



Future Enrollment in the SIU System

Daniel Mahony, President

Austin Lane, Chancellor, SIU Carbondale

James Minor, Chancellor, SIU Edwardsville

Sheila Caldwell, Vice President for Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Gireesh Gupchup, Vice President for Academic Innovation, Planning, and Partnerships

The Challenge

Throughout much of the history of higher education, enrollment increases were the norm and not very difficult for most universities to achieve. This was true even in relatively recent years when enrollment from 1998-2011 grew by 25% nationally. This increase in enrollment was important because many states were decreasing state appropriations for higher education by the 1990s or early 2000s and this general trend continued for many years. For example, in Illinois general appropriations declined over 25% from 2002 to 2019. When inflation is factored in, that rises to about a 50% reduction. Illinois was certainly not unusual and those types of reductions were common in many states. Moreover, capital funding from the state, that had been relatively common prior to this period, became infrequent. This meant less money available to build new buildings or more importantly, address deferred maintenance, which has increased dramatically for public institutions across the country. In this environment, increases in tuition revenue were necessary to offset the loss of state appropriations. Some of this offset was accomplished through rapidly increasing tuition. Illinois public universities increased tuition an average of 10% a year in the 6 years preceding 2011 – again, not unusual. The financial situation was also helped by this national growth in enrollment. In fact, the increases in tuition were possible because enrollment was growing.

Enrollment and tuition increases at public institutions escalated during the financial crisis in the late 2000s. While that worked for many institutions for a few years, the situation changed after 2011. In many states, particularly in the Northeast and Midwest, the number of high school seniors declining. In addition, the percentage of high school graduates choosing to attend college has also declined. Because of these and other changes, the strategy to offset lost state appropriations with enrollment increases at public institutions only continued to be successful at the state flagship institutions.

11/10/2020 10:00 AM

institutions increased tuition an average of less than 2% per year during the 6 years starting with the budget impasse in fall 2016, and this was also common in other states. In fact, research from the College Board shows when tuition and fees are examined in 2023 dollars, published tuition and fees have actually declined in the last decade. In other words, tuition has actually gone up slower than the increase in the Consumer Price Index.

Moreover, the amount of institutional financial aid provided to students has increased across the country. According to the College Board, from 2006 to 2020, institutional grant-in-aids at public 4-year institutions has increased 128% when examined in 2020 dollars—much more in terms of actual dollars awarded. This means the net tuition revenue per student received by institutions has frequently declined. It is also an indication of how competitive it is to attract new students. In fact, the net tuition paid by in-state students at public 4-year institutions is the lowest it has been in the lifetime high school seniors and 35% lower than 11 years ago. In general, the high cost of going to college is more related to the other costs of attendance (housing, food, personal technology, etc.) than tuition costs. However, even when these are costs are included in the , the net cost for students has declined since 2015.

Overall, 80% of incoming freshmen received at least one grant to help cover some or all of their college costs.

For many institutions, these changes along with the decline in enrollment resulted in less overall net9.6.0 1

examining incoming freshmen numbers, they were down 3.6%, traditional age freshmen were down 5.2%, and public 4-year freshmen were down 6.9%.

And, this is all before we have reached the recognized demographic cliff starting in 2025. Nationally, not just regionally, the number of high school graduates will begin to decline each year. From 2008-2019, 6.6 million fewer children were born than if the number of births had

at our own universities. The expansion of the FAME and GAME programs at SIUE this year led to a 10.2% increase in the retention of black students.

- (2) Improving the ease of transition to our universities from community colleges. While we have some programs that have worked with community colleges to allow for a seamless transition for students in certain programs, there are definitely more opportunities with additional community colleges and/or programs. And the reality is this is an area higher education institutions could do much better. Frankly, in higher education we often confuse rigidity with rigor and make decisions in terms of the latter when we are really just being rigid. Two recent articles in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* highlighted this weakness across the country and here at home.

