

Welcome, Dr. Hogan

5:50 PM CDT, May 13, 2010

Memo to Michael Hogan, the next president of the University of Illinois:

Welcome to Illinois, Dr. Hogan. You're about to be schooled.

You're stepping into the top job at perhaps the most challenging point in the university's history. You'll have your hands full, cutting your way out of the current fiscal emergency and taking over in the middle of a \$2.25 billion fundraising campaign. That's more than enough to command all of your attention. Don't let it.

You know about the U. of I. admissions scandal. It's why you're here. Your introductory remarks this week suggest you believe — or want to believe — that it's all in the past. "The lines have been clearly drawn, and I expect everyone will be anxious to respect those lines," you said. Don't count on it.

Just last week, the Tribune detailed the role of a single politician — Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan, D-Chicago — in that scandal. In three years, 28 applicants were routed to the VIP admissions track at Madigan's behest. Their relatives collectively contributed more than \$115,000 to campaign funds controlled by Madigan. Many of them had already been denied admission, or were about to be, but in the end, 23 of them got in.

Asked to explain, Madigan insisted for the umpteenth time that no, none of this was inappropriate. Inexplicably, that was the university's official position, too. Our point is that you are surrounded by people who don't get it. Be on guard.

You've probably also heard that each of the state's 177 lawmakers can send two students your way every year, on your dime. It shouldn't surprise you that this program, too, runs on clout. Lawmakers have shamelessly bestowed free rides on the offspring of party workers, campaign donors, lobbyists, friends, neighbors — even their own kids.

They pretended to correct this by passing a bill that prohibits them from giving scholarships to close relatives of recent contributors, which doesn't begin to address the abuse. Gov. Pat Quinn vetoed it.

As the governor pointed out, lawmakers haven't found a way to fund the Monetary Assistance Program (MAP), which provides financial aid to the state's neediest students. And by the way, they're almost certainly going to cut your funding again next year. How they justify sticking you with millions of dollars worth of tuition waivers is beyond us.

If you haven't met Senate President John Cullerton, D-Chicago, we encourage you to introduce yourself soon. Remind him that there's a perfectly good bill, already passed by the House, that would eliminate the scholarships. It would take the Senate five minutes to pass it, if Cullerton would let it out of committee.

Cullerton, who derailed that bill earlier by substituting his own fake one, says lawmakers are far too busy working on the budget to take up the real bill before the fall. He thinks Illinois voters are dumb enough to believe that. Dare him to tell that to your Ph.D.

Dr. Hogan, the state's flagship university will soon be in your hands. We wish you the best. Wrestling the budget into line is a big job; repairing the U. of I.'s reputation may be even bigger. Don't expect the politicians to be much help with either.



Incoming U of I president makes Springfield stop

By **MATT HOPF**

THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

Posted May 13, 2010 @ 11:59 AM

Last update May 14, 2010 @ 06:12 AM

Michael Hogan, the new president of the University of Illinois, says he knows there will be challenges for all three campuses in the U of I system.

Donning a University of Illinois Springfield tie, Hogan was introduced to the smallest of the three campuses Thursday.

He told a standing-room-only crowd he is ready to lead the university.

"This is a challenging time, but for me it is a terrific opportunity, because the University of Illinois is one of the world's jewels of public higher education," he said.

The state needs to invest in universities, Hogan told reporters. Tuition at the U of I is expected to increase by 9.5 percent for freshmen this fall.

Hogan also has to restore the image U of I, which was damaged by an admissions scandal that led to the resignation of the former president, B. Joseph White, along with the chancellor of the Urbana campus, Richard Herman.

Interim president Stanley Ikenberry and the U of I board "have put that admissions issue behind them and behind the university," Hogan said. "We're going to make sure it doesn't happen again. So we're looking ahead and not behind right now."

Ikenberry hasn't given Hogan any advice on dealing with the university's problems.

"I don't think he needs any advice on that," Ikenberry said. "He's had a 30-year tutorial in dealing with pressures.

Hogan lauded the Springfield campus for its liberal arts education.

"Here at the University of Illinois Springfield we are home to one of the nation's most outstanding liberal arts universities," Hogan said. "With about 5,000 students and an average class size of just 15, we offer one of the most personalized academic experiences you can find at public university anywhere in the United States."

