclusion of the Illinois Public Agenda study is that there are *two* states of Illinois – one is well-off and the other is struggling; one is highly educated and the other is educationally underserved; one is economically vibrant and the other is economically stagnant.

Separating these two states of Illinois is a vast and widening **prosperity gap** -- divided by race, ethnicity, income and geography – which directly results from differences in educational attainment.

The State of Illinois simply cannot compete – perhaps not even survive – in the global economy unless we close this gap in educational attainment. Simply put, Illinois needs more people with more education. Achievement of this goal is not only necessary, it is urgent. We need action and we need it now.

We may discuss and debate the best path to closing the prosperity gap, but the bedrock goals that form the superstructure of the Illinois Public Agenda are not debatable and must be met: To

- Increase educational attainment,
- Make Illinois 1 of the top 5 states in affordability,
- Increase production of degrees in high-demand workforce areas, and

- Integrate the state's superb research into its economic development strategies.

How the Public Agenda was developed.

Let me review briefly how we got to where we are today. A few statistics are revealing:

- The Public Agenda Task Force was comprised of 28 individuals who represented a vast array of higher education constituencies and stakeholders.
- The Task Force held six formal meetings, each at independent colleges and universities.
- There were 34 regional forums at 17 community colleges across the state, attended by nearly 700 stakeholders in higher education.
- The Task Force sponsored hearings at six public universities, including one at the University of Illinois at Springfield.
- The consultants from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) met with every public university president and held briefings for legislators, college and university trustees, business leaders, union representatives, civic officials, plus many other one-on-one sessions with members of the General Assembly.
- The Public Agenda Task Force numbered 28, but the number of people who participated in the meetings, forums and hearings, and who sent comments via e-mail or through the website portal was close to 1,000.

The point is that this planning process was open, transparent and collaborative. We not only listened to the voices of a variety of stakeholders, we heard what they had to say, and the document embraced by the IBHE changed significantly over the course of the process as we incorporated the suggestions and recommendations we received.

On November 21, the Public Agenda Task Force voted unanimously to adopt the Public Agenda and on December 8 the Board of Higher Education approved it.

What now?

I believe the development of the Public Agenda is a significant accomplishment. It represents the concerted effort of all stakeholders to understand the challenges and opportunities facing Illinois, and to chart a common course for meeting them.

You have, I believe, received copies of the Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies from the Public Agenda, as well as in the Executive Summary we have distributed, but we have them displayed for you here as well.

However, adoption of the Public Agenda is not the end, but merely the beginning of a process. Unless the Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success becomes a living, dynamic part of

everything we do in higher education, it will be meaningless and the State of Illinois will continue to languish in a spiral of educational mediocrity and economic stagnation.

What the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems consultants told the IBHE board last December encapsulates the point. They said, “If you are spending your time . . . on things other than the Public Agenda, then you are on the wrong agenda.”

So, here is what we’re doing:

The Public Agenda is driving our budget. The budget recommendations the Board approved in January link virtually all higher education spending to the four goals of the Public Agenda. For instance, we are supporting funding of:

- **Goal 1:** P-20 data systems, the College and Career Readiness Program, the P-20 Council.
- **Goal 2:** Increased MAP funding, dual-credit grants.
- **Goal 3:** High-need healthcare grants, baccalaureate completion grants, adult education programs.
- **Goal 4:** Research matching grants, an initiative very dear to research institutions such as the U of I.

As we build the 2011 higher ed budget, we intend to refine this process to ensure that institutions are making state priorities their campus priorities as well. Simply put, if what we are funding does not advance the Public Agenda goals, then we should not be funding it.

The Public Agenda is driving our legislative agenda. The legislation we are supporting includes:

- **Goal 1:** SB 1828 – Comprehensive P-20 Longitudinal Data System.
- **Goal 2:**
 - HB 150 – 21st Century Scholars Program, an early intervention effort to entice middle school students to take a rigorous high school curriculum.
 - HB 1079 – Dual Credit Quality Act to ensure programs for students to get high school and college credit meet collegiate academic standards.
 - HJR 54 – requires a study on college affordability and an approach to higher education funding that considers state funding, financial aid, and institutional tuition and fees.
- **Goal 3:** SB 1883 – baccalaureate completion grants.

The Public Agenda is driving policy initiatives. Here are some of the policies we are pursuing:

- High School to College Report – a new feedback report that shows high schools how their students are doing in college.
- The American Diploma Project (ADP) – an initiative aimed at aligning academic standards between the K-12 system and higher education.

- Expanding the College and Career Readiness Pilot to diagnose student academic shortcomings while still in high school to reduce the need for remediation once they get to college.
- Funding and startup of P-20 Council.
- Strengthening school leader standards.
- Financial aid for adult learners.
- STEM initiatives – IMSA new field offices for professional development.

The Public Agenda is even driving the Board of Higher Education meeting agenda and format.

