

Applegate's Update

Lessons Learned from Illinois' Budget Disaster

I have been asked by friends and colleagues at more than one national organization to share lessons being learned from the budget disaster in Illinois. Many states are suffering from differing levels of disinvestment in higher education but no state has completely defunded its system as Illinois has. They want to know what it looks like when a major state descends to this level. Everyone remotely associated with education knows the value of reflection even in the midst of chaos. So here are a few reflections as we continue on this dangerous path in Illinois.

1. When government becomes dysfunctional those who least can afford to be hurt are hurt the most. Of course this is not just true in higher education but certainly applies in this sector. The first students to be hurt in Illinois were low income students in Illinois that rely on the state Monetary Award Program (MAP) for financial aid. Though our colleges have struggled throughout the year to protect them from harm ("fronting" their costs), the added stress of not knowing if and when their costs would be covered was added to the other family, financial, and social stresses they experience unlike their wealthier peers. As the impasse has gone on some institutions have been unable to sustain support asking students to "pay up." The average annual income of an independent MAP student is about \$16,000; for a dependent student the average annual income of their family is not much above \$30,000. Dropping out is the only option for many. These students have done all we asked of them to become productive members of our society. They trusted us. We are failing them.

The same principle applies at the institutional level. Those institutions most dependent on state support through state appropriations and state need based aid are the ones closest to the precipice, being forced to slash programs, layoff faculty and staff, and have their very existence threatened. These are also the institutions who tend to serve a higher percentage of Illinois' low income and underrepresented students. If these institutions cannot provide college opportunity for these students, many will have no college opportunity at all. They cannot board a plane or be driven to live in a distant college locale.

2. Solutions require "politics" to be practiced as envisioned by our founders. Politics has become a disparaging term thanks to the behavior of many politicians. However, our founders chose to ground our government in an explicitly political process. They knew it was a messy process that requires continuous compromise leading to temporary agreements that are soon subject to more conversation and new compromises. Still they chose it over monarchy, oligarchy, and authoritarianism for a society characterized by diverse interests. When done correctly people of principle come together acknowledging and respecting their differences while understanding that bending those principles will be required to do the people's business. Ad hominem, demonizing, and dehumanizing attacks are strategies certain to destroy the process. Ideological purity must be subordinated to doing what at a particular place and time makes life better for the most people. Disagreement and debate are not antithetical to comradery and trust. We know we only progress at the speed of trust. Higher education as a driver of both economic development and social justice should be fertile ground for re-growing

this type of politics. Reasserting the political process the founders envisioned is proving challenging to say the least. It will be necessary to progress.

3. Progress requires stability grounded in trust. We all know that higher education needs to reassess its business model and develop strategies to increase its efficiency, effectiveness, and affordability for the millions of additional people with limited resources who want a college education. However, that kind of planning is impossible when annual or even biannual state budgets are wildly buffeted by changing political winds making planning and revenue/expenditure projections impossible. The slash and burn approaches that have been forced upon the Illinois system in the face of a completely unexpected elimination of all funding for almost a year are in no way strategic or helpful in becoming more efficient and effective.

The Illinois Board of Higher Education, recognizing this, has proposed a three part solution. First a 2016 budget immediately that minimizes damage to the system through a combination of new revenues and necessary reductions. Second, a foundation level budget in 2017 to stop the bleeding. Third and most importantly, calling on the state to use the moment of calm produced by these first two steps in 2016-17 to develop the Illinois Higher Education Compact. The Compact provides mutual commitments from the state for stable funding for three years in exchange for improved metrics and performance of the higher education system: greater efficiency and effectiveness and better student outcomes. The Compact will require the compromise and trust characterizing politics at its best.

4. Higher education at its best is so much more than a business. Recent polls have suggested the public is taking higher education off its pedestal: more people see it as business more committed to its own interests than its students. The last 10 months in Illinois have provided multiple counter examples to that perception. Illinois colleges have struggled mightily to protect their students from harm during this budget storm. As noted, they have painfully realigned internal budgets to support continued enrollment for their low income students. They continue to support military veteran students even though the state has eliminated its state scholarship support for these students. Through the year we have seen continued attempts to restructure academic programs to better align them with career success for students. One university recently announced that despite everything they were committing to ensuring lower division courses were taught by full time faculty to better support student persistence. The list goes on. My point is this: in so many ways our colleges have not acted like corporations committed to shareholders but rather as educators committed to the public good.