Hogan, 66, has been the president of the University of Connecticut since 2007. Prior to that, he served as executive vice president and provost at the University of Iowa.

Matt Hopf can be reached at 782-3095.

Salary of \$620,000

The \$620,000 salary future University of Illinois president Michael Hogan will receive is a \$170,000 increase from that of former president Joseph White's \$450,000.

If Hogan remains at the U of I for five years, he will receive an additional \$225,000.

University spokesman Tom Hardy said Hogan's salary is in line with Big Ten school presidents at Penn State and the University of Minnesota, and lower than those of the presidents of Ohio State University, the University of Michigan and Northwestern University.

Hardy also said that Hogan's pay is slightly less than he makes now at the University of Connecticut.

The U of I Board of Trustees is expected to approve Hogan as president at a meeting Thursday in Chicago.

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Our View: Bad time to pay big bucks to university leader

RRSTAR.COM EDITORIAL

Posted May 13, 2010 @ 06:38 PM

We wish Michael Hogan, who will become the 18th president in University of Illinois history, all the success in the world.

However, his price tag leaves a bad first impression.

Hogan, who is president of the University of Connecticut, will make a base salary of \$620,000 — \$170,000 more than former U of I President B. Joseph White. Hogan's also eligible for retention bonuses of \$30,000 the first year, \$37,500 the second, \$45,000 the third, \$52,500 the fourth, and \$60,000 the fifth.

We think bonuses should be tied to performance goals rather than being paid out just for staying on the job.

University officials say they're paying the going rate for top talent and that Hogan's taking a pay cut from what he received at Connecticut. That's true, but when university staffers have been laid off, or had their wages frozen and have been forced to take unpaid furlough days, it's a steep price.

It's an even steeper price when you consider the state owes the university \$376 million and probably will provide less money next year. Also, the proposed tuition for incoming freshman is 9.5 percent higher than last year's rate.

Money matters will take up a lot of Hogan's time. He also needs to rebuild the school's image, which was tarnished by allegations that some students were admitted because of whom they knew rather than what they knew.

When university staff, students and parents are sacrificing, the timing for giving the new president 37 percent more than his predecessor is not right.

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Chicagoist

As U of I Faces Financial Hardships, New President Rolls In Green

The University of Illinois formally introduced their new president, Michael Hogan (most recently of the University of Connecticut), yesterday and he addressed the challenges that the school faces. Commenting on the hundreds of millions of dollars that the school is owed by the state, Hogan said, "We are going to be looking very clearly at how we can focus our resources to make sure the best parts of the university remain intact and continue to improve." Some measures already being taken include a 9.5 percent tuition hike and unpaid furlough days for faculty and administrators.

Meanwhile, Hogan's salary is reported to be a mind-blowing \$620,000 per year for five years, plus a potential \$225,000 in retention pay if he stays past five years. Ever the altruist, Hogan claimed he's not in it for the money: "If I wanted to run a \$5 billion business and make a lot of money, I would be somewhere else." How benevolent. That's a 27 percent increase over the salary earned by Hogan's predecessor Joseph White, who resigned in part due to the Clout College scandal. So while faculty members take unpaid furlough days and incoming students and their families prepare to shell out even more money to attend the college - because, you know, the recent economic crisis hasn't affected them at all - Hogan will be able to stockpile enough quarters to pull a Scrooge McDuck all under the guise of "I'm in it for the kids, not the money."

As the state continues to be mired in a budget mess of epic proportions and falls further behind on payments, Hogan will have a base salary higher than the President of the United States. Sadly, Hogan's salary isn't unusual; the median pay for public school execs in 2008-2009 was \$436,111. School board chairman Christopher Kennedy said of Hogan, "He is a rare find, a top-flight leader capable of moving the university forward." While that may be true, we're already disappointed to see Hogan willingly rake in such a steep salary while the school he's tasked to lead continues to struggle, drowning in debt. If Hogan wanted to make a truly bold statement about the change in leadership, he would take a pay cut or, at the very least, accept the position at the same salary that White made. If the school is asking its own students and faculty to make sacrifices for the betterment of the school's financial situation, the President of the school should be held to the same standard. It won't save the university, but it's still the right statement to make.

