

Remarks to Urbana Faculty Senate

President B. Joseph White

September 14, 2009

Two weeks ago, I told you I regretted the admissions problems that occurred on this campus. I told you that I did not admit candidates noted as denials, nor did I ask or expect them to be admitted. I did not direct the admission of any candidate. The Mikva Commission report is consistent with this record.

Today, I want to tell you things I did do as president.

For four-and-a-half years, I have worked to insulate this University from external pressures in an extremely difficult and intensely political environment. From the outset, I understood that was my job.

- I stood behind every admissions denial, no matter who the advocates or how persistent they were.
- I said no when I was told that Governor Blagojevich's office wanted a new IGPA research report killed rather than published.
- I said no when a senior aide to Governor Blagojevich told me the administration was at war and I was in their army. He asked if I had read the organization chart. He berated me for not supporting the Gross Receipts Tax proposal. I told the aide that the president of the University reports to a board; that I am independent and not in anyone's army; and that I would not support bad policy.

Throughout my presidency, I have consistently said "no" when no was the right answer. I have protected the University's autonomy. I have defended faculty freedoms of inquiry and expression. That was my job and I did it.

So let me be clear. The notion that I would submit to pressure – or apply pressure – for admissions or anything else in order to please the high and mighty is dead wrong. I never did. It would have been completely out of character. I am not and never have been a servant of power.

I came to Illinois in 2005 a fiercely independent person and high integrity leader. I still am.

I appreciate your listening. I welcome your comments and questions.