

Annual Evaluation

Robert Jones
Chancellor University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Vice President, University of Illinois System
September 19, 2023

Dear Robert,

I thank you for the thoughtful and comprehensive memo summarizing activities during your eighth year as UIUC Chancellor and U of I System Vice President. I also appreciate your use of the suggested template I provided.

This year has been another critically important period for you and for UIUC. Once again, you have risen to the various and multifaceted challenges facing our flagship university with integrity and effectiveness. You have managed the critical transition away from the disruption of the COVID-19 global pandemic to a more normal cadence of university operations. You have done this by sustaining world-class, on-line and in-person hybrid education; by attaining continued high levels of philanthropic funding; by implementing the construction of several important new facilities; by solidifying and recruiting key leaders; and through your many communication efforts, including the early implementation of an updated strategic plan that sets the course for “the next 150 years”.

UIUC’s ranking in the U.S. News and World Report remains in the top 40 among all national universities in the most recent report. Other international and national rankings also show important gains and enhanced recognition. This is back to the kinds of levels we were at prior to the long budget impasse and an encouraging sign for the future. I offer my sincere congratulations on all these and other accomplishments, and, also, my thanks for your collegial and collaborative approach to serving the entire University of Illinois System.

Enrollments have now reached an exciting plateau, as planned, now requiring careful recruitment of new faculty according to the detailed plans your team has developed. Faculty retention and recruitment efforts have been productive, and several key hires have been recently announced, including some distinguished faculty recruits. Most importantly, yet another bumper class of graduates has benefited from the receipt of a world-class education, and with in-person celebrations once again!

You have made significant and noteworthy administrative appointments, bolstering your leadership team, although some key departures have also occurred. You appointed a permanent new provost, and several key deans and senior administrators. You initiated the new Threat Assessment Office and hired a new director. You have devoted personal significant time and energy to the critically important issues concerning systemic racism that are very much in the national spotlight and are strong elements of our enterprise risk framework.

Progress with the seminal Carle-Illinois medical school is apparent, with the fifth class of students having arrived and successful graduations and professional outcomes. I strongly support your efforts to drive towards an NIH Cancer Center designation and the many other initiatives you are undertaking in research and service partnerships, too many to recite.

The new partnerships with IBM, the Quantum Exchange, South African universities, and Foxconn Interconnect are noteworthy, as are the ongoing plans to expand the Research Park.

Your new strategic plan and associated master plan, developed with a robust, inclusive process, were both presented to the Board for approval and have set the stage for a shared vision of where UIUC needs to go. Signature new buildings and facilities are being put into place – prominent examples being the new Instructional Facilities and the amazing cleaning of the exterior of Altgeld Hall!. You have communicated effectively and directly with multiple stakeholder and groups, and your annual “state of the University” address has been well received. Ongoing conversations with the faculty Senate have been productive and I believe that your commitment to shared governance, and candid and direct communication is well received by the faculty. I heard very favorable comments from the Senate Executive Committee at my recent meeting with them concerning your leadership. I also heard some concerns about communication channels with some of your direct reports that we can talk about.

I appreciate and applaud your initiative in the areas of professional work-plan development for all direct reports. Your support for the newly approved system policies on Sexual Misconduct has been appreciated, as well as the joint Administration/Senate initiatives on this topic.

Your report outlines all of the many positive metrics of accomplishments and outcomes: enrollments, financial aid (including, of course, the Illinois Commitment), diversity attainment, student debt management, course redesigns, on-line elements, student affordability initiatives, faculty recruitment and retention efforts, and equity based pedagogy and the associated promotion and tenure considerations. Your oversight of athletics is noteworthy, and to be commended, with an amazing and impressive 3.45 combined GPA for our athletes.

Your senior leadership team is diverse and of very high caliber. All members have contributed to the important and challenging discussions regarding pandemic response and aftermath.

You have worked hard: to build community; to expand communication linkages on campus and within the community; to extend our research and development reach to Chicago and beyond; to participate in national and international settings; and to raise philanthropic funding. You have multiple (perhaps too many!) national leadership positions and have made many significant contributions to the nation’s higher education efforts, including hosting the recent visit to campus of the NSF Director.