Update: As a reader points out below, Hogan *did* take a pay cut by accepting the U of I job, as he would have earned a salary of \$745,000 at the University

http://chicagoist.com/2010/05/13/new_president_illinois_salary.php

New U. of Ill. president says fundraising is key

By DAVID MERCER | Posted: Thursday, May 13, 2010 4:51 pm

Some might wonder why new University of Illinois President Michael Hogan would want the job.

The last president resigned over political influence on admissions, and the university is operating without almost \$400 million in promised state money that Illinois can't pay.

Hogan, 66 and an Iowa native, said this week that he took the job for the opportunity to run a larger university and the chance to get back to the Midwest after three years as president of the University of Connecticut.

But he made it clear he knows that when he takes over July 1, he'll walk into both an immediate financial mess and a period of fundamental fiscal change.

"Right now we're in this crisis, but this is just the most recent blip in a longer-term trend toward declining support for higher education, and this is true all across the country," he said.

His \$620,000 annual salary has already created a stir. B. Joseph White, his predecessor, was paid \$475,000. Illinois trustees Chairman Christopher Kennedy defended Hogan's pay, saying, "I think we're getting a bargain."

In an interview with The Associated Press, Hogan talked about his priorities at Illinois and leaving Connecticut.

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AP: In Illinois, given the \$13 billion deficit in the state government's budget, do you think after meeting this week with Gov. Pat Quinn that the state can in the foreseeable future offer any more support than it does now? (About 16.5 percent of the U of I's roughly \$4.7 billion budget comes from the state.)

Hogan: I think universities have to adapt to (limited government support). They can't just think, "Oh, in another year, the situation will change and the money will be pouring in." I don't think that's going to happen.

So we have to look at our university and we have to think of this as an opportunity to reshape it so it stays highly competitive.

We have to stop talking all the time about the revenue stream and start talking about the cost structure of the university and how we're going to manage that.

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AP: How much do you know about the current set of committees looking at various pieces of the university for potential cuts, and what role will they play in the change you're talking about?

Hogan: It'll be a long process. ... This is just the first act in a longer-term process of thinking about the whole university and each part of it.

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AP: How much time do you plan to spend on fundraising? President White was criticized by some on campus for being more of a fundraiser than an academic.

Hogan: I want to make sure, particularly in periods of crisis like this, that (daily operations) have active oversight and active management. ... But fundraising is now an increasingly _ and alumni work _ are increasingly important parts of the job. I'm not sure how much time President White spent on it, but I'm prepared to believe that it's going to be at least 25 to 30 percent of my time working with alums.

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AP: Connecticut Gov. M. Jodi Rell said she was "deeply disappointed" and called your exit after less than three years an opportunity to hire someone who will be committed to the university "heart and soul." Is that fair, given that you'd also been at the University of Iowa (as provost) only four years before coming to Connecticut?

Hogan: I wasn't really looking to move. This opportunity just came up. I'm as surprised as just about anybody. And I understand the governor's surprise and perhaps her sadness about my departure.

But I had a good relationship with her and with her staff and with people in the statehouse since I got there. I'll always be grateful to her and to all the legislative leaders I've worked with because together we managed to get an awful lot done in three years.

AP: What do you consider your top accomplishment at Connecticut?

Hogan: (For) the Health Center, we got this new, close to \$400 million package between federal support and state support. ... It's no doubt that our hospital was in deep and long-term financial distress, and it was a burden. And it's certainly true that we had tried five or six times over a 10-year period to deal with that issue and never succeeded. And this time around, thanks to the help of a lot of people, we got something done.

AP: Christopher Kennedy, in introducing you and talking about your responsibilities, mentioned sports. Do you have time to pay attention to the state of the football, basketball and other programs under the current circumstances?

Hogan: I have to. I don't know any of the details about the current circumstances over there. Intercollegiate athletics is very, very important to universities, to alums, to students, to fans. I'm sure, like every place else, we're investing a lot of significant money on it and, like Chris Kennedy said, we'd like to see that investment pay a dividend in successful teams.

A lot of people, including a lot of donors and alums, come back into the university through the athletic door and then connect with the rest of the university and support the rest of the university. I've had a lot of experience in the Big Ten, and of course UConn's no piker when it comes to big-time sports.

Opinion

Hogan's smart career move

Friday, May 14, 2010

Journal Register News Service

Michael Hogan was already in Chicago when the news broke in Connecticut. After less than three years as president of the University of Connecticut, Hogan has jilted the Nutmeg state to become president of the University of Illinois.