- We have changed our meeting agenda to ensure we concentrate our time and energy on matters relating to the Public Agenda.
- We also have restructured the agenda to include a dash board describing specific actions to implement the public agenda and an in-depth discussion of major Public Agenda issues at each of our meetings.
 - In April, the Board invited Pat Callan, President of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, to speak on ways to connect higher ed funding to the goals of the Public Agenda.
 - In June, the Board will hear from Pam Tate, President and CEO of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) regarding the need to strengthen

programs for adult learners, another key strategy of the Public Agenda.

Those are some of the things we're doing. What are you doing?

I was gratified to learn that the University is doing quite a lot that relates to the Illinois Public Agenda, and I congratulate you and the chancellors of the three U of I campuses for your efforts to bring the Public Agenda to life in Urbana-Champaign, Springfield and Chicago.

I am impressed with your initiatives to improve educational attainment through partnerships with community colleges, your engagement with Chicago Public Schools and the outreach to rural communities. I applaud your assistance for students of limited means to make a University of Illinois degree accessible regardless of financial wherewithal. I appreciate your creative use of technology to expand access and increase degree production in high-need occupational fields. And I value your distinction as one of the great research universities in the nation, indeed the world. I thank you for all of those efforts.

Your response to the Public Agenda is what I would expect of a great university. It is what we at the Board of Higher Education would expect of the University of Illinois.

But, I need to ask you for more. I respectfully ask that you go beyond the impressive roster of activities and initiatives you are already doing

and accept a challenge that the University of Illinois is uniquely able and well-positioned to meet: take leadership.

I am asking that you make the Illinois Public Agenda the University of Illinois Public Agenda.

I am asking that you demonstrate to your sister public institutions, to the broader higher education community, and to the General Assembly and Governor . . .

. . . that you regard the Public Agenda as the most significant, viable and urgent path to prosperity for the state and its citizens; . . .

. . . that you consider the great divide between the one Illinois and the other Illinois unacceptable and show us that you are prepared to marshal the University's mighty resources to achieve a unified, prosperous One Illinois; . . .

. . . that the U of I will take the lead in getting all Illinois citizens on the path to college and career success.

How can you do this?

I don't want to be presumptuous in dictating a specific agenda or action plan to you. But please consider this: There are a couple areas of the Public Agenda, in particular, where we most need your

help and where you can most impact the educational and economic future of Illinois.

First, Goal 1 – increasing educational attainment and reducing the achievement gap.

We need to look no further than an article in the current issue of *Illinois Alumni* for some wise counsel: “Starting strong and finishing strong are the best human-capital investments we can make.”

That advice comes from President Joe White, who advocates state investments to:

- Expand quality early childhood education.
- Improve K-12 education to reduce the high school dropout rate, increase student preparation for college, promote greater access to college and degree completion, and strengthen efforts to meet the educational needs of non-traditional and first-generation students.
- Instill the importance of lifelong learning.

That is sound advice, and there is a multitude of specific action steps recommended in The Illinois Public Agenda document, which will soon be published and be available on the IBHE website (www.ibhe.org).

I challenge you to make the commitment that U of I will “Lead a Human Capital Initiative designed to ensure that children are ready

for kindergarten, prepared for college, succeed to degree completion, and become lifelong learners.” You can do this, and the people of Illinois need your commitment.

Second, Goal 4 – building a stronger link between academic research and economic development.

Clearly, this goal is a natural for one of the world’s premier research universities. Illinois universities enjoy an enviable position, ranking among the top 10 states in all major fields of university research and development expenditures. But the state does not enjoy the economic fruits of that research in terms of development of innovation assets and new business startups.

How can we marry the two? Can the University of Illinois lead statewide efforts that leverage university research – both public and private – to create increased entrepreneurial activity? Can the University of Illinois build a higher education coalition that will address the regional disparities in economic growth? Can the University of Illinois organize an alliance of education, business and labor to develop cutting-edge programs across the P-20 spectrum to prepare students to succeed in the global economy? I hope the answer to those questions is “yes”.

So, that is my request – that you gather the collective educational, research, and public service resources of your three outstanding campuses, and help us achieve these ambitious but absolutely vital

goals – improving educational attainment . . . eliminating the achievement gap . . . and building a stronger economy.

The Board of Higher Education, as I mentioned, has a regular update of Public Agenda progress. I would like to report to the Board at its August 11th meeting in Chicago that the University of Illinois has accepted this challenge and how, together, we can move forward to achieve these goals.

This is a great University. I am proud to be an alum of the University of Illinois. And I'm pleased to have a higher education policymaking role in a state that boasts a University of such stature and prestige.

My challenge to you today is to spread that greatness around. Put that greatness to work with your leadership, your reputation, your example, your resources and your actions.

The Illinois Public Agenda is our roadmap to the future. The road may be long, and it certainly will be difficult, but the journey is vital to create a prosperous Illinois where all residents have a chance for college and career success. Please join us – please help lead us – on this journey.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would be delighted to answer any questions the Board may have.