

**“41 Years: Reflections on Our Mission in Public Affairs”
Retirement Reception Remarks
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Thank you David for your very generous words. Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for coming. In my 41-year career here, I have witnessed many milestones in the growth of the university. My vantage point has been from our work in fulfilling our special public affairs mandate.

Sangamon State University was mandated to be an innovating institution focused on public affairs. At the end of its first year, 1970, in what came to be known as the “blue memo,” the university’s first President, Robert Spencer, set forth the conditions of employment to be accepted by all new faculty. Teaching was to be considered “the engagement of the students’ minds and imaginations, not the ‘delivery’ of information as such.” The curriculum would explicitly encourage the study of public affairs. This would include “not only careful study of the facts underlying public problems,” but study of “the imperatives and values which are always intermixed with public questions.” President Spencer said, “We are, in short, asking the scholars at SSU to be philosophers,” and “to engage in philosophizing with their students, with their colleagues, and with knowledgeable members of the community on questions of common concern to us all.”

I joined the staff of Sangamon State in February 1976. In Geologic Time, this was BC and BE – before personal computers and before email. Brookens Library had just opened two months before and was the only permanent building on campus. There was no on-campus student housing. Where we sit today, was farmland and a windmill. It would be nearly another five years before the Public Affairs Center would open in December 1980. In Fall 1976, 3800 students were enrolled, taught by 143 fulltime faculty.

I was hired as a Research Specialist in the Center for the Study of Middle-size Cities, on the recommendation of a former professor at MacMurray College, Burkett Milner, who had since joined the faculty here. I was part of a research team working on a project funded by the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission to determine the criminal justice information needs of local government officials. We traveled the length of the state interviewing mayors and county board chairmen. Growing up in the Washington DC suburbs, it was quite an introduction to Illinois, and it was the first of many times when I was conscious of of being the first person that people had met from Sangamon State. With the ego and zeal of youth, we felt we personified the public affairs mission. But we also learned not everyone held “Springfield” in high esteem.

My first office was downtown, at 5th and Capitol on the second floor of the old Leland Hotel which served as the Capital Campus of Sangamon State. It was fun to work downtown. Shadid's bookstore and newsstand was just up 6th street where you could get newspapers from across the country. For lunch, we'd get ham salad sandwiches to go from the drugstore lunch counter on the corner. Or we'd skip lunch and shop at Bressmer's or Myers Brothers over our lunch hour. After work, we'd go across the street to Norb Andy's.

In the early years, with the mandate to be the "public affairs university for the State of Illinois," the interconnections with state government were very strong. State employees would take classes at SSU, and the contacts would lead to requests for proposals from their agencies. Many SSU faculty from a variety of different academic fields were affiliated with the public affairs centers in the 70s and 80s, including faculty in the School of Business. It was a multi-disciplinary environment that was fun to work in.

By 1980, SSU had established four public affairs centers, one for each branch of state government, plus one focused on local government. I was now the assistant to the director of the Center for Policy Studies and Program Evaluation which focused on the executive branch.

The university's premier internship programs and media units had also been established – the Graduate Public Service Internship Program, the Illinois Legislative Staff Intern Program, WSSR Public Radio station, *Illinois Issues* magazine, and the Television Office which operated the local community access channel.

On a bitterly cold January morning in 1979, John Collins, director of the Policy Studies Center, Dan Johnson, director of the Middle-size Cities Center, and I left the parking lot before 6:00 am in the dark to drive the 4 plus hours to DeKalb for a working meeting with the associate dean for research of the Graduate School of Northern Illinois University. The four of us would spend the day writing a proposal for a Higher Education Cooperation Act (HECA) grant to fund a joint project, the creation of the Illinois Poll. NIU would focus on the Chicago Metropolitan area and we would focus on the balance of the state in conducting telephone surveys three times a year on citizen policy preferences and publishing the results in newspapers and *Illinois Issues* magazine.

I will never forget the last hour of the trip to DeKalb on a two-lane road that was literally a tunnel through high snowbanks on either side, or how cold walking on the NIU campus was that day. We finished the draft of the proposal around 6:00 pm, left for the trip back to Springfield in the dark, stopped for supper, and arrived back after midnight. It took three days for my feet to thaw out.