5. Fully addressing the damage done by breaking the public trust will be a multi-year effort. It has always been difficult to explain the complex dynamics of what drives higher education's progress or retrenchment to those outside the system. In the past, as inadequate and delayed as support has often been for Illinois higher education, there has always been the assumption that commitments would eventually be honored. We have reached the point where that assumption no longer holds. Parents and students are unsure the programs they want or even the institutions they have chosen will be there for them in the long term. Efforts to attract talented faculty/staff or retain the best we have is nearly impossible as the news of Illinois' troubles have been splashed across state and national media outlets and large layoffs have begun. Anyone who has ever been in a human relationship knows that trust, once broken, takes time to repair. A state budget tomorrow will not immediately restore that trust. The IBHE knows that it must partner with its colleges to begin to rebuild that trust over multiple years through reliable service to our students and faculty and support from our stakeholders. It will not be easy but it will be absolutely necessary for the return to long term health of the higher education system and the state.

On March 28, **U.S. District Judge Sharon Johnson Coleman** ruled in Chicago federal court to dismiss a legal challenge from Illinois Bible colleges and a student at one of the colleges accusing the state of Illinois, through statutes administered by the **Illinois Board of Higher Education**, of violating the First Amendment by requiring Bible colleges to meet certain standards before awarding degrees to their students. Coleman granted a motion by IBHE, represented by **Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan**, to dismiss the suit for failure to state a claim. "The evaluation criteria set forth in the statutes are secular and do not require inquiry into the reasons for religious practice," Coleman wrote. "Instead, the criteria seek to determine the institution's capability to carry out the education that it is purporting to provide based upon finances, transparency and training." The case is *Illinois Bible Colleges Association, et al. v. Lindsay K. Anderson*, No. 15 C 444.

[The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville \(SIUE\) School of Nursing \(SON\) and Lake Land College have announced a new partnership. The Bachelor of Science in nursing degree track](#) enables community college students to rapidly achieve their baccalaureate degree from the SON. Students must have previously attended Lake Land College to complete an associate degree and the majority of the general education requirements. "This is going to benefit students who may not have originally seen themselves going into a four-year program," said SON **Assistant Dean Dr. Roberta Harrison**. "They can complete the coursework for an associate degree at the community college level. When they transition into our online program, they can already see the light at the end of the tunnel."

"Lake Land College is the second community college to work with us on a program of this nature," said **Dr. Laura Bernaix, interim dean of the SON**. "This is an agreement that other community colleges in Illinois also desire, because it is a seamless, cost-effective way to help meet the demand for baccalaureate prepared nurses." **Lake Land College President Josh Bullock** said the college's nursing program is vital to the region's economic viability

Phi Theta Kappa has recognized 40 top colleges and universities as members of the inaugural [Excellence in Community College Transfer Honor Roll](#), which identifies the top four-year colleges and universities for creating dynamic pathways to support community college transfer. Two Illinois universities, **Illinois State University and DePaul University** are included in the special recognition. The new recognition program reflects the growing importance of transfer in helping the U.S. achieve its college completion goals and will promote further study and sharing of best practices.

Increasing Affordability

Danville Area Community College (DACC) was recently surprised with a gift valued at nearly \$1 million from the late **Harold and Virginia "Ginny" Auter** of Danville. "It was a wonderful surprise," **DACC Foundation Executive Director Tracy Wahfeldt** said. "Family members say that the Auters liked to 'help their fellow human beings.'"

The Auters were married for 56 years and both died in 2014. Mr. Auter, an Army veteran, first attended DACC (then called Danville Junior College) before earning an engineering degree at the University of Illinois and returned to take computer classes in his 80s.

Their gift will be used to establish the Harold "Boo" and Ginny Auter Endowed Scholarship fund. "We are incredibly grateful," **DACC President Alice Marie Jacobs** said. "Students now and into the future will be able to attend DACC."

