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75% of SIUC faculty vote against reorganization

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A new compilation of votes cast by faculty at Southern Illinois University Carbondale shows that the majority of tenured and tenure-track faculty oppose Chancellor Carlo Montemagno's restructuring plan. As part of the contractual review process, faculty had the right to vote to speed up or slow down the process. Chancellor Montemagno urged faculty to vote to speed the process up, but 75% of faculty have voted to extend the deadlines for reviewing the plan or to not advance (295-99).¹

Additionally many departments have taken "straw polls" on the merits of the chancellor's plan. 79% of faculty voting in such polls have voted against the chancellor's proposal in their area (111-30). This includes overwhelming margins of votes cast in the proposed schools of Engineering, Physical Science, and Humanities.

"These figures, which are the most complete data we have so far on faculty views, demonstrate what any objective observer on campus would have concluded long ago: most faculty simply aren't buying what the chancellor is trying to sell, despite his claims to the contrary," said Dave Johnson, SIUC Faculty Association President.

"The faculty is not buying the chancellor's plan because it is chaotic and complicates the challenges facing SIU, rather than solves them. It is motion without purpose, a so-called change that serves only the chancellor and not the university" added Segun Ojewuyi SIUC Faculty Association Vice-President and member of the Faculty Senate.

The chancellor has repeatedly said that some 70% of the input he gets about his plan is positive. But he has provided no evidence to support that figure, and the figures above are just the latest evidence that his plan lacks support. Additional evidence for the views of faculty and others on campus comes from the findings of a [survey done by the Coordinating Committee for Change at SIU](#). This survey included responses from 246 faculty (both non-tenure track and tenured/tenure track faculty) and showed that just 39% of faculty supported the chancellor's plan. Overall, only 36% of the more than 1000 people to fill out the survey voiced support for the chancellor's plan. The CCC survey also found 62% of faculty opposed the elimination of departments and chairs.

Last fall, both constituency bodies representing SIUC faculty, the Faculty Senate and the Graduate Council, voted two to one against the chancellor's plan to eliminate all academic departments. The two branches of student government, the Graduate and Professional Student Council and Undergraduate Student Government, have gone further still. Both have not only voted by overwhelming majorities to

¹ Not every department voted on moving forward or not (it is not required). There are 510 tenured or tenure track faculty at SIU.

oppose the elimination of academic departments but have passed motions of no confidence in the chancellor, the most serious vote such bodies can take against a sitting administrator.

“There are some pockets of support for the chancellor’s plan on campus,” FA President Johnson said. “And where faculty do want to merge their departments into schools, they should certainly do so. But there is a consensus across campus that departments should not be eliminated where faculty, students, and staff believe that departments continue to be the best way to run our academic programs.”

The chancellor has claimed that his reorganization will help SIUC begin to grow again at some point after it is put in place, but has admitted he has no evidence for this claim. The five schools already present on campus (Allied Health, Information Systems and Applied Technology, Art and Design, Music, and Architecture) have seen their enrollment drop by 16% in the last five years.

Last fall, the chancellor announced his plan to present the Board of Trustees with a comprehensive proposal to reorganize the Carbondale campus for their approval at their meeting on April 12. It is now apparent that nothing will be ready in time for board approval at that meeting. This means that no major changes will be in place at the outset of the next fiscal year (July 1, 2018), so any hypothetical improvements on campus would likely not take hold until July of 2019 at the earliest.

While SIUC debates the chancellor’s controversial restructuring plan, other Illinois universities are taking positive steps to increase enrollment. Eastern Illinois University reports that its enrollment grew this semester, and both EIU and SIUE are projecting increased enrollment for fall 2018, while SIUC is predicting a huge decline.

“We’ve wasted a year on an impracticable plan our chancellor tried to impose on this campus, without providing any evidence that his plan would work,” Johnson said. “Faculty and students across campus have concluded that the chancellor’s restructuring would do more harm than good. It’s time to turn the page and come up with some concrete, practicable steps to address our declining enrollment and get our finances back in order.”

“If Chancellor Montemagno can’t change course and unify the campus behind a plan faculty and students support,” Johnson added, “perhaps the time has come for new leadership on the Carbondale campus.”

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