There is no doubt that he is leaving behind bruised feelings that were best summed up in a statement by Gov. M. Jodi Rell: "We assumed President Hogan's commitment to UConn was a long-term one; it should have been."

Hogan has gotten good reviews for his job at the University of Connecticut. His most recent achievement was talking the legislature into a \$362 million in bonding to rescue the university's white elephant hospital in Farmington. But, he clearly wanted a bigger challenge back in the Midwest where he was raised and spent most of his academic career.

The University of Illinois has a nearly \$4.7 billion budget and 71,000 students. It oversees \$771 million in research spending. UConn has a budget of \$1.7 billion and almost 30,000 students.

Hogan didn't leave for a big pay increase; although, he will be earning \$650,000, including his base salary and deferred compensation, as compared to his salary of \$615,000 at UConn.

He will have some of the same budget problems, he has had to deal with here. University of Illinois students face a possible 9.5 percent tuition increase and the state is short \$380 million on its payments to the university.

And, the political meddling could be intense. The last University of Illinois president retired after the Chicago Tribune reported that the university had admitted unqualified students to please trustees, politicians and members for former Gov. Rod Blagojevich's administration.

Hogan has chosen a bigger challenge at a much bigger university. It is a great career move. Too bad he did not reveal his career ambitions before he was hired here. We hope UConn's next president sticks around a bit longer.

URL: <http://www.registercitizen.com/articles/2010/05/14/opinion/doc4becc75dde32f067795035.prt>

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THE CHRONICLE

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May 13, 2010

How Michael Hogan Landed in Illinois

By Paul Fain

The use of search firms continues to grow in higher education, but their role can still be controversial.

A search firm was in the news this week with the hiring of Michael J. Hogan as president of the three-campus University of Illinois system. He leaves the University of Connecticut, where he had served as president since 2007. His relatively short stint in Connecticut rankled some lawmakers in the state.

Isaacson, Miller, an executive search firm that contracts with colleges and nonprofit groups, handled both the search in Illinois and the one that had brought Mr. Hogan to UConn in 2007.

However, it's not quite fair to say that the firm "plucked" him out of a pool of applicants for the job in Illinois, as *The Chronicle* [reported](#) on Wednesday, because Mr. Hogan applied on his own, both he and the search firm said in interviews on Thursday.

Michael A. Baer, a vice president and director with Isaacson, Miller, worked on both searches. Mr. Baer, who is a former provost at Northeastern University, said Isaacson, Miller has a policy that prohibits its consultants from recruiting people the firm has previously placed. Such "off limits" policies are fairly standard among search firms.

"Isaacson, Miller will not actively recruit our placements as long as they are in the assignment we recruited them to," the policy states. "If an off-limits person calls us and expresses interest in one of our searches, we are blocked and cannot pursue his/her candidacy."

Mr. Hogan said he first heard of the job opening in Illinois from an advertisement that ran in *The Chronicle*. Later, in December, Mr. Baer called him to ask if he knew of any possible candidates. Search consultants often tap their contacts to ask if they have peers who might be looking for a job or who might be a good fit for one.

During the call, Mr. Hogan says he suggested a few names. But after speaking with Mr. Baer, "I got to thinking and thought I might be

good for the job," said Mr. Hogan, a native Midwesterner who grew up in Iowa and spent 17 years at Ohio State University.

He later called Mr. Baer, who said immediately that he could not speak about Mr. Hogan's interest in the Illinois presidency, both men said.

"I told him I couldn't deal with him," said Mr. Baer. He recalls telling Mr. Hogan that "if he was interested, he'd have to deal with the university directly."

Mr. Hogan, who is 66, then spoke with the chair of the presidential search committee in Illinois, Pamela B. Strobel, a university trustee. He eventually did apply, and was selected by the committee from a pool of 208 applicants.

"We went around Isaacson, Miller" because of the off-limits policy, Mr. Hogan said of the process.

Mr. Baer said he was not surprised that Illinois drew such a large pool of candidates, given the university's prestige and a history of solid state financial support, although that support has dropped precipitously in recent years as a result of the recession. And for jobs that draw a large amount of interest, it's not surprising that a prominent firm handling the search might get applications from leaders it placed in the past.