Illinois College has announced its [Finish in Four program](#), ensuring that first-time, first-year students will graduate in four years, or the college will cover the cost of the remaining required courses. Finish in Four is a voluntary program starting Fall 2016. Participating students will attend Student Success workshops and be paired with an academic adviser who will assist with academic planning, registration and career guidance. Throughout the program students will have to maintain continuous enrollment earning a C or better in their classes.

"We are excited and confident to offer this opportunity to first-time, first-year students starting this fall," **President Barbara Farley** said. "Illinois College's dedication to student success means most of our students already graduate in four years but this program guarantees it. It's yet one more way that Illinois College provides an excellent education that makes the most of our student's college investment."

Upcoming Events

The **National Network of State Teachers of the Year** (NNSTOY) will present their 2016 conference, "Teachers Leading: Bridging Theory of Practice," July 11-14, 2016, in Chicago. [Click here](#) for registration and a preliminary agenda.

People in the News



Governors State University President Elaine P. Maimon has been elected to the Board of Directors of the **American Council on Education** (ACE), the major coordinating body for the nation's colleges and universities. Maimon was elected to the Board during ACE's 98th Annual Meeting and will serve a three-year term. "I am honored to be elected to the Board of Directors of ACE, an organization that represents all sectors of higher education. I look forward to working with **President Molly Corbett Broad** and with fellow Board members to make the case for the importance of colleges and universities to our national agenda."

Alex Jansen, a student in the Mass Communication program at **Highland Community College** (HCC), was awarded [first place in the Reel Illinois Community College film competition](#) at an **Illinois Community College Trustees Association** (ICCTA) luncheon Friday, March 11. Jansen received a \$1,000 scholarship award for his film "The Voices of Highland Community College." The three-minute video was part of a state-wide competition sponsored by the ICCTA. With 65 percent of Illinois students in higher education attending Community Colleges, the films submitted to the competition were to focus on enhancing school engagement and pride. Jansen's film explores what Highland means to the community, where it's been and where it is going.

Jansen plans to further his education in broadcasting at Western Illinois University (WIU) in the fall of 2017. Highland Community College recently signed a 2+2 transfer agreement with WIU to offer a direct pathway to a bachelor's degree in broadcasting.

Speech and mass communication instructor Jim Yeager said Jansen's prize is great for HCC and the newly developed program at the College. "This is fantastic for our program at Highland," Yeager said. "Alex is a great kid, a student worker, and has an insane work ethic, striving to be better. Now we can say we are an award-winning Mass Communications program. It's great for recruiting future students, and students like Alex lead by example. This sets the pace for us and encourages more people to come to Highland Community College."



IBHE Student Art Exhibition

Lijun Chao, SIU Carbondale



Sandstorm IV



Sandstorm V

Regan Melton, SIU Edwardsville



Selfie

Student Laureates

In each issue of *The Bulletin*, we will feature student laureates recognized by the Lincoln Academy of Illinois.

Illinois Institute of Technology



Pooja Agarwal
Chicago, IL

*Major: Biochemistry
Minors: Rehabilitation Services
and Premedical Studies*

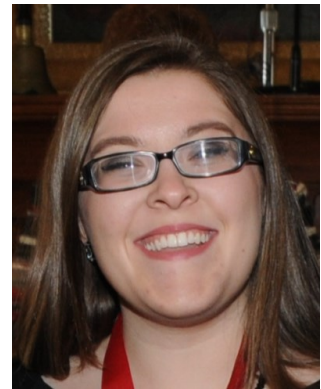
Illinois State University



Maureen Christensen
Normal, IL

*Majors: Marketing and
Broadcast Journalism*

Illinois Wesleyan University



Nicole Jovicevic
Des Plaines, IL

Major: Political Science

In Case You Missed It

A few articles and updates worth the read:

[Chicago Tribune](#): Letter to the Editor – Education funding can come with compromise, March 25, 2016

[Chicago Tribune](#): High schoolers, parents are wary of Illinois colleges as budget crisis hits schools, March 31, 2016

[Inside Higher Ed](#): For freshman, only full-time faculty, March 22, 2016

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