

FA News (May 3, 2019)

Update: Undoing Saluki Success

Interim Provost Komarraju is ["enhancing" the Saluki Success program](#). Under the leadership of Nick Wishenskey and his team of NTT instructors, UCOL 101 has been a success for the first time in its history, as demonstrated by [prominent news](#) stories and the program's own data. Now the interim provost is driving away the NTT instructors by saying the best they can hope for would be fall contracts for next year, with no expectation of spring contracts. TT faculty will be asked to teach the course instead, with the course perhaps simply being loaded onto their teaching loads with no meaningful change in expectations for the rest of their work. The interim provost says that many TT faculty are eager to teach UCOL 101, but has provided no reason to believe this is true.

Thus it looks like the provost will dismantle the current, successful program; effectively fire successful NTT instructors; and burden TT faculty with teaching a student success course few are interested in or qualified to teach. So instructors are being mistreated and students will be worse served, in another self-inflicted wound that is producing [negative news coverage](#).

If you are asked or required to teach UCOL 101 on top of your regular teaching load, please let us know.

Update: Restructuring

The SIUC campus administration has now received permission from the IBHE to impose three restructuring plans rejected by faculty:

- Agriculture
- Analytics, Finance, and Economics
- Education

The IBHE has also approved two more plans that now have majority faculty support:

- Management and Marketing
- Human Sciences

Full documentation of this most recent wave of schools can be found [on our website](#). This second wave follows a first wave of seven schools that did have faculty support. At least one more wave is coming.

Restructuring: Analysis

The IBHE staff approved five complex RME proposals, weighing in at 124 pages, in a mere 48 hours (from April 23 to April 25).¹ This followed what certainly appear to have been similarly perfunctory reviews by Interim Chancellor Dunn, Interim President Dorsey, and Acting System Vice President Jim Allen (now serving in place of Brad Colwell). No matter: the decision, such as it was, was already made by Interim Provost Komarraju. None of these parties seem to be interested in the views of the faculty who will have to work in these new schools. None seems to have been concerned by negative votes from the Faculty Senate and Graduate Council. None of these administrators seems to think that their interim or acting status ought to lead them to pause before making permanent changes on this campus in the face of opposition from faculty and students.

We are living under a zombie administration. Chancellor Montemagno (who at least was no interim or acting administrator, unlike the administrators whose signatures are on these documents) proposed an ambitious, flawed, controversial restructuring plan. To his credit, he approved a number of major changes to that plan. There have been few such changes since his untimely death.

Upon Chancellor Montemagno's death, the administrators who found themselves running this campus had a choice. They could attempt a reset, take what was positive in the chancellor's vision and make it work, put the rest on hold, unite the campus, and refocus on recruitment and retention. This opportunity was lost first by the interim provost, then by the interim chancellor, then by the interim president. At any point, any one of these administrators could have had the wisdom and courage to decide that we could do better than to jam through ill-supported plans rejected by faculty and students.

Instead these interim administrators have decided to double-down on Montemagno's plan, guaranteeing that restructuring would be a lengthy, contentious, dysfunctional debacle for this university. In doing so they are not only forcing faculty to merge, but are destroying our current college structure without any clear plans for how to replace it. Lacking any vision of their own, administrators exploited the natural feeling of goodwill for the late chancellor at the time of his death, and converted his plan into a holy relic. It's unclear how many of them are true believers in restructuring, but our administrators have long since abandoned making any real effort to defend their plans. Instead restructuring has become an article of faith.

Consider the [cover memo written to the IBHE](#) by the new acting vice president for academic affairs, Jim Allen. Allen's memo notes that faculty were "fully engaged in discussion concerning the changes" and points out one last-minute change (a change worked out in concern with negotiations with the FA, though that is not mentioned). He grants that "these RMEs have not received majority faculty support," a decidedly delicate way of referring to no votes in unit upon unit, in the Faculty Senate, and in the Graduate Council. We then get the one sentence of direct argument that apparently outweighs all

¹ Though the [relevant memo from the IBHE](#) is dated April 28, the SIUC administration informed faculty that plans had been approved by the IBHE on April 25.

the negative votes by faculty: "The Chancellor and President firmly believe that the academic units will be much the better in the medium- and long-term, especially for the creation of innovative, more interdisciplinary programs that will draw more students to study at SIU Carbondale."

