

June 29, 2017

An Open Letter:

State Budget Impasse Threatens Shutdown of Major U of I Construction Initiatives

Six major construction projects critical to the University of Illinois System in fulfilling its statewide higher education and research missions will shut down June 30 in the absence of approval by elected officials in Springfield of a fiscal 2018 state budget.

Delays from a work stoppage will drive up construction costs and disrupt the continuity of teaching, research and campus life. Moreover, with total spending of nearly \$134 million for these essential projects, they create jobs and a rippling economic benefit to our communities and the state, now and for years to come. The threatened U of I System projects include:

- A state-of-the art, \$32 million Integrated Bioprocessing Research Laboratory (IBRL) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where researchers, students and industry will develop renewable bioprocessing technologies. Situated on campus at the nexus of agricultural and food research, IBRL will empower the university to leverage its world-class research strengths and lead in the growth and development of the bio-based economy.
- A critical, \$25.4 million HVAC infrastructure replacement and upgrade at the University of Illinois at Chicago's College of Dentistry, the largest dental school in Illinois and the state's largest provider of dental care, serving many from the most underserved communities in Chicago.
- An infrastructure upgrade at the U of I at Urbana-Champaign, also \$25.4 million, to make life-safety improvements in key buildings, including iconic, active structures such as Foellinger Auditorium, Huff Hall and the Armory.
- A \$46.9 million multi-jurisdictional, multi-phased transportation project that includes the U of I at Urbana-Champaign and the cities of Urbana and Champaign. The Multimodal Corridor Enhancement (MCORE) Project entails curb-to-curb reconstruction of streets in and around a campus heavily travelled by cars, buses, pedestrians and bicyclists.
- A \$3.7 million renovation of the large-animal clinic and teaching-and-research laboratory at the U of I at Urbana-Champaign's College of Veterinary Medicine.
- A \$706,000 replacement of elevators in buildings on the east and west campuses at UIC.

A critical university project that has not broken ground, stalled by budget impasses and the state's failure to fund capital projects, is the planned but unfunded \$6 million public safety building at the growing University of Illinois at Springfield. Public safety functions are carried out in a cramped, antiquated former farm house.

A shutdown of the above-referenced Multimodal Corridor Enhancement (MCORE) Project could make it a poster child for the frustration and absurdity of the three-year state budget impasse. Years in the planning and funded with \$15 million in *federal grants* that pass through the Illinois Department of Transportation and a \$31.2 million local match, there is no cost or risk to the state, yet it is held hostage to the gridlock in Springfield.

Construction is already underway with streets in the central campus area demolished as workers sought to complete this phase of the project by August 25 and the start of a new academic year. Some 65,000 students, staff and faculty, as well as Campustown small businesses, will be disrupted on a daily basis if the project sits unfinished.

The damage being wreaked on institutions and communities statewide by the budget gridlock is indisputable. These are but a handful of examples of how it threatens the U of I System that the people and the state have supported it for 150 years. We could cite many more.

It is time—this week—for the General Assembly and the governor to work together to end the stalemate, to keep these important initiatives underway and to empower the state of Illinois and its people to live up to their fullest potential. We stand ready to assist in any way we can.

Sincerely,

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Robert J. Jones, Chancellor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Michael Amiridis, Chancellor, University of Illinois at Chicago
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