"We do not go after people that we place, period," Mr. Baer said, but "we can't keep people who are interested in a position from applying."

Mr. Hogan's first day on the job in Illinois is July 1. He spent the last couple of days traveling around the state and appeared at events at all three campuses. Speaking from the road, he said his office in Connecticut had received 650 e-mail messages about his looming departure. Only about 25 to 50 of those messages were negative, he said.

"I intend to answer every one of them," he said.

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May 13, 2010 4:52 pm US/Central

Budget Cuts May Close Sickle-Cell Treatment Center Doctor Says More Than Jobs Could Be Lost If Facility Is Shuttered



Reporting
Mike Puccinelli

CHICAGO (CBS) — They suffer from chronic pain. Five thousand people in Illinois have sickle cell anemia, and hundreds of adults rely on the only comprehensive treatment center in the state. It's right here in Chicago.

But now all of that center's funding has been cut off. As CBS 2's Mike Puccinelli reports, patients say they don't know what they're going to do.

Shovonta Magette-Wilson is hurting so badly, she's been hospitalized for four days. The culprit: sickle cell disease, a chronic blood disorder affecting Shovonta and more than 800 other men, women and children who come for treatment at the Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center at the University of Illinois-Chicago.

The 27-year old mother fears she'll soon have to walk out the door of the center for the last time. That's because the only center in the state specializing in the treatment of adults and children with sickle cell has been slashed from the state's budget proposal.

Barring a change, says Dr. Rich Labotka, the center's co-director, "We're going to have to fire staff and no longer have our sickle cell center here."

A dozen jobs are at stake. More important, Labotka, a shutdown will cost lives.

"If somebody has serious acute complications of sickle cell disease and is not managed by physicians and nurses who are experts in managing this, then patients do die," Labotka said.

State Rep. La Shawn Ford says that's unacceptable. He is sending a letter to Gov. Quinn asking that funding be restored for the center.

"We want to make sure that the governor is aware that, through all the cuts, that we cut waste and not services that's vital," Ford said.

Magette-Wilson's leg may be swollen, but her pain is now manageable, unlike when she came in.

"It was bothering me so bad to the point I was crying," she said.

She shed tears Thursday, too, over fears that the center might be forced to close.

She's among 2,000 people who have signed a petition that will be sent to the governor urging him to restore about \$1.9 million of funding to the center.

If it's not restored, the center is set to run out of money by July.



1 of 1

[Click to enlarge](#)

Sickle-cell anemia patient Shovonta Magette-Wilson, right, is afraid state budget cuts will close the center that treats her disease.
CBS

Our View: Lawmakers special scholarship favors should be killed

RRSTAR.COM EDITORIAL

Posted May 13, 2010 @ 06:44 PM

College students need help paying for school. But they don't need the kind of help that Illinois legislators have given for decades — the kind offered if you or your family has money and connections.

Gov. Pat Quinn gets it. We're glad. This week he vetoed Senate Bill 365, a so-called reform of the legislative scholarship program. Lawmakers must think the people of Illinois are pretty slow.

They think they can dress up a few half-measures and people will buy it as real change in the culture of favors and payback, a culture that has infected this scholarship program as it has infected every other part of state politics.

Under the program, each of the state's 177 lawmakers award two full tuition waivers every year to students attending a state university. The schools have to absorb the cost, which in fiscal year 2009 was approximately \$13.5 million, according to the governor's office.

Meanwhile, the state can't even keep its financial promises to these schools. At last count, the state owed \$376 million to the University of Illinois.

This "reform" would have ignored all that. It would have banned House and Senate members from awarding a scholarship to a student whose family gave a campaign contribution in the previous five years. It also would have prohibited family members of scholarship recipients from donating to the campaign of lawmakers who gave the award.

That's only the first layer of corruption. Peel back the bill to reveal no limits on tuition waivers for the children of elected officials, campaign workers or lobbyists.

Lawmakers in this area have consistently argued they award the scholarships on merit and not to their cronies. That's fine, but an AP investigation of the program showed their legislative colleagues weren't nearly as conscientious.

In practice, the program was a mess — in principle, it is bad too, as Quinn said in his veto message.

"This bill fails to adopt the fundamental reforms that are necessary," he wrote. "At a time when students are being deprived basic assistance and we are asking our institutions of higher learning to operate with scarce resources, I cannot affix my signature to something that allows student assistance to be based on anything other than need and merit."

