

Annual Evaluation

Robert Jones
Chancellor University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Vice President, University of Illinois System
December 18, 2024

Dear Robert,

I thank you for the thoughtful and comprehensive memo summarizing activities during your most recent year as UIUC Chancellor and U of I System Vice President. I also very much appreciate your use of the suggested template I provided, as well as providing an exhaustive (at least to the reader!) list of specific accomplishments.

This year has undoubtedly been a challenging for you and for UIUC, given global events and tribulations outside of our direct control. You and your team have risen to the challenges with integrity, energy and effectiveness. You have managed the UIUC response to the campus protests and unrest associated with the conflicts in the Middle East well, with no-one hurt and generally peaceful and reputation-preserving outcomes.

UIUC's ranking in the U.S. News and World Report remains in the top 35 among all national universities and the university is ranked #12 among national public universities in the most recent US News report – a significant increase in ranking. 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 near record, with positive increases in application levels for the upcoming cycle as well. It is encouraging to see both the excellent recruitment efforts and the reduction in numbers of retention efforts needed to preserve faculty talent. You note several very important recruitments that occurred this year, including that of your Provost and a number of leading Deans, as well as faculty cluster hires. Most importantly, yet another bumper class of graduates has benefited from the receipt of a world-class education, and with an in-person fabulous, stadium-filling celebration!

Your report is replete with significant specific accomplishments this year, and I would like to highlight a few of particular significance, without attempting to be comprehensive.

The success of Innovate Illinois under your co-leadership has been simply remarkable, building the collaborative structure of the state, connecting its many assets, and generating a whole family of successful proposals to access federal and corporate resources.

The new branding and marketing strategy is great. It is sorely needed and will position UIUC optimally to continue generating philanthropic support and continue to grow public trust and confidence in our work.

The exciting new partnerships with IBM, the Quantum Exchange, iFAB, Digital Agriculture, Chan-Zuckerberg and Foxconn Interconnect are all noteworthy and, collectively, demonstrate amazing national leadership. The rapid development of the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park (IQMP) is another major (once-in-a-generation) legacy contribution to prosperity and technological leadership for the entire state.

It was a significant accomplishment to lead the complex and successful negotiations on behalf of the System for the OCR settlement.

Your strategic plan and update (Boldly Illinois), developed with a robust, inclusive process, have set the stage for a shared vision of where UIUC needs to go. Signature new buildings and facilities have been put into place – prominent examples being the Siebel Design Center and the new Instructional Facilities. 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 positive comments from the Senate Executive Committee at my recent meeting with them concerning your leadership.

I appreciate and applaud your initiative in the areas of professional work-plan development for all direct reports. Your senior leadership team is appropriately diverse and of very high caliber. All members have contributed to the important and challenging discussions regarding the Gaza war response.

You have worked hard: to build internal community and comity; to expand communication linkages on campus and within the broad external community; to extend our research and development reach to Chicago and beyond; to participate in national and international settings; and to raise truly significant levels of philanthropic funding. You have a national leadership position as chair of various Boards and have made many significant contributions to national leadership, including hosting the recent visit to campus of the NSF Director. You have directly led various successful fund-raising efforts, including the (still fairly recent) historic namings 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. I look forward to the development and identification of the next campaign goal, following on from the great success of the *With Illinois* campaign.

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. Next steps need to be carefully considered to take advantage of residual capital funding appropriately and expanding on and preserving the important shared vision and partnerships already created. It will be important to continue the tradition of inclusive engagement with System partners and beyond.

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 enrollment with the largest and most diverse class - even in the fairly 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 \$1.2B invested in campus upgrades and you are to be thanked for continuing and driving this important process. The combination of approved capital funding and of multi-agency federal funding for the quantum science initiative and the advanced IIN hub in Champaign-Urbana provides an excellent testimony to richly-deserved high standing of UIUC in our state.

I am pleased to see that progress is being made in both recruitment and graduation of our African American student body, though much remains to be achieved on this score.

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, 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 very 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 budget impasse, 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 and student success, including assisting students hit hard financially and traumatized by global conflicts. Faculty morale appears to be reasonable despite the disruptions and budget uncertainties looking forward.

There is no question that you continue to face a number of tough challenges. 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, Gaza War, 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 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 increasingly successful and 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! Your continuing work and leadership in Chicago is of inestimable importance.
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. 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 the newly formed IQMP.
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 cancer center, 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 continue as 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 and cabinet 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.
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

01/14/2025

Timothy L. Killeen
President

Date

Robert L. Jones

01/14/2025

Robert L. Jones
Chancellor and Vice President

Date