

Annual Evaluation

Janet Gooch
Chancellor University of Illinois, Springfield
Vice President, University of Illinois System
January 8, 2025

Dear Janet,

I thank you for the thoughtful, candid, and comprehensive memo summarizing activities for the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024. I look forward to our discussion regarding the sustained “good progress” being made at UIS, under your much-valued leadership.

This year has been another critically important one for you and for UIS, with significant internal and external challenges (e.g., FAFSA delays), disruptive and abrupt senior personnel changes (e.g., CFO), and ongoing faculty concerns raised about the restructuring process finalized just before your arrival at UIS. It has not been easy!

You have risen to all of these various and multifaceted challenges facing UIS with poise, integrity, energy and effectiveness and I congratulate you for an excellent year of hard work and progress despite the trying circumstances.

As you point out, good progress has been made towards reducing the budget deficit, building and implementing effectiveness and efficiency programs, and focusing on enrollment opportunities with creativity. These are important, direction-setting initiatives.

I want to single out your successful hires of Dr. Brandon Schwab as Provost (starting in July 2024), and Dr. John Ferry, recruited recently through the System’s Distinguished Faculty Recruitment Program. In his short time at UIS, Brandon has shown himself to be an extraordinarily able second-in-command at UIS, providing both stability and important ideas and programmatic elements to benefit the University. Dr. Ferry brings impeccable scientific credentials and creativity, together with a proven research track record, that will inspire colleagues at UIS.

Provost Schwab’s reorganization, including the establishment of a new Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness has the potential of increasing both quality and quantity of research at UIS. You have also deployed System funding from the Strategic Investment Fund in thoughtful ways, focusing on areas of great promise for enrollment gains. I look forward to learning more about your On Line and Professional Education Association (UPCEA) consultant projects.

You have also conducted other successful searches of academic leaders, such as an inaugural grant writer, new soccer coaches and a capable athletic director, as well as important academic leadership positions (some on an interim basis). In building your permanent team, and in articulating a vision and approach for UIS (e.g., in your Investiture speech), you have established a whole fresh outlook for UIS, with a growing new leadership team that continues to work well together under your supervision.

You have managed a process to restructure the finances of UIS to make progress with reducing chronic structural deficits and have a viable plan to eliminate such deficits completely over time. I acknowledge that you have taken this task on with a seriousness of purpose that might have been somewhat missing in years past. I applaud your courageous decision to institute a hiring freeze. In doing so, you have

collaborated well with the System offices and have taken advantage of central support and expertise. You have communicated well with faculty and staff regarding these challenges and have developed, through appropriate collaborative mechanisms, a five-year plan to eliminate structural deficits as required by policy.

The recent news about substantive enrollment gains, highlighted in your report, are truly thrilling to see, particularly from the Spring and Summer programs, even though the most recent data was negatively impacted by the FAFSA delays of 2024. It is abundantly clear that in Vickie Cook, you have an innovative and creative leader of the Enrollment and Retention Management program. Your enhanced emphasis on retention is appropriate and I am sure Vickie will make significant progress in this area newly under her responsibility.

You have filled open positions and completed important reorganization tasks, including adding a new unit for Admissions Processing. I particularly applaud the obvious new levels of resolve and energy evident in student recruitment processes (including financial aid), and the creative new pilot program for in-state tuition pathways for students from nearby counties in Iowa. In all this hard work, you have demonstrated a level of detailed knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of academic support processes - and have already made major improvements - Congratulations!

UIS's ranking in the U.S. News and World Report puts it securely, once again, as the top university in its category in our State. You have developed strong and important linkages with the Springfield Community and you successfully used your (wonderful!) Investiture event to develop and propagate a clear set of institutional priorities that have been warmly embraced by both internal and external stakeholders.

You are leading various fund-raising efforts, with your small team of advancement specialists, and are close to securing a worthy successor to Jeff Lorber. The success of the "*Reaching Stellar*" campaign puts UIS on a good path for further gains.

Significant campus upgrades are in the works, with many refurbishment and new facilities planned, including downtown. These will continue to consume your time and energy. I appreciate your leading involvement with the Presidents and Chancellors group and encourage you to be a prominent spokesperson in that venue (for all of the UofI System) as a vice-president. You are an ever-engaged colleague in the "3+2" team of system leaders and bring important insights and ideas to my team. I have greatly enjoyed working together with you, for example, on the recent State Tour.

Your plans for next year are appropriate and timely and I continue to urge you to move forward developing your goals assertively. Your work to implement the modern budget process for the University is really important, and I applaud the positive and transparent manner in which this critically important effort has been initiated.

Your emphasis on building inclusion and diversity is incredibly important and, I believe, strongly supported on and beyond the campus. I believe that your system-wide leadership role will be very important, and I look forward to the plans emanating from this system-wide thinking that you are leading.

There is no question that you continue to face a number of quite tough issues. You have weathered particular challenges in the area of student affairs this past year, but I was heartened and gratified to see the US Department of Education five-year \$2.25 million Strengthening Institutions Program Grant – a major win for UIS.

Faculty morale has been questionable for many years, given the evolution of state support, budget deficit, partially-implemented academic reorganization, and other factors. I share the wide sentiment that you have done an excellent job in stepping up to address many long-standing and complex challenges, including the aftermath of the pandemic and the persistent racial inequity crises. You have provided both stability and perspective throughout, and I acknowledge these important contributions. Please know that I, and many of our colleagues, are deeply appreciative of the collaborative, 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 energized leadership and momentum. Of course, as you point out, there is much more to do! As mentioned above, I look forward to our discussions about ways to take advantage of the state-wide “platform for performance” that we now have.


I have a few thoughts and suggestions for next year, very similar to those from our last year’s discussion:

1. With your leadership and insights, we can become a national leader on the thorny topical questions of addressing racial inequities, antisemitism and islamophobia, campus culture, student safety, first amendment, etc., etc. It is just great to be working with you on these issues!
2. Continue to develop and take advantage of your regional leadership standing and role. This is a major asset for us!
3. Please continue to work closely and collaboratively with the University system leadership. UIS can help lead the way for the System and your voice is critically important.
4. Continue modeling a visible and effective partnership with me in my role as system president, and with Nick and Paul and others in their respective roles.
5. Continue your focus on Philanthropy and the planning and implementation of the IIN Hub, which is certainly gaining momentum. Continue your active participation in DPI.
6. Continue to work effectively with shared governance, extending and supporting our base of faculty excellence. Careful development of existing faculty and deans will be a major ongoing emphasis going forward.
7. Down-scaling must be managed thoughtfully and transparently, but structural problems, such as those you have identified, cannot fester over time. The System stands ready to help.
8. Student recruitment and faculty development go hand in hand and, I believe that both require serious attention in the next year to preserve and extend our leadership positioning within and beyond the state.
9. Janet – 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.

 1/8/25

Timothy L. Killeen
President

Date

 1/8/25

Janet Gooch
Chancellor and Vice President

Date