

President Al Bowman

Center for the Performing Arts - **September 16, 2008**

Thank you Dan—and good afternoon everyone.

I would like to extend a special welcome to Trustees Joanne Maitland, Betty Kinser and Geno Bagnolo, as well as Rep. Dan Brady, Mayor Chris Koos and, of course, my wife Linda.

For as long as anyone can remember, the President's annual State of the University Address has always referenced the University's condition with regard to the state's revenue outlook. The logic being that...as go the fortunes of the State—so follow the fortunes of public universities. As I enter my sixth year as President of Illinois State, I am proud to say that our institution has redefined that relationship.

When I began my presidency, April or early May would bring anxious e-mails and conversations with faculty and staff - all with the same questions: What is going to happen in Springfield?—What does the budget look like?—Are there going to be cuts?—Will there be money for salary increases, operating expenses and all the other funds that are required to run the University?

I don't receive calls like that anymore. No e-mails filled with angst over the Illinois economy or the political jousting at the state capital, and my campus conversations with faculty, staff members and students are actually quite pleasant. Well—mostly all quite pleasant.

There is a reason for that change in attitude—and no— it has nothing to do with a better economy, a sudden outbreak of harmony in Springfield, or the sight of our Governor and Speaker of the House hugging on stage in Denver!

The truth is this campus has changed, and the change has been dramatic. We have decided, and we are now comfortable in the knowledge, that Illinois State University will control its own destiny. We have decided that a stormy financial climate will not stop us, and we will not be deterred by a state government that is in a constant state of disagreement.

In September 2008, the state of Illinois State University is strong, vibrant, and resilient. Our success story is stunning, and together, we have strengthened the institution and have achieved new levels of prominence.

It is true that the challenges ahead are not insignificant. We face continued stagnation in state support for public higher education. I never thought I would live to see a day when our state support would drop to a mere quarter of what it costs to operate the institution. Since 2001, Illinois State has lost tens of millions of dollars in spending power. And with the remaining dollars, we have an aging infrastructure that requires ongoing maintenance and rehabilitation, rising energy and technology costs, as well as demands associated with changing pedagogical methods and scholarship.

The obstacles are very real, but what has emerged at Illinois State is a willingness to face our challenges together. Today, there is a sense of campus cohesion that I dare say can't be found on many college campuses around the state, the region or the country.

Certainly, we have our disagreements, but today our arguments are played out in the spirit of debate and discussion, instead of a cloud of cynicism and mistrust. We have defined our

priorities, and have created financial and operational pathways to achieve our goals. And, we have been very successful.

The State of Illinois deserves some of the credit, because it was a government decision to grant each public university its own independent governing board. Our Board of Trustees has established a broad and ambitious agenda, and we have used our campus resources to achieve our collective vision. Our tradition of shared governance has served us well. The most tangible example of this, of course, is *Educating Illinois 2008-2014: Priorities for Illinois' First Public University*.

This newest revision of our University plan celebrates our mission, vision and values and offers strategies to place those values into action. A former member of the University community captured it best when he said that, and I quote, “*Educating Illinois* provides an excellent blueprint for the future, the institution’s leadership is knowledgeable and effective, and the University’s long-standing faculty strengths are well suited for the challenges on the horizon.”

It is with *Educating Illinois’* values in mind, that I give you my priorities as President of Illinois State.

My top priority remains competitive compensation for faculty and staff members. We promise **Individualized Attention** to all of our constituencies, but our most important constituency is also our most important resource—the human resources of Illinois State.

During my State of the University Address in 2005, I initiated a Salary Enhancement Plan in an effort to bring the salaries of university groups close to comparison group average. Since then, we have added more than \$3 million dollars to faculty and staff salaries above and beyond the merit-based increases associated with the beginning of each fiscal year.

Today, the salaries of Civil Service and Administrative Professional Employees are very close to—at—and in some cases, above comparison group averages.

For faculty members, the salaries of assistant professors are very close to or at comparison group averages, and we are moving closer to the mark for associate and full professors. Still, there is work to be done, and I pledge to continue our Salary Enhancement Plan this year.

During the course of this semester, we will again compare group salary averages to determine where the greatest imbalances exist and where small pockets of imbalance may reveal a need to enhance salaries. Then, toward the end of this year or at the beginning of the spring semester, I will provide more detail regarding the next salary enhancement.

We will be conducting 57 tenure-track faculty searches this year for hire in 2009. For comparison, this is nine more than we had just two years ago and 22 more than we had three years ago. Last year’s 57 tenure-track appointments included three colleagues at the rank of full professor, and another six at the rank of associate professor.

