

FA announcements

The FA's Departmental Representatives Council will meet **at 5:00 on February 21st**. The main agenda item will be a discussion of priorities for the next contract. All FA members are welcome to attend.

The national Representative Assembly of the NEA, our parent union, will be held from July 3 to July 7 in Houston Texas. The FA can send at least one member to participate in this meeting. If you are interested in attending, please contact me (dmj2@me.com) by **February 19**. The FA can subsidize registration and travel expenses for the conference.

Ways to get involved

The FA is a volunteer organization, so we are as effective as our members and activists make us. Here are a couple of general areas where you can get involved—neither of which requires a massive time commitment.

The biggest single area is regarding **bargaining**, both “full book” bargaining, and bargaining over SIU's conflict of interest process. Commitments here don't need to be life-threatening: it would be great to have people work on separate, finite issues, the most pressing of which is finances.

We're also looking for people willing to help out with **membership**—recruiting new members to the FA. The best way to do this is to talk to colleagues; the committee will help with training and planning. Every conversation helps, so the time commitment needn't be large.

Do please consider getting more involved. FA work can be tremendously rewarding. If you have questions or are interested in pitching in, drop me a line: dmj2@me.com.

Textbook orders

A [memo from the provost](#) has set very early deadlines for textbook orders for the summer and fall semesters. These deadlines fall before class assignments will be finalized for either semester. The memo cites selectively from the textbook provision of the [2010 Federal Higher Education Opportunity Act a 2010 federal act](#), and neglects to note that the act itself contains explicit language (section h) protecting the academic freedom of instructors involved in the selection of texts. Were SIUC to comply at the 100% rate the memo calls for, this would rob many instructors of the academic freedom

to choose their own texts for class, or result in late changes to text orders that could result in some students purchasing the wrong texts.

We encourage faculty to order textbooks early, whenever this is practicable, to help students plan. But insisting on finalizing all textbook orders before faculty are even assigned courses undermines academic freedom, which is protected by our contract and the federal act itself.

Restructuring update

On December 13, the Board of Trustees passed [a resolution](#) in support of the restructuring process. The FA opposed the resolution, and I outlined [some of the FA's questions](#) about the resolution at the executive session. The schools approved by the FS and GC are now before the IBHE, where they will undergo a staff review process.

The BOT resolution was couched in broad and vague language. The SIU administration has, however, clarified its meaning as a result of queries we sent them earlier this semester. The essential thrust of the resolution is to delegate decision-making on proposed schools to Interim President Dorsey. The resolution does not mean that the BOT has approved any or all proposed schools, nor does it commit the university to the elimination of all academic departments. Interim President Dorsey has the authority to approve or reject school proposals forwarded to him by the SIUC administration.

The BOT resolution, thus interpreted, does not violate Article 9. And we are happy to see that schools supported by faculty are moving forward. However, the SIUC administration appears to be committed to a lengthy period of restructuring, in which new schools fall outside the current college structure, current colleges are largely or partially deconstructed, and many faculty and students are left uncertain of the fate of their units.

The major argument made in favor of the resolution was that the BOT needed to pass it in order to move restructuring forward in a way acceptable to the IBHE (Illinois Board of Higher Education). But no one is arguing that this is the only way the IBHE would approve of restructuring. There are at least two other approaches.

First, SIUC could simply move forward with the schools that faculty have approved, and assign them to the current college structure, with necessary adaptations. Other current units could be left intact for the time being. We could introduce more changes at a later date, after seeing whether the new school structures are successful. The administration could declare victory and point, truthfully enough, to major changes on campus, while resolving the confusion and controversy that have dogged us for the last year and a half. These significant but limited changes could be approved by the IBHE as it approves

other similar changes in the normal course of business. They could then be implemented in relatively short order.

Second, SIUC could first finalize plans for a more comprehensive restructuring, and only then implement changes. The IBHE would have an entire, coherent plan to review. This approach would take more time, a powerful argument against it, but it would still beat the current approach, as it would also avoid the chaotic interregnum during which SIUC is half restructured, half not.

Finally, we should not lose sight of the real crisis: enrollment. [Figures shared by the IBHE](#) show that SIUC ranked dead last in enrollment changes among Illinois public universities from 2017 to 2018, down by 13% (in FTE terms). And early indicators for the fall of 2019 are apparently also negative. We must turn this around. The administration has failed to make the case that restructuring will help enrollment, and while faculty and staff are working hard to recruit and retain students, restructuring continues to consume far too much of our energy, and uncertainty about how we are to organize ourselves makes planning for the future all but impossible. Shared governance does take time, but faculty made their views on restructuring clear many months ago. It is well past time to finish restructuring and start rebuilding our enrollment.