You have directly led various successful fund-raising efforts, including the still recent historic naming of the Grainger College of Engineering and the Gies College of Business. It is very clear to me from this record fund-raising work that there is very significant external trust and confidence in UIUC leadership and direction. We are now working on the definition of the next fundraising campaign after the great success of “*With Illinois*”.

Your energetic support for the system’s DPI/IIN project has opened the door to very important opportunities for expansion of influence into Chicago and in various multi-lateral partnerships, of the state-wide level, as well as nationally and internationally. I thank you for your partnership on this key system strategic initiative. I look forward to hearing specifics of a robust plan in this regard.

You continue to focus intensely on the affordability and quality of the student experience as our highest priority in a most principled manner – one that all can appreciate and acknowledge. The record (or near-record) enrollment with the largest and most diverse class ever in the immediate aftermath of a global pandemic is simply a magnificent accomplishment.

Significant campus upgrades are in the works, with many refurbishment and new buildings and facilities planned. The past 5 years have seen more than \$1B invested in campus upgrades and you are to be thanked for continuing and driving this important process. The combination of newly-approved capital funding and of multi-agency federal funding for the quantum science initiative, the CZ Hub, and the

advanced computing IIN hub in Champaign-Urbana provides an excellent testimony to richly-deserved high standing of UIUC in our state.

I am concerned about the relatively slow progress on black student enrollment and look forward to hearing your thoughts on how you propose to pick up the pace in this regard.

The quality of the university is extremely high and you are clearly committed to maintain and extend its reach and renown both nationally and internationally. You support the key advocacy role and have participated actively and importantly in raising our visibility in Springfield and participating in the annual State Tour, leading to the positive budget outcomes and the extremely critical procurement reform, as well as robust capital funding appropriations. You have supported our longer-term legislative agenda and have been effective in building stakeholder support within the legislature. Congratulations on the evident success of the Illinois Commitment program!

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

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 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. The several distinguished faculty recruitments that have been made within the new stellar faculty hiring program are also very encouraging, as are the recent dean and department head appointments.

You have worked with your team and have acted to address the budget in ways that support the student experience, including assisting students hit hard financially by the pandemic. Faculty morale appears to be improving given the more favorable budget outlook.

There is no question that you continue to face a number of tough issues. 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 pandemic and 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 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. I greatly enjoyed the most recent state-wide tour that we jointly conducted and look forward to our discussions about ways to take advantage of the state-wide "platform for performance" that we now have.

I also want to highlight the effective and principled stewardship of our highly-visible athletics program and your mentorship of the Athletic Director and support for his decision-making at a time of significant volatility in college athletics.

I have a few thoughts and suggestions for next year:

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. It is just great to be working with you on these issues!

2. Continue to take advantage of your national leadership standing and role. This is a major asset for us!
3. Please continue to work closely and collaboratively with the University system leadership. Our flagship campus must lead the way and the fruitless territorial disputes that have occurred in the past only serve to slow progress and waste energy. Helping Chancellor Miranda find her feet in her new role is important and I hope that you can help cure some of the relationship problems caused by dropping UIC from the C-Z proposal. I believe improving this relationship may have been among your most significant contributions to date!
4. Continue modeling a visible and effective partnership with me in my role as system president.
5. Help me continue to work towards a graceful and effective reform of the System Offices and the URO programs, including your relatively newly defined Alumni Association.
6. Please work intensively on the Research Park doubling plan and the growth in impact of Extension and the Prairie Research Institute. These state-wide projects and programs are critical to the future and must be connected to other system initiatives (IIN and DPI).
7. Continue your focus on Philanthropy and the planning and implementation of the new medical school, which is certainly gaining momentum.
8. Continue to work effectively with shared governance, extending and supporting our base of faculty excellence. Careful recruiting of new faculty will a major ongoing emphasis in the next year.
9. As you are well aware, there are still important needs within the university system to clarify roles, responsibilities and communication pathways. Your participation in the Advancement Council and the “3+2” meetings are very important.
10. Student recruitment and faculty hiring 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. Significant criticism is still heard on the topic of UIUC’s progress on African American recruitment and retention.
11. 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.

Timothy L. Killeen

10/12/23

Timothy L. Killeen
President

Date

Robert Jones

10/11/2023

Robert Jones
Chancellor and Vice President

Date