It has been 14 years since we have been able to provide a general cost increase to departments and units. As critical as salaries are to maintaining and strengthening our faculty and staff resources, we cannot overlook the operational support of our departments. For many faculty and staff, cuts to travel, equipment, supplies and even copying budgets have accumulated far too long. I am pleased to announce that we’ve put together a budget for the coming year that will include 3 percent more funds for operational costs.

In creating this budget, I've asked the vice presidents to make sure that several initiatives are funded. These include funding for our new Ph.D. in Nursing program, increased support for Milner Library, and funds to enhance our emergency communications, dispatch, and notification systems.

We have also made progress on an initiative that has been discussed for many years. In partnership with Illinois Wesleyan University and BroMenn Healthcare, Illinois State will open a child-care center beginning in the fall of 2009. Land for the facility has been purchased just south of campus at the corner of Main and Harris Streets. The center will be able to accommodate up to 175 children from the three partnering organizations.

You may recall that during our comprehensive fund-raising campaign, *Redefining Normal*, a child care facility was listed among the faculty and staff campaign priorities. While the ideal situation would be to offer a laboratory child care center on our campus, I do believe this partnership offers us an excellent opportunity. I thank all of you who contributed to child care through *Redefining Normal*.....your contributions have helped make this child care center a reality.

Another top priority this year is, of course, our academic enterprise. Probably the biggest and smartest move we made in the **Pursuit of Learning and Scholarship**, to borrow a phrase from Educating Illinois, was the pursuit and capture of our new Vice President and Provost Dr. Sheri Everts. Sheri, we are thrilled that you are part of the Illinois State team.

The growing national reputation of Illinois State academics should be a source of pride in all of us—those who teach—and those who support our academic mission. Just recently it was announced that Mennonite College of Nursing will prepare to increase its enrollment for fall 2009.

This summer, the College of Education learned that its Little Village Program and Chicago Teachers Pipeline Project won a national award for urban education.

Business Week magazine has once again listed Illinois State University's College of Business as one of the best undergraduate business schools in the nation. The graduate programs in the College of Fine Arts were also ranked among the top in the nation.

The College of Applied Science and Technology and the College of Arts and Sciences will partner to offer a popular renewable energy major and launch the Center of Renewable Energy. Milner Library has invested over \$300,000 in new electronic resources ranging from Web of Science to the most comprehensive art bibliography available world-wide.

Our academic reputation is attracting more and more high achieving students to Illinois State. This semester, we enrolled a freshman class that set a high standard for academic achievement from a record pool of more than 14,000 applications.

Our retention rate has risen to a historic high of 83.4 percent, and according to the latest *U.S. News & World Report College Rankings*, our selectivity now outpaces institutions such as Michigan State, Purdue, Iowa, Indiana, Iowa State and Texas A&M—and I think that is simply amazing.

And while the world probably knows us best for our excellence in undergraduate teaching, we will double our outreach efforts this year to enhance the visibility of our research enterprise. As

a student-centered research institution, we are a unique entity and through print and web-based publications published by our Office of Media Relations, you will be reading about scholars like Associate Professor of Technology, Klaus Schmidt, who is researching online and e-commerce privacy and security issues on the Internet—and Assistant Professor of Nursing, Wendy Woith, who is focusing her research on the international epidemic of tuberculosis.

You will also see more interactive marketing of Illinois State via innovative communication vehicles, such as on-line social networking, text messaging and web-based video sites like U-Tube. There will be an updated set of logo images for use by the entire University community.

And we will even offer you an ISU hoody for your Avatar in Second Life. You have got to love a world where you can sell virtual clothes to a virtual person for REAL dollars.

Another high priority is the continued development and renovation of our facilities. Through the leadership of Dr. Steve Bragg, Vice President for Finance and Planning, and his staff, Illinois State initiated--continued--or completed more than a dozen construction projects this past summer.

We began the demolition of two residence halls, completed the renovation of Hewett Hall and immediately launched into the year-long Manchester Hall project. We continued improving our classrooms and created new spaces for athletics and student recreation. We improved our environment through green space initiatives just west of campus on Gregory Street. And on Main Street, we transformed an existing building into a brand new Alumni Center. If you haven't visited the Center, please do, it is a first-class facility.

I am also happy to announce today that we will break ground on the new \$50 million Student Fitness, Kinesiology and Recreation Building on October 16th. I hope you can join us for the ceremony.

Maintaining competitive salaries, growing our academy and providing quality facilities and technologies costs money, and the lack of state support has forced us to raise tuition significantly over the past several years. Still, the investment in an Illinois State education remains affordable. I hear that good news from our students and their families, and we receive external validation from sources such as *Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine*, which has ranked Illinois State among the top 100 public universities in the nation for quality and value four straight times.

