

Annual Evaluation
October 3, 2016 – June 30, 2017

Robert Jones
Chancellor University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Vice President, University of Illinois System
Annual Evaluation
September 1, 2017

Dear Robert,

I thank you for the thoughtful and comprehensive memo summarizing your activities during the first nine months in your new role as permanent UIUC Chancellor and U of I System Vice President. I also appreciate your use of the suggested template I provided.

Your first year as Chancellor has been not without challenge! As you know and have acknowledged, this has been a complex and tricky time for UIUC, the U of I System, and, in fact, for all of public higher education. In Illinois we have experienced the long (2+ year) budget impasse, generally weakening state support, a growth of worrying global instability, and a surge in divisive rhetoric and actions in our national society. Steady and principled leadership is needed in higher education – more than ever at this time of stress and transition.

At the outset, I want to let you know that I believe you have made a significant positive impact on our great flagship university in this short first year of your work as Chancellor! You hit the ground running, and have made considerable gains in listening and learning all about your new responsibilities - which are quite different from your previous job, as we both know. You have worked to build community, extend our research and development reach, and you have always focused intensely on the student experience as our highest priority in a most principled manner that all can appreciate and acknowledge. Significant campus upgrades are in the works, with many refurbishment and new buildings and facilities planned. Enrollment has been stable, with encouraging trends evident in building important diversity. Congratulations! I also greatly appreciate the close working partnership that we have managed to build in our respective roles and that we strive to embody and exemplify for all of our friends and staff.

The quality of the university is extremely high and you are clearly committed to maintain and extend its reach and renown despite the budgetary difficulties and other challenges we are facing. You jumped into the key advocacy role and participated actively and importantly in raising our visibility in Springfield, leading to the current budget resolution and the extremely critical procurement reform. You have supported our longer term legislative agenda and have been effective in building stakeholder support – notably with the black legislative caucus.

You have started several initiatives that will be important in the coming months as we begin the fundraising campaign. You have made clear decisions regarding branding, timing and the approach to the campaign, resolving issues of long standing expeditiously. You are clearly

thinking ahead on the important next steps: revisiting the UIUC strategic plan in the context of the overall system framework; modernizing business practices; improving administrative function and taking on the recently devolved administrative elements; building campus morale through significantly enhanced levels of communication; supporting the faculty; and building diversity at all levels, etc. Your plans are appropriate and timely and I continue to urge you to move forward assertively. I know that you are working intensively on building your administrative team and I encourage you in that regard. We have experienced significant loss of experience and talent in your office (provost, associate provost, vice chancellor, etc.) that needs to be rebuilt quickly with strong and capable leaders. I stand ready to assist with this. There is no option available for a holding pattern at UIUC! You are also thinking through the complex issues of centralization vs decentralization and I expect to be working with you closely as we strive to become as efficient and effective as possible within our budgetary resources.

Your emphasis on building diversity is acknowledged, incredibly important and, I believe, strongly supported on and beyond the campus. I believe that you have a system-wide leadership role to play in this regard and I look forward to your ideas going forward. There have been significant gains in rebuilding UIUC faculty diversity and numbers since the recession and the Targets of Opportunity (TOP) and Dual Career Academic Couples (DCAC) programs are clearly among the system's best practices. I support your decision to raise the visibility of the diversity and inclusion program to a vice chancellor level and feel that this commitment will just grow in importance as national and regional demographics adjust in predictable ways. The external review of central campus diversity investments has led to a set of actionable and welcome recommendations.

You have worked with your team and have acted to address the budget shortfall in ways that protected the student experience and buffered faculty from the most harmful effects of the prolonged impasse. The process, led by your provost, of developing a new budget model is underway and I support this critically important work. Faculty morale has suffered during this period and you have worked with me on issues such as the "gift" Christmas season days and the modest salary adjustments to help preserve morale. Now that we have a budget we must redouble our efforts to rebuild morale and I appreciate your support for our recent initiative to establish a "distinguished faculty" recruitment fund.

I have read your comments about the system reframing and the issues of governance and delegation of authorities carefully and look forward to an in-depth conversation about these reform efforts as we move forward. Hard lessons of the past must inform our efforts and we cannot afford self-inflicted wounds due to lack of appropriate oversight, so these are critically important discussions. I believe that your voice as "vice president" is becoming more and more influential on issues such as the Alumni Association reform efforts, as well as our enterprise risk management work and the campaign and diversity efforts. I appreciate the difficulty you must have in wearing both caps, given the huge responsibilities as Chancellor of the largest university in the system and one of the top universities in the world.

I recognize your growing influence nationally in various leadership and advisory board roles. I was delighted to learn from Dr. McPherson that you are on track to become APLU Board Chair and this national leadership role will reflect luster back on the entire University of Illinois System.

There is no question that you have faced a number of tough challenges during your nine months in office and, in many ways, this assessment comes a little premature, given the sheer number of complex issues and morale questions that you have been grappling with. I share the wide sentiment that you have done an excellent job in stepping up to address many long-standing and complex challenges in a short period. I congratulate you. Please know that I and many of our colleagues are deeply appreciative of the selfless and thoughtful manner in which you have taken on these challenges. You have made significant progress and have put many (if not most) of the long-standing difficult issues on a healthful forward course, with new leadership and momentum.

Robert – I look forward to congratulating you in person for your hard work and for your many wonderful accomplishments this year! I look forward to future discussions about directions, approaches, problem areas, challenges – all focused on how to build and take advantage of the many opportunities for progress at the University of Illinois. Thank you for your support.

Tim Killeen