Months later, when we received the letter from IBHE informing us that our proposal had not been selected for funding, I couldn't believe it. We had only asked for \$27,600 to share between us. How did they not see the importance of policy makers understanding the attitudes and needs of the citizens? And the credibility of having universities conduct the poll?

Well it was my introduction to the effort and often disappointment when you live on grants and contracts, as we have had to in public affairs.

In 1989, the Policy Studies, Legal Studies, and Legislative Studies Centers, and the media units were brought together under one administrative umbrella to create the Institute for Public Affairs. President Durward Long appointed Professor Mike Lennon to be the first Executive Director of the Institute.

Mike epitomized President Spencer's "philosopher scholar" engaged in public affairs: he taught American literature and served as publisher of Illinois Issues, a magazine devoted to provocative analysis of state politics and government. Mike Lennon had big ideas and a big heart, and inspired creativity and hard work in us all.

The goal in creating the Institute for Public Affairs was to produce synergies between applied research and media to generate new capacity to do more significant state and national level work. And it did.

In the early 90s, Mike brokered a contract with the Illinois Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities for us to conduct an evaluation of the Community Integrated Living Arrangements or "CILA" Program. Designed and carried out by the brilliant team of Dick Schuldt, director of Survey Research, Kathy Peterson, and Marge Wilkerson, we interviewed individuals with serious mental illness or developmental disabilities, and their caseworkers, about how they were getting along in the community after discharge from nursing homes. The TV Office produced a video and our Institute Publications Unit produced a brochure about the program. Those were challenging interviews but it was certainly one of the most important projects we ever did. Illinois was one of the states experimenting with CILAs and our reports and media products helped DMHDD demonstrate their success.

Our best work with the most impact was always done by teams -- teams of faculty, staff, and graduate assistants:

- The Management Needs Assessment of Arts Organizations in Illinois, in 1989, with Joan Lolmaugh, and GAs Deserrie Ruptash, Ravi Makam and Krishna Brahmamdam, funded by the Illinois Arts Council.
- The Illinois Enterprise Zone Study, in 1991, with Kent Redfield, Dick Schuldt, and GAs Jim Muschinske, Deserrie Ruptash and Yali Dong, funded by the Illinois Tax Foundation.

- The Evaluation of the Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Program in 1996, with Margie Williams, Mariah Leatherwood, Alice Williams, and a gem of a graduate research assistant, Heather Hostetler, funded by the Illinois Department of Public Health.
- The Illinois Campaign Finance Reform Project, in 1997, with Ed Wojcicki, Kent Redfield, and Dick Schuldt, funded by the Joyce Foundation; and
- The Evaluation of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, TANF, Program, in 1999, with Tony Halter and Steve Anderson from the UIUC School of Social Work, and George Julnes, Lee Frost-Kumpf, Dick Schuldt and Francis Staskon, funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services. We had the good fortune to have Dave Gruenenfelder as our project monitor and the even greater good fortune when he joined our staff when he retired from the state.

The Illinois Civic Engagement Project in 2001 was a landmark project. It was the first statewide study of civic engagement in the nation. We questioned Harvard Professor Robert Putnam's assertion, in his book "Bowling Alone," that civic engagement had declined in America. Ed Wojcicki, publisher of *Illinois Issues*, co-chaired the project with the President of the United Way of Illinois. We had funding from Caterpillar, State Farm, the McCormick Tribune Foundation, and the Woods Fund of Chicago. Dick Schuldt, in his most creative work yet, led a team that included GAs Eric Judy, Jeff Heuttmann, and Heather Hostetler, in designing the benchmark survey of the Illinois public.

In his analysis of the findings, Dick created a typology of civic engagement to describe the varying ways people were involved – from civic leaders to informal socializers, to cyberactivists. Contrary to Putnam, nearly two-thirds of Illinois respondents had volunteered for a community organization in the last five years, including school, church or other group.

