

## Hogan Address Highlights Fall Meeting

SUAA–UIUC’s fall meeting on October 16 was highlighted by a presentation by UI President Michael Hogan. Hogan spoke and answered questions to nearly 100 SUAA members in attendance. The President acknowledged that the University faces a number of difficulties, due in large part to the precarious nature of the Illinois economy. But he also pointed to a number of impressive achievements and suggested that the University is moving forward despite its difficult times. Among the success indicators Hogan cited were:

- A rise from 15 to 13 in the campus’ placement in the widely–reported and influential institutional quality rankings from **U.S. News and World Report**;
- Successful conclusion – four months ahead of schedule – to the University’s Brilliant Futures \$2.25 million dollar fund–raising effort. That effort has in no way abated, Hogan noted.
- Filling an array of major administrative positions over the past year with extremely well–qualified new leaders, including Dr. Phyllis Wise, Provost and Interim President of the University of Washington as Vice President and UIUC Chancellor. Others included three new University–wide Vice Presidents (Academic Affairs; Research and Technology; and Health Services) and a Director of Athletics.
- Initiation of a new three–year effort to generate \$100 million in private support for student aid.
- Improved attention to internal administrative process improvements and efficiencies through the Administrative Review and Restructuring Program, which has a target of generating \$60 million in recurring funding from internal economies over three years.

In many ways, Hogan concluded, the University is stronger at this point than at any time in the past four or five years.

The President was equally candid in his comments that the University remains vulnerable to the State of Illinois’ deep financial problems, which have left us vulnerable to still more budget cuts if our political leaders are unable to turn the Illinois economy around in the midst of a national recession. The State’s burgeoning health care and worst–in–the–nation pension costs remain a long–term worry. He reported that the Board of Trustees has directed that in addition to a focus on administrative efficiencies, the University must begin a review of its academic programs.

During an extended question and answer session, President Hogan commented on the general realization among virtually all observers that Illinois deep pension deficits must be addressed. The problem of course, is how to do that. Along with others, the UI helped fend off action on “draconian” pension changes for current employees last spring, but we remain vigilant about efforts to revisit that legislation, perhaps as soon as the Fall Veto Session in October–November.

Along with serious concerns over pensions, the President indicated that improvements to the unintended consequences of recent procurement changes in state law and securing the current year's appropriation for State Surveys would be high priorities during the Veto Session.

Hogan also commented that his office is working with SUAA to make it possible for current employees to cover SUAA membership costs via monthly paycheck deductions. He also expressed his appreciation for SUAA efforts to help smooth the transition to new technology for retiree e-mail services.

Finally, President Hogan suggested that any retiree wishing to help bolster support for the University among legislators become member of the Illinois Connection, an effort to strength the public support of the University from graduates, Foundation and Alumni Association members, and the business community.

In the business meeting which followed, UIUC-SUAA chair Tom Conry urged all SUAA members to make sure their local legislators were aware of our concerns over potential reductions in retiree benefits, whether in health care or other elements of our retirement program. Conry also thanked all who had a hand in publicizing the retiree e-mail issue and expressed his strong belief that without SUAA intervention, the e-mail changes would have been much more damaging to retiree services.