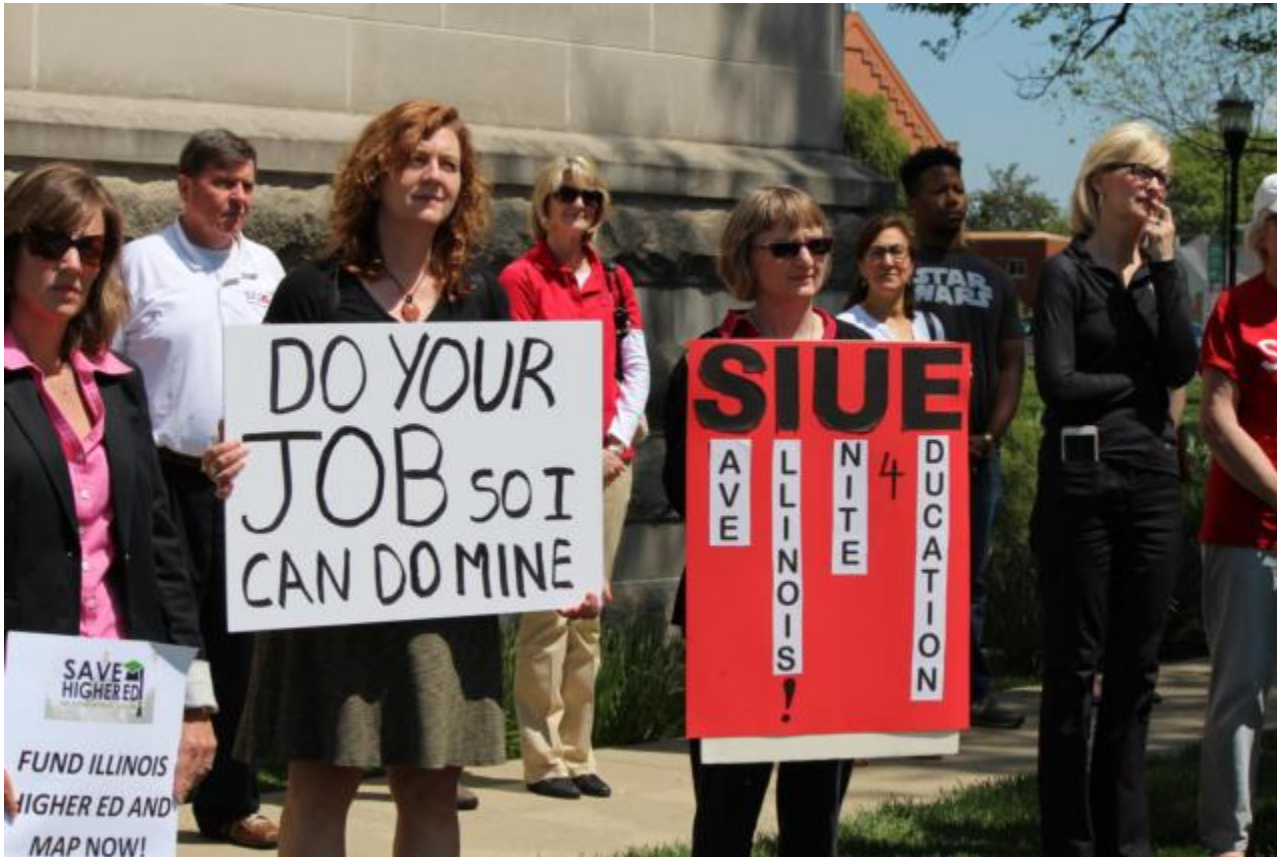


“WE NEED SIUE”: Passionate speakers, community gather to support higher education funding

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – In the words of **Edwardsville Mayor Hal Patton**, “It’s a beautiful day for a budget.”

Mayor Patton, along with students, faculty and staff of **Southern Illinois University Edwardsville** along with community residents joined together in camaraderie and

passion to rally in support for higher education funding and healthcare needs for SIUE's faculty this **Friday** at **Edwardsville City Park**.

Madeline McCune, Student Body President of SIUE, stood by her classmates, faculty members, alumni and more speakers to raise awareness for the compromising position it has placed on the school and community as a whole.

“Our rally is to support and save higher education, and to do that, we are supporting SIUE in the process,” McCune said. “This is really important not only to me but to the future of our state. Education is the base to a great economy. What we’re seeing now is a lot of student migrating out of the state and attending other universities... Right now, they’re not sure what’s going to happen. This is really an important message and something that we all feel really strongly about today.

Dillon Santoni, Student Trustee on the SIU Board of Trustees, fueled the discussion with passionate and thought-provoking dialog.



“To see this many members of our community at SIUE and Edwardsville show up definitely stresses the importance of what this means to everyone,” Santoni said. “I

believe in unity. Everything that we do is built upon unity, and to see my peers step up and join me in something that I think matters to us all is incredibly important to me and moving.”

This rally comes just hours after the State of Illinois House of Representatives approved Amendment 3 to Senate Bill 20159, a bipartisan bill that will appropriate \$600 million for public universities, community colleges and MAP grants for students needing financial assistance throughout Illinois.

State Comptroller Leslie Geissler Munger also stated that she will begin dispersing funds to institutions and students across the state immediately as the bill is signed by **Governor Bruce Rauner**.

S.J. Morrison, Executive Board Member of the SIUE Alumni Association, stated that SIUE’s impact on the community is insurmountable.

“That university tucked away in the woods west of town is one of our region’s greatest economic generators,” Morrison said. “It’s no exaggeration to say we need SIUE.”

A portion of the rally was broadcasted live on [RiverBender.com's Facebook Page](#).

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