

THE CENTERPIECE

A bi-weekly publication of the Center for State Policy & Leadership

University of Illinois Springfield

April 23, 2012

- Recently, the **Illinois Legislative Staff Intern Program**, overseen by UIS, interviewed 57 mostly recent college graduates for 24 internships with the General Assembly starting in August. Each party caucus in the state House and Senate will receive slots for five interns, with the remaining four allotted to the Legislative Research Unit. Candidates this year come from universities and colleges from all parts of Illinois as well as Massachusetts, Mississippi, and Wisconsin. UIS supplied the largest number of candidates at 12, followed by University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign at 7 and University of Illinois Chicago and Illinois State University at 6 apiece. Currently, more than 70 former interns are serving as regular staff in the legislature.
- Meanwhile, this past week UIS' **Graduate Public Service Internship** (GPSI) program held its spring interview session, where during an intense two-day period state and local agencies offering internships get to interview candidates. A total of 573 interviews were conducted by agencies trying to fill 79 intern positions from among the 107 students who applied. Most candidates were identified through graduate student recruiting efforts by GPSI over the past several months. Candidates can interview for more than one position. This time around, one candidate was in particularly high demand with 18 interviews.
- **Suzanne Borland**, assistant professor of legal studies at UIS, and **Barbara Hayler**, professor emerita of criminal justice at UIS, presented early results of their study of the Illinois judiciary at the annual conference of the Midwest Political Science Association in Chicago on April 15th. The study, which is being funded by the Center and supported by the Survey Research Office, is an update of a similar one conducted 30 years ago by then Sangamon State University. Preliminary findings show that a majority of "elected" judges today did not first get on the bench through election but by appointment. Also, women now represent close to a fourth of the trial judiciary, up from less than 5 percent in 1980, and almost one-third of the appellate justices. So far, 50 percent of the judges receiving the study's survey have completed it, a high response rate for the judiciary.
- Also at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, UIS assistant professor of political science **Mike Miller** presented his paper, "Buying Extremists? Public Funding, Parties, and Polarization in Maine and Arizona," coauthored with Seth Masket of the University of Denver. The paper describes the linkages between public

election funding and greater legislative polarization in the two states. The paper's main finding is that members who got elected to each state's legislature using public funding started out more ideologically extreme than their privately financed counterparts. However, by the end of a four year legislative career (both states have term limits), the level of extremism of the two groups was almost exactly the same. Miller and Masket argue that the increased extremism is due to the inability of political parties to steer donors to moderate candidates in publicly funded election environments. For more on the paper, see <http://themonkeycage.org/blog/2012/04/06/clean-elections-make-for-extremists/> http://www.slate.com/blogs/moneybox/2012/04/06/fundraising_buys_moderation.html

- UIS public administration professor **Beverly Bunch** recently moderated a podcast for the State and Local Government Review, a journal that addresses politics, policy, and management, particularly their intergovernmental dimensions. Panelists from the National Governors Association, National Association of Counties, and National League of Cities talked about the need for increased citizen involvement, alternatives, such as outsourcing, to achieve public objectives, and increased flexibility in the administration of federal programs and mandates. <http://slg.sagepub.com/site/misc/Index/Podcasts.xhtml>
- Controversial Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker's visit to Springfield last week attracted national attention. **WUIS** statehouse bureau chief **Amanda Vinicky** reported for NPR news on Walker's remarks to state business organizations and the union protests of his visit. Vinicky also provided reports to public radio in Wisconsin, where Walker is the subject of an upcoming recall election due to his efforts last year to curb the power of public labor unions and cut pay for state workers and teachers. Business leaders brought Walker to Illinois to contrast the two states' policies, especially in the areas of taxation and collective bargaining.
- This past week, **WUIS** statehouse reporter **Brian Mackey** filed a report from the **WUIS Health Desk** on Illinois' struggle to create a health care exchange, one of the requirements of the federal health reform law. A health exchange is basically a marketplace where consumers will be able to shop for the best health insurance rates. Mackey points out that opponents of the federal law want to wait and see if it's overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court before trying to set up an exchange. But, supporters argue that the state should be prepared if the law survives the legal challenge. <http://wuisnews.wordpress.com/2012/04/11/illinois-and-the-politics-of-obamacare/>
- In the May edition of **Illinois Issues**, hydraulic fracking – pumping water, sand, and chemicals into the ground to extract natural gas or oil – isn't new in Illinois, but the state is beginning to see operations on a larger scale than ever before. The growth of the practice is sparking concerns about environmental and health problems that other states have begun to face. Also coming in the May edition is an article on the

legalization of gay marriage. Now that Illinois allows civil unions for same-sex couples, is gay marriage next? One of the reasons cited by proponents is that if Illinois couples in civil unions move to another state – even one that allows gay marriages – their union may not be valid.

- As it often does, **Illinois Issues** is surveying its readers on what they like and dislike about the magazine. *Illinois Issues* will use what it learns to help make improvements. The survey can be accessed on the Web at the following link <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/IISurvey>
- Last week, the **Office of Electronic Media** hosted, on behalf of the Illinois Department on Aging, a live webinar for 200 frontline staff from local agencies on aging on improving communication with the state Department of Children and Family Services. Many grandparents are raising grandchildren who are wards of DCFS, increasing the need for workers from both systems to share information and coordinate their efforts. OEM also filmed the event so that a DVD can be produced for use by those who were unable to attend. The webinar is part of larger collaboration between the Center's **Institute for Legal, Legislative, and Policy Studies** and IDOA to enhance the latter's training efforts.
- **WUIS** is reaching out to its listeners this week for financial support during the station's Spring on-air fund drive. *WUIS* needs to raise \$75,000 to meet its budget for the current fiscal year. To become a member or renew a membership go to <http://www.wuis.org/> and click the "Pledge Now" button at the top of the page.

David P. Racine, Ph.D.
Interim Executive Director, Center for State Policy and Leadership
Director, Institute for Legal, Legislative, and Policy Studies
University of Illinois Springfield
One University Plaza MS PAC 409
Springfield, IL 62703-5407
Phone: (217)206-8417