There's need, all right. The fate of the Monetary Award Program continues to hang in the balance with only partial funding.

The program provides more than 200,000 low-income students with need-based grants through the Illinois Student Assistance Commission.

As a **May 3 Register Star story stated**, the percentage of college students graduating with education-related debt is rising even as jobs and earnings are drying up. In Illinois, more than half of all students leave school with debt that averages \$20,102 per student. It's a climate that makes political favoritism less and less palatable. The governor is right. Don't fiddle around the edges of this perk. End it. No one can afford it.

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Interim positions remain despite ongoing search

[Selma Haveric](#) Staff Writer [Contact me](#)

Posted: May 13th, 2010 - 9:50 PM

Updated: May 13th, 2010 - 9:50 PM

Editor's Note: This article was published in the Spring 2010 Year in Review issue.

Several search committees were formed this year to aid in the selection of top administrators and other campus positions.

However, the positions of provost and dean of the College of Media are all still held by individuals holding an interim title, and no final decisions about permanent replacements have been made.

After former President B. Joseph White stepped down during admissions clout controversy, Stanley Ikenberry, Illinois' president from 1979 to 1995, served as interim president.

Since its formation in October 2009 after White stepped down, the presidential search committee considered 200 candidates, and on Tuesday Michael J. Hogan, former president of the University of Connecticut was announced as the 18th president of the University of Illinois, pending approval by the Board of Trustees.

The 19-member search committee included students, faculty and administrators from all three University of Illinois campuses.

University Spokesman Tom Hardy said diversity played a role in the selection process.

Student Trustee Matt Reschke said the search committee made sure everyone's needs were met.

"The candidates that we brought forth were all very, very highly qualified," he said.

The University provost position has yet to be permanently filled. The position is currently filled by Interim Provost and Chancellor Robert Easter. Easter is also vice chancellor for academic affairs and has served as interim provost since Linda Katehi resigned in August.

Despite having spent \$147,000 to find a new provost, according to documents obtained by the Illinois Freedom of Information Act requested by The Daily Illini, the search was temporarily suspended in October because of vacancies in the president and chancellor positions.

The search for a permanent College of Media dean has been suspended indefinitely. An e-mail was sent out to members of the college on Feb. 15 announcing the end of the search.

The College of Media is one of many campus units that are under review through the Stewarding Excellence initiative.

The project team on Academic Reviews, part of the initiative, is looking at independent schools and colleges with less than 40 faculty members in an effort to consolidate services and resources across campus.

Walter Harrington, who is currently the interim dean for the College of Media, has only agreed to fill the position through the summer of 2010.

Harrington said the college is going to consider alternative organizational structures that would not harm students or the college's mission.

He said one option involves a possible collaboration with the Graduate School of Library and Information Services.

chicagotribune.com

Daley says Web site changes aid transparency

Residents can track 311, FOIA requests

By John Byrne, Tribune Reporter

5:16 PM CDT, May 13, 2010

Long criticized for routinely denying public records requests, Mayor Richard Daley on Thursday promoted several additions to a city Web site that he said will make his administration more transparent.

Residents will be able to track their 311 service requests and look up financial interest statements for city employees. They'll also be able to see a list of open records requests filed under the Freedom of Information Act — a new wrinkle that could give pause to reporters who don't like competitors seeing what they're working on.

Daley, whose administration has been dogged by scandals uncovered by Chicago investigative journalists, denied that posting the records requests online is a deliberate dig.

"They know it anyway. They all know anyway," said Daley, who smiled and laughed.

"Again, if you want transparency in government, you have to have this. This has nothing to do with the Sun-Times, the Tribune, the media, anything. This is what you want, and we have all types of FOIAs coming in."

City Corporation Counsel Mara Georges said she isn't concerned people will be less willing to ask the city for information now that their neighbors and others will be able to easily see what they have requested.

Daley's talk of transparency comes after he resisted efforts last year to see documents behind his administration's decisions on federal stimulus projects. Daley also assented to Chicago's police chief's defiance of a federal judge's demand of a list of officers repeatedly accused of misconduct.

The Web site improvements Daley touted Thursday also would do nothing to improve transparency on closely held city deals such as the much-maligned parking-meter lease. Aldermen approved the deal in December 2008 despite having only a couple of days to review the complicated proposal.