Ed worked with a blue ribbon steering committee to translate the research findings into 68 practical recommendations for enhancing civic engagement, such as “Don’t invite only the “usual suspects.” Look for new suspects.” After he and Ed met with the Chicago Tribune editorial board, Dick gave a great power point presentation to an audience filling the Chicago Hyatt Crystal Ballroom for the United Way’s annual conference. The bonus for us was meeting the keynote speaker, *Washington Post* columnist E. J. Dionne, author of “The Revival of Civil Society in America,” who was very interested in our work.

Another significant project was the Illinois Channel Planning Study directed by Terry Martin. We received funding from the Joyce Foundation to study the feasibility, cost, and public interest in a state version of C-SPAN, a public affairs TV channel. Following two years of town hall meetings, surveys, technical analysis, and consulting with other states who had similar channels, and working with a prestigious advisory board, we piloted operation of the Illinois Channel for a year. Then, in 2003, we launched it as a separate 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation with Terry Martin as CEO and a distinguished board of directors. Since then, the Illinois Channel has provided non-partisan, unedited coverage of Illinois state government and public affairs events that can be viewed on the Channel’s website and in 1.7 million homes in Illinois through local government cable access channels. Creating the Illinois Channel was an important service UIS provided to the citizens of Illinois. We will always be grateful to Chancellor Naomi Lynn for her early support of this venture.

One of the important roles the university has played over the years has been as a convener of conferences, roundtables and seminars that bring together scholars, practitioners, government leaders, and policy activists to share diverse perspectives on current public policy issues. Those of us in public affairs have been privileged to organize many of these events in which faculty and students have had an opportunity to exchange views with policy makers.

One of our most ambitious undertakings was to host the national “Links between Public Universities and State Capitals Conference” in 1997. This was our first attempt at staging a national conference but thanks to Nancy Ford’s bid to host it and the extraordinary work on the part of Nancy and so many, it was a big success. The LINKS conference showcased UIS less than two years after the merger with the U of I, impressing President Stukel, university administrators and trustees who attended, and established our national reputation. It was the fifth annual meeting of this network of centers and institutes like ours, based at universities in state capitals. More than 250 people from 35 states attended our three-day conference on how to improve the usefulness of university research and service to state government. The LINKS conference was a high point in UIS’ visibility and in Nancy Ford’s leadership as Executive Director of the Institute for Public Affairs.

UIS had the privilege of hosting a prestigious national conference again in 2010, the 10th Annual State Politics and Policy Conference, chaired by Professor Chris Mooney. This conference is the premier event of the year for scholars of state politics and policy. UIS faculty were involved as chairs of panels and all of the sessions were free and open to UIS students, faculty, staff and the public. The conference celebrated the 10th anniversary of the formation of this section of the American Political Science Association, and the journal, *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*, founded and edited by Professor Mooney. 200 from across the country attended over the three days, beginning with an opening reception and panel of former governors from four states held in the Hall of Representatives of the Old State Capitol, including one of ours who was not behind bars.

I am compelled by reasons of historical accuracy to mention our brief dalliance with being the “academic arm of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.” In 2002, the Institute for Public Affairs was renamed the “Abraham Lincoln Presidential Center for Governmental Studies” and a national search was conducted for an executive director. This took place at the end of

Governor George Ryan's term. The idea was ill-fated from the start; for one thing, the Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation felt we would be competing for the same donors. In Governor Blagojevich's first year in office, he eliminated the special appropriation for the Center and ordered us to change the name, to remove "Lincoln" and "Presidential" from the title. So in 2003, we changed the name to Center for State Policy and Leadership, and resumed the agenda of the Institute for Public Affairs with added focus on comparative state policy. Not all was futile. The Lincoln Legacy Lecture Series and Public Policy Summits were ideas that were sewn then and later flowered.

