

# **SIU Board of Trustees Approve System-Wide Initiative To Begin New Program That Covers Tuition, Mandatory Fees, For Those With Less Than \$63,575 Income**

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CARBONDALE - Major announcements came out of the SIU Board of Trustees meeting today including the creation of the SIU System Commitment, a system-wide

initiative beginning Fall 2021 that will cover tuition and mandatory fees for new four-year undergraduate students who have a family income of less than \$63,575 and meet basic requirements.

SIU System President Dan Mahony said the program would fill the gap these students might have after other financial aid and scholarships have been applied. The program will be available to new students at both SIU Carbondale and SIU Edwardsville.

The amount paid from the SIU System Commitment will not exceed the cost of tuition and mandatory fees and will not cover other costs, such as housing, meals, course fees, books and supplies. It will apply to new, full-time undergraduates beginning in fall 2021 and will cover eight semesters of continuous enrollment. Participants must maintain satisfactory academic progress in order for the program to be renewed.

To be eligible, participants must have an annual family income less than \$63,575 with assets less than \$50,000 based on a submitted Free Application for Student AID or FAFSA. They must be an Illinois resident who attended an Illinois high school, apply for admission by the priority deadline of March 1 and enroll in a baccalaureate degree program.

“From Governor Pritzker, his leadership team at the Illinois Board of Higher Education and our Illinois legislators all the way through to our Board of Trustees, system and campus leadership, our goal is to keep students in Illinois and attract students to our campuses,” said SIU System President Dan Mahony.

“This has been a priority and it signals an important message we want to send to students and their families that the SIU System campuses are doing all they can to make college available, especially for those who have the most challenging time paying for it,” Mahony said.

Mahony noted a 2017 report by the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) that found that students from lower income backgrounds could only afford 1 to 5 percent of the 2000 colleges included in the study.

“A student’s zip code or economic status should not prevent them from achieving their goal of obtaining a college degree,” Mahony said.

“The entire Board wants to commend President Mahony, Chancellor Lane, Chancellor Pembroke and their enrollment management teams who have worked very hard to ensure we have this opportunity ready to offer prospective students and their parents as they begin looking at college choices,” said SIU System Board of Trustees Chair Phil Gilbert. “This is a great announcement coming on the heels of the important enrollment

and retention gains our campuses made this fall. This is one more example why an SIU campus should be a top consideration for students across Illinois.”

“Higher Education changes lives but access to higher education can be limited because of financial challenges. The SIU System Commitment program will provide that access and open doors for future SIUE students. We are excited to be part of this transformational initiative,” remarked SIUE Chancellor Randy Pembroke.

“Our goal is to remove barriers so that all qualified students have access to an SIU Carbondale education,” said Austin A. Lane, SIU Carbondale chancellor. “A college education opens doors that lead to rewarding careers, and no student should have those doors closed due to financial restraints.”

Another important item on the board’s agenda was the presentation of the FY 2019 Underrepresented Groups Report, which will become part of the Illinois Board of Higher Education’s (IBHE) annual report to the governor and General Assembly on the status and participation of underrepresented groups in higher education. Students identifying as African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, American Indian, Alaska Native, or an individual with a disability are covered in the report.

According to IBHE, the report examines trends, challenges and achievements regarding the status of post-secondary underrepresented student groups through data on student services and participation, including support programs that promote successful outcomes of underrepresented student groups provided by Illinois higher education institutions.

### **Highlights from the SIU System include:**

#### **At SIU Carbondale and the SIU School of Medicine:**

SIUC saw an increase of 216 African American students in this current cohort, an increase of nearly three times the Fall 2019 class. African American students make up 25.3% of the first time college student cohort which is 4 year high.

SIUC also saw an increase of more than 50% in Hispanic student enrollment, a 53.3% increase in our Two or More races students and a 7.3% increase in our White students.

In the Fall of 2019, 7.1% of the faculty and staff at SIUC were African American which is an increase of 34 faculty and staff from 2018.

SIU School of Medicine has developed an Equity ecosystem that includes six elements: affinity groups, education and curricular assessment, policies and procedures, research innovation, community and global health and medical pipelines.

Among the School of Medicine's greatest successes are their medical pipelines and preparatory programs which have graduated over 1300 students since 1972

The School of Medicine is focusing on policies and procedures to improve recruitment and retention of diverse candidates.

### **At SIU Edwardsville:**

For the fall 2020 student cohort, the proportion of under-represented students is the highest in SIUE's history.

The Strategic Hiring Initiative was used to support a cluster hire of three new tenure track African American faculty members. Additionally, the School expanded the excellence and representation of African Americans in the School with the hire of another Assistant Professor, a full-time instructor, and a development director. Overall, of the 17 new tenure track faculty members across all academic units, SIUE welcomes an outstanding and diverse group of teacher-scholars, including 7 who identify as White, 6 as Black, 3 Non-Resident, and 1 as Asian.

Graduation rates of African American students are lower than those of their white peers; the development of a new Associate Dean of Students for Diversity and Inclusion position and the launch of the new Social Justice Scholarship program are among the initiatives focused on improving this graduation rate. These efforts are combined with initiatives in Academic Affairs. New strategies will be implemented based on recommendations from the Anti-Racism Task Force.

“The Southern Illinois University campuses have a distinguished record of service to underrepresented groups and it takes a multiplicity of campus offices and dedicated employees to serve our students,” said Gireesh Gupchup, vice president for academic Innovation, planning, and partnership for the SIU System. “This report shows the extraordinary work of so many on our staff who contribute to the success of our great students.

“The information used in this report helps faculty and administrators better shape programs targeted at underrepresented groups and provides our statewide policy makers with information to monitor our successes and challenges,” said Dr. Ed Hightower, Vice Chair of the SIU Board of Trustees.

Also discussed at the meeting was the recent announcement that Southern Illinois University Edwardsville will not require standardized SAT and ACT scores in spring and fall 2021 for incoming freshmen and transfers (with fewer than 30 credit hours) to be considered for admission. In addition, SIUE will not require prospective freshman to submit standardized test scores to be considered for merit scholarships.

With this announcement, both campuses join a growing number of colleges and universities across the country that are making standardized tests optional in the admissions and scholarship process.

Southern Illinois University Carbondale announced last December that applicants with a high school grade point average of 2.75 or above who have met course requirements will be admitted to the university regardless of whether they submit their SAT or ACT scores. Students who enroll for summer or fall 2021 with a 2.75 or above were also eligible for consideration for institutional merit scholarships without submitting standardized test scores.