

Contact: Tom Hardy
Office: (312) 996-3772
Cell: (312) 543-7476
Email: hardyt@uillinois.edu

(Note to journalists: Following the meeting on admissions reform, President B. Joseph White will be available at 4-5 p.m. to take questions from media in Room 2017 of the Business Instructional facility, located at 515 E. Gregory St., the corner of Sixth and Gregory streets. Journalists may also call in to (866) 337-0370 to listen to the news conference.)

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University of Illinois officials meet to act on admissions reforms
Goal is immediate action for fair, equitable and transparent process

URBANA, Ill. — More than 100 top University of Illinois administrators, faculty and staff were convened today to begin to make admissions reforms in response to the report and recommendations by the State of Illinois Admissions Review Commission.

Following the release of the report last Thursday (Aug. 6), U of I President B. Joseph White said the University was grateful to the Admissions Review Commission, and its recommendations reflected thoughtful analysis. He said the goal of the summit of senior administrators was to initiate immediate implementation of the commission's recommendations.

“Across the University system we must accept, embrace and implement reforms recommended in the final report of the Admissions Review Commission that will allow our admissions processes to work as they were designed to,” White said. “This means all three campuses and every college and school. There are no exceptions or exemptions.

“We must restore the trust of the people of Illinois, and all who apply to the University, that our admissions processes are fair and transparent with equal access to all. So I'm putting us on a forced march to get all this done in the next six to eight weeks.”

Attending the summit were the chancellors, provosts, deans, admissions officers, administrators and faculty representatives of the University's three campuses. The meeting took place at the Business Instructional Facility on the Urbana-Champaign campus and at the Chicago and Springfield campuses via video conference.

In a statement (<http://www.uillinois.edu/our/news/2009/Aug6.ARC.UnivStatement.cfm>) issued by the University Board of Trustees and administration on Aug. 6, the summit's charge is an action plan to build a firewall around the University's admission process by:

- drafting a code of conduct that excludes undue influence in the admissions process;

- communicating all admissions policies and procedures to applicants;
- drafting a clear appeals policy;
- creating a central and transparent means of dealing with inquiries about applications;
- launching a yearlong review to examine the effectiveness of the new policies and practices and adding additional reforms if needed.

The University has put an end to the “Category I” tracking system and barred the Office of Governmental Relations from any role in admissions.

White said there was urgency in enacting an action plan because the admissions cycle for students and their families for the 2010-11 school year begins in September.

The seven-member Admissions Review Committee, chaired by former congressman and judge Abner Mikva, met for eight weeks and examined the University’s admissions policies and practices.

The University of Illinois fully cooperated with the Admissions Review Committee by furnishing more than 10,000 pages of documents, and the voluntary testimony and interviews of more than 40 University officials, including the president, chancellor, trustees, deans and admissions officers.

Information on the Admissions Review Commission and University statements is available at <http://www.uillinois.edu/our/news/2009/admissions.cfm>.

White said the way forward is clear.

“This is a painful, but necessary, chapter in the 142-year history of a proud institution,” White said. “Once we have fixed the problem, we need to restore the confidence of the people of Illinois in the U of I.”

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The University of Illinois is a world leader in research and discovery, the largest educational institution in the state with almost 70,000 students, 24,000 faculty and staff, and campuses in Urbana-Champaign, Chicago and Springfield. The U of I awards more than 18,500 undergraduate, graduate and professional degrees annually.