I had the privilege of serving as Interim Executive Director of the Center for nearly three years, from 2004 through most of 2006. Those were exhausting but happy years and I will always be grateful to Provosts Michael Cheney and Harry Berman for their confidence in me, and to the exceptional management team who worked with me to reinvigorate the Center: Nancy Ford, Ernie Cowles and Carol Esarey in Legal Studies, Chris Mooney and Kent Redfield in Legislative Studies, Dick Schuldt in Survey Research, Kim Hayden in GPSI, Peggy Boyer Long at Illinois Issues, Brad Swanson, Rich Bradley and Bill Wheelhouse at WUIS, Jerry Burkhart in Electronic Media, and Daniel Stowell at the Papers of Abraham Lincoln. And how lucky I was to have the experience and loyalty of Rob Raleigh and Brenda Allan in the Office of the Executive Director.

In fiscal year 2006, there were a total of 112 faculty, staff and students working in the Center. Our total budget was 7.5 million dollars, 80 percent of which we generated ourselves in non-appropriated income. Today the Center generates 86 percent of its own funding.

In those years, we made it a priority to contribute more to Academic Affairs and students' co-curricular experiences. We revived the SSU Intersession Public Affairs Colloquium, an interdisciplinary course on a timely public affairs topic, open to all students and taught by a team of faculty and guest speakers from various disciplines.

In 2004, we presented a policy summit in conjunction with an online summer course on Policy Issues in Cyberspace taught by Computer Science Professor Keith Miller. In 2006, we presented a Policy Summit on Politics and Religion in tandem with a summer PAC course, working with an interdisciplinary faculty team led by Professor Steve Schwark. We invited internationally prominent speakers whose books students read for the course. In both years, conference sessions were webcast live and videotaped for the benefit of online students. These summer PAC courses were very popular: 80 students enrolled in Issues in Cyberspace, and more than 100 enrolled in Politics and Religion.

The 2006 summit was a sequel to the “Policy Summit on Politics and Religion: Global and American Perspectives” we held the previous year to help students learn about Islam and our religiously diverse society. The policy summits were part of a series of co-curricular speaker events the Center was now regularly sponsoring in collaboration with the Colleges and other units on campus. In 2005 we began collaborating with Lynn Otterson and the Women’s Center in cosponsoring the annual Women’s Heritage Month/International Women’s Day speakers. We presented the first U.S. Constitution Day Forum in 2005, and in 2006 began collaborating with Professor Tih-Fen Ting and the Environmental Studies program in cosponsoring the annual Earth Day keynote speaker.

At the same time we were expanding our co-curricular offerings to students, we were continuing our outreach to the public. The Annual Lincoln Legacy Lecture Series, begun in 2002 with the dedication of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, has become one of UIS’ signature events, attracting students, alumni and the public to the campus each fall to hear invited lectures on a “legacy” issue, one that Lincoln and the citizens of his era grappled with and that we still face today. Last fall, the 14th Annual Lectures focused on “Lincoln and Reconstruction: America’s Struggle for Equality.”

Certainly one of the great privileges of my career has been the opportunity to work alongside Professor Emeritus of History Cullom Davis and the two eminent Lincoln scholars who have held the Naomi Lynn Distinguished Chair in Lincoln Studies, first Dr. Phillip Paludan and then, since 2009, Dr. Michael Burlingame.

The Lincoln Legacy Lecture Series has been at the nexus between the University and the community, serving more than 3,000 attendees and online viewers, including more than 600 who attended our symposium on the eve of the grand Lincoln Funeral Re-enactment in Springfield two years ago. We are gratified by the community's support, particularly the long-running co-sponsorship of the Lectures by the Abraham Lincoln Association and the Illinois State Historical Society.

I attribute the success of the Lecture Series to the reputation of Michael Burlingame as a bright star in the Lincoln firmament, to the talented graphic design of our marketing materials by Lindsey Feger, the key support of Kimberly Craig and all associated with the Engaged Citizenship Common Experience (ECCE) Speaker Series, the media support by our Office of Electronic Media and WUIS Public Radio, and the phalanx of UIS staff and students who pitch in to help with the event each year.

I look forward to attending this year's Lectures planned by Michael Burlingame and Stacy McDermott, to be held on October 12th on Lincoln and Education.

