

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

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Prepared Remarks, May 19, 2016

Timothy Killeen to the Board of Trustees

Thank you, Chairman McMillan.

Yesterday marked my first year as president and I am even prouder now than I was a year ago to be part of this magnificent University system.

It was a year that brought a host of difficult challenges that none of us could have seen coming, from campus leadership changes to a historic budget impasse that shut off state funding for nearly 10 months.

Looking back, I am reminded of a lesser known but still spot-on theory by scientist Albert Einstein.

“Life is like riding a bicycle,” he said. “To keep your balance you must keep moving.”

And we have ... on an upward trajectory, firing on all cylinders.

We have tackled every challenge head-on ... with purpose and integrity, guided by a bedrock commitment to students and the public good.

Along the way, we have done more than just weather the challenges.

We have also built on the excellence that is synonymous with the University of Illinois ... thanks to the commitment and vision of the board, our faculty and staff, our students, and our alumni and friends.

Just consider how we have grown over the last year.

Enrollment topped a record 80,000-plus students across our three great campuses last fall, including our largest freshman class ever and significant increases in African-American and Latino students.

Next fall could bring new records.

System-wide, we received more than 58,000 applications from prospective first-time freshmen ... record interest that was up more than 13 percent from the year before.

Almost 12,000 have accepted our offer of admission ... nearly matching last year's totals ... and acceptances are up 9 percent among African-American and Latino students.

It speaks to the quality of a U of I education and to a commitment to access and affordability that will hold tuition rates flat for the second straight year, despite the financial challenges we face.

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Through ramped-up advocacy efforts, we are working to restore adequate and reliable state funding ... making our case on the value of the University of Illinois and its importance as an economic engine for the state.

That included another great day at the Capitol yesterday, when more than 150 alumni joined trustees and top administrators to share their stories about the difference the U of I has made in their lives and the key role it holds in moving Illinois forward.

Our story is connecting.

Last month, the legislature and Gov. Rauner approved a stopgap measure that provided about a quarter of our fiscal 2016 appropriation ... and I am hopeful a full budget for both 2016 and 2017 will follow that holds reductions below earlier forecasts.

Each of our campuses is also adding to its legacy of service to students and society, and momentum continues to build under the visionary leadership of our chancellors ... Barb Wilson in Urbana-Champaign, Michael Amiridis in Chicago and Susan Koch here in Springfield.

Along with a new, engineering-based College of Medicine, Urbana is also developing a new leading-edge center that will increase students' role in innovation and enhance their educational experience.

The \$48 million Campus Design Center is set to open by December 2018, a 60,000-square-foot facility where students from different disciplines will come together to bring pioneering ideas to life.

The new center was inspired by award-winning students from the past, including one who designed a solar-powered lantern that brings light to remote villages in Africa and India and another who created affordable artificial limbs for amputees in developing countries.

At UIC, we are building on a health-care enterprise that is home to the nation's largest medical school and a legacy of research discovery that includes a drug to reduce the spread of HIV and imaging techniques to detect aggressive cancers.

A new vice chancellor for health affairs is now on board to oversee a realignment that will integrate our health-science colleges with our hospital and clinics ... a move that promises advances in medical education, in breakthrough research and in service to underserved communities around Chicago.

And here in Springfield, we broke ground this month on the campus's first-ever student union, a \$21 million facility that will provide a critical new hub for student life on this growing, 5,400 student campus.

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Our achievements have truly been a team effort ... rooted in the passion, creativity and dedication of our many stakeholders ... trustees, our leadership team, our faculty and staff, and our students and alumni.

They are the foundation of our standing as one of the world's premier University systems and why I am so optimistic that our future is even brighter ... no matter what new challenges come our way.

We will chart our course with the help of a new strategic framework, and I'll talk more about it in just a few minutes.

The framework sets high aspirations for future, by setting core priorities centered on students and public service that follow a piece of advice that Abraham Lincoln handed down more than 150 years ago.

"Be sure you put your feet in the right place," he said "Then stand firm."

My thanks again to all of you for your support over the last year ... and for your loyalty and commitment to this great university.

We have had many town hall meetings, office hours, retreats, and the steering committee has met regularly and often and has developed the document that the Board will approve today.

Our Commitment to academic freedom is central to our University, and embedded into the strategic framework. As such, I feel it is important to reiterate the foundational importance of academic freedom as state in our University Statutes, Article X, Section 2, "It is the policy of the University to maintain and encourage full freedom within the law of inquiry, discourse, teaching, research, and publication and to protect any member of the academic staff against influences, from within or without the University, which would restrict the member's exercise of these freedoms..."

Also important to note: over the last year the process of appointing faculty has significantly improved and now follows on appropriate timeline. As an added reminder, during the appointment process, should concerns arise about a proposed appointment, the Board office will notify the relevant chancellor and request that the Chancellor follow the campus shared governance process to evaluate the concerns and, after such consultation, to advise if the proposed appointment should proceed.