In order to maintain affordability, and the access affordability offers, we must continue to mine new streams of revenue. I am pleased to announce that for FY2008, external grants to Illinois State reached an historic high of \$22.3 million, a 23 percent increase over FY2007. We also saw an extremely healthy increase in private donations to Illinois State, and I am happy to report to you that we raised over \$10 million in private gifts this past year, a 37% increase over the previous year.

I would like to congratulate Vice President for University Advancement Dr. Dianne Ashby and her staff for an achievement that is quite remarkable, especially given that we are not currently in a comprehensive campaign mode. One of those gifts comes from a cherished graduate named—Jean Borg—who established four significant endowments in the College of Education to honor the memory of her mother Mary, and to celebrate her own connection to Illinois State. Jean is with us today, and I would like to ask her to please stand for recognition.

While important contributions are made by alumni, corporations with a vested interest in Illinois State, and friends of the University, a great many gifts also come from you, the Illinois State family. As members of this family, your University motto is “Gladly We Learn and Teach.” But you also gladly give back to your college home, in time, talent and money. Your continued generosity has helped propel us to new heights.

As I look to the future of Illinois State, I see the opportunities and challenges of a rapidly changing national population and how those changes will undoubtedly affect the makeup of our student, faculty and staff.

Over the next ten years, the population of high school graduates will begin to shrink. Right now, more than 65 percent of Illinois high school graduates are Caucasian, about 16 percent are African-American, and just over 13 percent are Hispanic. In 2018, it is predicted that the Caucasian high school graduate population will drop below 60 percent, the African-American high school graduate population will dip to 14%, and the Hispanic high school graduate population will rise to over 19%—an increase of 44 percent.

Illinois State must be positioned to compete—not only for students in an overall decreasing high school environment—we must also seek new ways to recruit and retain students from diverse backgrounds. I am announcing to you today that I have created a new Recruitment and Retention Committee, represented by a diverse cross-section of faculty, staff members and students, and chaired by Dr. Jon Rosenthal, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management and Academic Services.

Their charge will include examining current recruitment and admission practices at Illinois State, exploring avenues for outreach to middle schools and high schools, developing more effective methods of transitioning underrepresented students from application—to admission—to enrollment. The group will also examine costs, support services and ways to build better relationships from the university and community perspectives.

This academic year, the enrollment of freshmen from underrepresented groups is up about 13 percent, and our retention rate for African-American students has risen to 73.3 percent. Meanwhile, the number of University employees from underrepresented groups has risen as well. Among universities in the Missouri Valley Conference, we have more African-American faculty than all but one institution.

That said, the diversity of our faculty does not reflect the state’s demographics. In addition to growing our recruitment and retention of these populations, we must also do more to celebrate diversity on our campus.

This academic year, I will ask that our University Center for Learning Assistance and Minority Student Academic Center be combined into one larger unit. And, pending approval of the Facilities Naming Committee, I will invite the University community early next semester to celebrate the naming of that new Center in memory, and in honor of one our most revered graduates and faculty members, Dr. Julia N. Visor.

In addition, my office is partnering with the student chapter of the NAACP to bring to Illinois State an extraordinary celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On January 23 of next year, we will welcome to our campus, actor and activist, Danny Glover.

I also want to make this clear to the University community and the community at large that acts of racial bigotry will not be tolerated on this campus. It doesn't matter what the motives are and it doesn't matter if the perpetrator is a member of the ISU community or a visitor to campus.

We all enjoy the right of freedom of expression, but we are all responsible for creating and maintaining a safe and welcoming environment for everyone who lives, learns and works at Illinois State. Those who violate laws will be prosecuted and those who violate our codes of conduct will be removed from this campus.

We will also lead through education and action. I am announcing today the formation of a group to create a campus community dialogue on race relations. The group, to be chaired by Dr. Toure Reed, a professor of History at ISU, will be charged with examining University programs and policies that combat intolerance and promote community, and to suggest initiatives to improve both. Once I appoint all members of the group, their work will begin immediately, and we will keep you updated on their progress.

As we work to create a more welcoming environment for our increasingly diverse population, Illinois State must also create a safer environment for a campus community that is becoming increasingly concerned about security.

The data shows that the Illinois State University is a safe place—safer than many of our peer institutions, and safer than the city and suburban hometowns of most of our students. Unfortunately, headlines and recent history show that no place is immune from the terror of random and inexplicable violence. As I speak to you this afternoon, Illinois State is purchasing and will implement a texting system that will immediately connect emergency information to individual cellular phones.

As the process is unveiled, I urge everyone to sign up and become connected to this important security technology. Of course, while I understand that active cell phones in the classroom can be a source of disruption and irritation, we all know that those disruptions can be easily minimized.

In addition to the new texting system, Illinois State will continue with its web-based, e-mail and land-line telephone warning systems. Our home web page links to a campus security site that offers faculty, staff members and students easy-to-read safety suggestions, as well as instructions in case of an emergency.