Today, the Center continues to carry out the public affairs mandate through the units established in the first decade of the institution, plus some significant new initiatives. The Center's Institute for Legal, Legislative and Policy Studies, directed by Dr. David Racine since 2007, now encompasses the missions of what were formerly three separate centers. ILLAPS carries out funded research, evaluation and training projects for state, local and nonprofit agencies, and also houses the Illinois Legislative Staff Intern Program, the Illinois Innocence Project, the Child Protection Training Academy, and the

Sangamon Success initiative to improve outcomes for less advantaged children. Since 2010, David has also served as Executive Director of the Center. He is admired by all the unit directors and me for the aspirational, collegial, and ethical climate he creates as our leader.

At David's impetus, the Center is increasing its contribution to the undergraduate curriculum through development of a new Minor in Public Leadership to be offered through the Public Administration Department and open to all majors. In our conversations with students and faculty across the campus, Professor Beverly Bunch and I have found strong interest in having the minor as an academic expression of "Leadership lived," Chancellor Koch's meaningful and successful "trademark" for UIS today.

The university's evolution has been a story in two parts: before and after the merger with the University of Illinois in 1995, including becoming a full four-year undergraduate institution in 2001. Chancellor Lynn and Associate Chancellor for Public Relations Cheryl Peck were key in keeping the public affairs mission front and center through the merger.

The year after the merger, I had the privilege of co-chairing, with Carol Bloemer, an organizing committee to establish the first Academic Professional Advisory Committee at UIS. Carol Esarey, Denny Freuh, Terri Jackson, Carol and I met with members of the APACs at Chicago and Urbana and then designed an organization that fit UIS.

We held elections in 1996 for representatives across the campus to serve on a 10-member committee that would be advisory to the Chancellor, represent the concerns of academic professionals to the administration and in campus governance, and facilitate professional development and advancement of APs. I was honored to be elected the first Chair of APAC and served for four years. It is gratifying that APAC has grown over the past 20 years into an effective,

campus-wide voice for APs, whose professional identity and contributions to the university are now recognized.

One of APAC's notable accomplishments in the early years was our successful campus entrance marker fundraising campaign begun in 1998. It was the first ever campus-wide, employee fundraising campaign at UIS. We succeeded in raising enough money to be matched by funds remaining from the Ring Road project that a large marker, designed by Curt Neitzke of UIS Graphics, could be built at the new entrance to campus that was created at the intersection of the new 11th Street extension.

It is the bonds with one's co-workers that make the lasting memories:

- The Mighty Everson Art Players performing at our Christmas parties in the 1980s with scripts by Legislative Studies Center Director Dave Everson lampooning the university president and other administrators. We'd all be in the cast, but get our lines only minutes before curtain.
- Dave's comedic genius was passed down to Dick Schuldt. At our Annual Center Convocations at which each unit director gives a report, we'd save the best for last. Dick would bring the house down with his power point lampooning various political and university figures. In 2005, while I was interim director, we held a celebration of the 30th anniversary of WUIS and Illinois Issues at which the President of National Public Radio, Kevin Klose, was the keynote speaker. He was a tall, distinguished looking, white-haired gentleman. In a photo of the event, he is seen tilting his head down to hear me as we are chatting. Dick used the photo in his Convocation presentation, but photo shopped a Pope's tall mitred hat on Mr. Klose's head, making it appear the Pope was bowing to me. If Dick was worried I was getting a big head, I got the message.

In closing, Sangamon State University's legacy remains in place today. It is the set of institutional norms that still guide our interactions and practices. These norms include an institutional ethos of mutual respect and shared governance. They include the norm that students come first and faculty's first obligation is to excellence in teaching. SSU's legacy also includes the centrality of public affairs in a liberal arts education, now reflected in the strategic vision of the entire University of Illinois. We place special value on engagement with the community, state, nation and world, both inside and outside the classroom.

Finally, SSU's legacy is in serving as an example of how you can create a new institution, as did President Bob Spencer and the founding faculty and staff, and have its core values remain true 47 years later. Through countless changes in people, resources, technology, politics, economic, demographic and social trends, and students' and the public's expectations, the value this university places on serving the public good both as a campus community and as individual citizens, endures. I will always remain a grateful and proud alumna. Thank you.