So restructuring is better because we, the (Interim) Chancellor and (Interim) President, "firmly believe" that it is better. Inasmuch as there is any argument here, it is a return [the Yugo argument](#) made in [December of 2017](#) by [Chancellor Montemagno](#): our current programs are insufficiently interdisciplinary clunkers and hence cannot attract new students. So we need shiny new interdisciplinary muscle cars. There's no argument here (or elsewhere) to show that reshuffling programs into new, somewhat larger containers will facilitate the birth of these new programs. No evidence is provided to show that it is current academic departments that stand in the way of cooperation across unit lines, rather than the bureaucratic hurdles imposed by the central administration, and the administration's rule of deciding on funding allocations by pitting department against department, kneecapping efforts at cooperation.

One bit of honesty pokes through: these new arrangements will produce positive results, Allen informs the IBHE, "in the medium- or long-term." As if SIUC, bleeding students by upwards of 10% of year ([13% just last year, in last place among Illinois public universities](#), with a similar downturn predicted for next fall) could afford the manifest losses entailed by a divisive, confused, morale-draining reorganizational overhaul that will, even if our interim leaders are correct, have positive results only years from now.

Allen's memo then goes on to spend rather more time hinting at cost-savings from the plan, despite the disclaimer that such concerns were "not paramount in the campus and system leaders' decisions." So in addition to the argument from authority, and the Yugo argument, we get a fine example of bait and switch. While he spent just a sentence on the promise of new interdisciplinary programs, Allen devotes half a page to pointing out how many chairs will be replaced by how few school directors. He offers no hint at how a few directors will do the work of many chairs, failing to note the acknowledged need for "division coordinators" (if faculty can be found to do work once done by chairs for far less compensation). Allen does not provide any figures for savings, presumably because the only figures provided by the administration to back this plan [have been shown to be fraudulent](#).

So while the budgetary impact of these changes is "considerable," it is not paramount enough to deserve actual numbers that someone might actually check, as checking would show that the numbers don't add up. This is the quality of argument we should expect from an administration that has stopped caring about the quality of their arguments.

Next steps

The FA has ongoing grievances about two of the IBHE approved schools (Analytics, Finance, and Economics; Education). If an arbitrator rules in our favor, as we expect, the administration will likely be forced to start these school proposals over from scratch. The administration could, however, choose to push these same schools forward, this time

being more careful to follow the Article 9 process. Neither the FA nor faculty acting in any other capacity have a legal or contractual trump card to stop this process forever.

What, then, are we to do? We can only continue to speak the truth as we see it, to make our own evidence-based arguments for what we think is best for the future of SIUC. We will, of course, continue to do our best to serve our students and do our research and creative work in whatever configurations this administration may force us into. But we owe it to our students, to our colleagues, to our disciplines, and, yes, to SIUC itself, a university we love enough to keep fighting for after all these years of decline and mismanagement, to continue to advocate for our vision for this university.

Our next chance to advocate for our students and our programs comes on May 15 and May 16, when the Board of Trustees returns to Carbondale. The board is now largely made up of members who have not weighed in publicly on restructuring, so there is at least some chance that they will be swayed by what faculty and students have to say. It is also this new board that will choose a new permanent president for the SIU System, and a new permanent chancellor for SIUC. These individuals will likely be named in time to have an influence on the restructuring process.

One positive sign is that the Board has agreed to give the four IEA unions time on the 15th to discuss how the unions can work with the administration to move SIUC forward. Consider attending on the 15th; we would appreciate a supportive audience. If you feel strongly about what is happening to your unit, may yet happen to your unit, or is happening to your colleagues, please consider speaking up at the public comments section of these upcoming meetings.

→ **To speak in the public comments section of either May 15 or May 16 BOT meetings, contact the BOT Executive Secretary, Misty Worthington, at mistyw@siu.edu.**

Impact bargaining

Finally, the FA will exercise its right to engage in “impact bargaining” ([CBA 9.06](#)) to address the impact of new schools on areas including:

- Promotion and tenure

- Promotional raises

- Merit pay

Faculty are welcome to contact us with their concerns about such matters. To ensure faculty are well represented, we need your input and support.

→ **If you are interested in joining an FA bargaining team to help protect faculty in new schools, [contact Bret Seferian](#).**