The address for the city's information portal is: **data.cityofchicago.org**.

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Daley sticks it to investigative reporters

CITY HALL | Website to tip competitors on who's digging for dirt

BY FRAN SPIELMAN

City Hall Reporter
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In the name of "transparency," Mayor Daley on Thursday got some measure of revenge against the investigative reporters who've made his life miserable by digging up dirt on the Hired Truck, city hiring and minority contracting scandals.

He revamped the city's new website to include a log of all Freedom of Information Act re-

EDITORIAL: Mayor lashes back at the press. | Page 22

quests. The list includes the name and organization of each applicant, documents demanded and dates the information was requested and is due to be released.

A new state law merely requires city departments to maintain such a log — not to post it on the Internet to tip investigative reporters about the trail being followed by competitors.

But Daley gleefully declared he was going "above and beyond what's required" in the interest of "transparency, openness and the free-flow of information."

"If you want transparency in government, you have to have this. I'm sorry. This has nothing to do with [getting even with] the Sun-Times, Tribune, media or anything. This is what you want," Daley said.

Corporation Counsel Mara Georges noted that some investigative reporters try to keep tabs on competitors by "FOI-ing other people's FOIs."

By posting the log, she said, "We don't have to be the arbiter of disputes . . . to decide who's gonna get access to other people's FOIs, who's gonna get access to the information others are asking about."

For years, Daley's response to the seemingly endless string of corruption scandals has been to shine a brighter light.

Another headline. Another indictment. Another mountain of information made available on the Internet. Daley likes to call it "transparency," as if the word is some kind of anti-corruption pill.

Thursday's news conference was more of the same.

Comment at suntimes.com.

CHICAGO **SUN-TIMES**

WE THINK

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Daley comes out swinging at press

Is Mayor Daley trying to give the press grief?

You bet.

Can we complain?

Not much.

On Daley's order, City Hall on Thursday began posting online all requests for government documents under the Freedom of Information Act — the lifeblood of investigative reporters.

Now every reporter in town —

We're pretty sure this is payback time.

and anybody else with a computer — can immediately check daily what every other reporter in town is looking into.

Our fear is that this will create a chilling effect on the press' ability to uncover public corruption.

Daley says he's posting all FOIA requests online for no other reason than "transparency" — let's have no secrets from the public.

But we're pretty sure this is payback time.

The media — and most especially the Chicago Sun-Times — have made Daley's life miserable over the years with a slew of explosive investigations, some of which have led to prison time for allies of the mayor and high-ranking city employees.

That said, it's simply impossible

for a newspaper, as a champion of the free flow of information, to object to any policy that makes public records more accessible.

We would look like — we would be — hypocrites.

FOIA requests already were public information. Even before they were dumped online Thursday, they could be viewed by anybody willing to walk over to City Hall and fill out a FOIA request to look at other FOIA requests.

We've always thought that was a bad policy, by the way, a confusing of apples and oranges. A request for government information should not be treated as government information itself.

We expect the ease with which anybody can now view every FOIA request in town — with a click of a computer key — will alter the strategies reporters and others use in filing their requests.

They may use broader language, so as to hide their specific interest. They may file many more requests to create a diversion.

And City Hall may find itself swamped in trying to fulfill these broader and more numerous requests.

We shall see.

But we already know this:

The best reporters in Chicago — and there are many — will not be deterred.

Do too many people go to college? Maybe

The notion that a four-year degree is essential for real success is being challenged by a growing number of economists, policy analysts and academics. They say more Americans should consider other options such as technical training or two-year schools, which have been embraced in Europe for decades.

As evidence, experts cite rising student debt, stagnant graduation rates and a struggling job market flooded with overqualified degree-holders. They pose a fundamental question: Do too many students go to college?

"College is what every parent wants for their child," said

Martin Scaglione, president of ACT, the not-for-profit best known for its college entrance exam. "The reality is, they may not be ready for college."

Federal statistics show that just 36 percent of full-time students starting college in 2001 earned a four-year degree within that allotted time. Even with an extra two years to finish, that group's graduation rate increased only to 57 percent.

Spending more time in school also means greater overall student debt. The average student debt load in 2008 was \$23,200 — a nearly \$5,000 increase over five years. *AP*