

Urbana campus the first among equals?

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As of May 13, 2008, the new e-mail addresses reflecting the campus domain change are functional. Though the full switch will take some time, this is a big stride in the university system's, or rather, the campus's new marketing plan.

I say campus because this move to the illinois.edu domain (from uiuc.edu) only affects the Urbana-Champaign location. The Chicago and Springfield campuses will remain unaffected by this change. According to the Illinois Domain Project Web site, this is because UIC and UIS are already "well-branded" institutions, while "research shows that the Urbana campus is not well-known as UIUC" (<http://webtools.uiuc.edu/blog/view?blogId=278>). Maybe not, but the Urbana campus is easily known as the University of Illinois, and anyone interested in attending the University will have no trouble Googling it that way.

As for being "well-branded," UIC does indeed boast the status of being a recognizable part of the University of Illinois network. On the other hand, a frightening amount of Urbana students do not even know UIS exists, let alone that it has been a part of the University of Illinois system for more than a decade.

In any case, I don't doubt that this is a solid marketing ploy for the university system's main campus. However, it also seems arrogant and disruptive to the potential unity of the three locations as a university system. While it would also require an even greater amount of work to completely shift all of the previous domains to a new central domain, it would also better advertise UIC and UIS as institutions with a caliber of education equal to that of the central campus.

And doesn't the university system constantly boast that students at both sister campuses receive a "University of Illinois education"? By changing uiuc.edu to illinois.edu, university administrators essentially say the exact opposite - that UIUC is the only "Illinois", and that its own affiliated locations are nothing but cheap knock-offs.

To give one campus the illinois.edu address is to grant it permission to surpass the importance of the entire system. It also further deters potential Global Campus students after the university has tried to bring so much attention to its pet initiative. UIUC is a large, traditional university which caters most specifically to students within the Champaign-Urbana area who can attend classes on campus.

Prospective Global Campus students will be hard-pressed to enjoy the one-and-only "Illinois" experience - that is, the education it offers - from a distance, as the central campus offers few online classes in a tiny number of degree fields. So by changing uiuc.edu to illinois.edu, insisting we're the only Illinois there is, we're saying that only traditional students can be a part of that Illinois. We're also broadcasting the message that to enroll in other online degree programs offered through UIC and UIS (outside of the Global Campus program) are substandard imitations of UIUC -excuse me- "Illinois" degree programs.

While the campus will continue to avidly pursue this particular brand idea, it is important that students here recognize that there is an "Illinois" outside of UIUC, and that the people who attend other branches of the University of Illinois system are equally important members of that system seeking a high-quality U of I education and paying U of I tuition. Let's keep this "illinois.edu" business from going to our heads.