This past summer, the University joined with city, county and state-wide emergency personnel in practicing our response to a simulated worst-case campus scenario. We learned a lot, and we learned that by practicing our plan and improving our emergency preparedness, we will make this a safer campus. However, plans that react to violence are not nearly enough. We must continue to be proactive in averting tragedy through communication, cooperation and intervention.

In the wake of the April 2007 shootings at Virginia Tech, I called for the formation of a Behavioral Intervention Team to identify, monitor and recommend appropriate behavioral interventions for those who display unhealthy or dangerous patterns of behavior.

This team, under the leadership of Vice President for Student Affairs Steve Adams, works within all federal and state laws and our own policies regarding confidentiality and personal privacy.

But I can assure you that this team has already made a positive proactive difference on campus and its presence ensures a safer living and learning community.

I ask all of you to do your part to make and to keep Illinois State as safe as possible, by signing up for our texting system, reading the campus security web page, talking about safety with your roommates, teachers and colleagues, and reporting behavior that you consider suspicious or troublesome. We don't want to create an atmosphere of paranoia, but we do want to enhance your sense of well-being.

This academic year, we enter into our sixth year of the American Democracy Project. By infusing our value of **Civic Engagement** into curricular and co-curricular activities, Illinois State has garnered national recognition and the admiration of our educational peers. The work of the American Democracy Project team this year will include several initiatives, including the enhancement of the First Year Experience Project. This project also began in 2003 when Illinois State became one of just 13 founding institutions for the Foundations of Excellence in the First College Year, and it has been very successful in improving student success and retention.

I also challenge students to spread their engagement efforts beyond the borders of our state and nation by taking advantage of Illinois State's study abroad opportunities. Despite a weak overseas dollar, more than 500 students studied abroad last year, which is more than double the number of just five years ago. Opportunities to study abroad have increased significantly and Illinois State has established 30 new partnerships with universities on a global scale, including institutions in Jordan, Taiwan, Peru, Palestine and Israel, to name just a few.

As a University community, Illinois State has become increasingly engaged with sustainability initiatives?processes which enhance the quality of life and meet the economic, social and environmental needs of the present without compromising resources for future generations.

Illinois State University is one of fewer than 100 college and university campuses selected to participate in the pilot phase of a national rating system for sustainability in higher education. This self-assessment system is designed to help gauge the progress of colleges and universities toward sustainability in all sectors, from governance and operations to academics and community engagement.

The recent opening of two chiller plants is helping us to be more efficient and is reducing our energy consumption. The money saved from these conservation efforts can be reinvested into future infrastructure improvements and result in greater efficiencies and enhanced reliability.

Campus Dining Services is actively working toward more sustainable dining operations. A good example of their efforts can be seen in the new meal plan, which has allowed us to significantly reduce our food waste and use of plastic products. The tray-less initiative at Linkins Dining Center, and at many other dining centers around the country, reduces water and energy consumption, food waste, and provides students with a more sustainable dining experience.

We have also received national attention for our recently launched bicycle program—REGGIE RIDE. The goal of the program is to provide members of the University community with more alternative transportation options.

Because it is important to coordinate our sustainability initiatives, I am proud to announce this afternoon that I have signed the American College and University Presidents Climate

Commitment—a pledge to reduce carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2050, with an ultimate goal of carbon neutrality.

By signing this commitment, we will be joining more than 500 other sustainability leaders in higher education. If we exhibit leadership in addressing climate change, it will stabilize and reduce our long-term energy costs.

Finally, I want to remind you that our first home Redbird Football game is just three days away. Under the leadership of Dr. Sheahon Zenger and his staff, Redbird Athletics is thriving at Illinois State.

Our student athletes have had one heck of a year and they deserve your support, as well as the support of the greater community. Last year, Illinois State's student athletes posted a school record 3.05 GPA during the fall semester and 244 Redbird athletes posted a 3 point or better GPA. In the past three years student athletes have performed more than 2,000 hours of volunteer community service.

And last year, the Redbirds brought home the Missouri Valley Conference All Sports Trophy—ISU's 11th since 1982, which is the most of any MVC member—so congratulations to our student athletes, coaches and staff.

In closing, at last year's State of the University Address, I borrowed the words of our first President Charles Hovey, to thank and congratulate you for Illinois State's rising status and unqualified success. The words were "hard work on good plan," and Hovey used them to explain the success of the then fledgling Illinois State Normal University.

This past year, we continued **our** hard work by reviewing and renewing our most important document—*Educating Illinois*. Clearly, we are a rising star on the national stage. If we continue to put our core values into action, the next chapter in our history will see us reaching levels of prominence our founders could never have imagined.

Thank you.