

SIU system faces potential split as campuses clamor for funds

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Body

SIU **CARBONDALE**

Established: 1869

Total fall 2017 enrollment: 14,554*

In-state tuition and fees (2017-18): \$13,932

Faculty and staff employees: 4,590*

Campus acreage: 1,136

Living alumni: 218,924

SIU EDWARDSVILLE

Established: 1957

Total fall 2017 enrollment: 13,796

In-state tuition and fees (2017-18): \$11,493

Faculty and staff employees: 2,390

Campus acreage: 2,660

Living alumni: 101,212

* Includes SIU School of Medicine **in** Springfield, Ill.

Source: University reports

EDWARDSVILLE - Mathematics professor Marcus Agustin spends a lot of time inside the student fitness center at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, but he's no gym rat.

Agustin and other faculty have been crammed **in** the gym facility for four years while waiting for construction on new classrooms and offices to be finished. The process was supposed to take two years, but Illinois state budget cuts doubled the time frame.

"But the good thing is our group is the most athletic faculty now," Agustin said.

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That cramped feeling in Edwardsville, made possible by its steady growth, is conspicuously absent at Southern Illinois University's flagship campus in Carbondale, where student enrollment has dropped by thousands over the last decade. Consecutive years of state budget cuts mixed with student disenchantment, high administrative turnover, and a successful sister campus to the north seeking more resources gives Carbondale the feel of a campus under siege.

"It's been a perfect storm kind of thing," said Ahmad Fakhoury, an associate professor in Carbondale's College of Agricultural Sciences.

Talk of splitting the two campuses into independent universities has come and subsided in the past, but a recent SIU Board of Trustees decision not to allocate Edwardsville a bigger piece of the state funding they share may have just pushed the system to a tipping point.

The board last month narrowly rejected a proposal to take \$5 million from Carbondale's budget to give to Edwardsville. It means SIU Carbondale will continue with about 60 percent of the system's share of state funding, despite having just slightly more students than Edwardsville, after enrollment dropped nearly one-third since 2001.

SIUE's enrollment hasn't boomed in the way Carbondale's enrollment has imploded, but steady growth over time has put Edwardsville in a position to eventually overtake Carbondale. In 2000, fall enrollment at Edwardsville was 12,193 compared to 22,645 at Carbondale (excluding the School of Medicine in Springfield) - a difference of 10,452 students. In 2017, fall enrollment at Edwardsville was 13,796 compared to 14,184 at Carbondale - a difference of just 388.

Now the Illinois Legislature is mulling a bill to split the universities, which Edwardsville leaders are outspoken in supporting. SIUE Chancellor Randall Pembroke said the proposal would also shake up the state funding formula, potentially getting Edwardsville four times more than the \$5 million they asked for from trustees.

"I think the most important thing is for SIUE to be recognized for the good things that are happening here," Pembroke said. "The current situation is not equitable."

Splitting the universities would not only change the funding structure but, as in divorce, could result in a change of custody. The SIU School of Medicine in Springfield is part of the Carbondale university but would fall into Edwardsville's sphere along with the schools of pharmacy, nursing and dental medicine, under the House proposal.

This prospect is especially concerning to Carbondale leaders, who say the medical school is "deeply interconnected with the Carbondale campus," according to Chancellor Carlo Montemagno.

"The medical school is an integral part of SIU Carbondale and must remain so," Montemagno said in a blog post.

Carbondale leaders have asked for patience and more time to right the ship. There's also a sense of enmity against SIUE for how it sought to change the state funding distribution.

"The Carbondale campus didn't see any details about the rationale for the funding at all until it was released to the public," SIU Carbondale spokeswoman Rae Goldsmith said. "What we saw was a proposal that had been developed by Edwardsville using Edwardsville's interpretation of data without the help of an external consultant."

Goldsmith also said the funding change would have taken effect July 1, leaving Carbondale little time to adjust to the change. After having nine chancellors since 2000, the university hired Montemagno in August 2017. Goldsmith said having a permanent hire in leadership is allowing Carbondale to finally do long-term planning that had been delayed.

"It would have had a significant impact on the institution and the community," she said. "Losing the funding at this point while trying to turn things around, which we're hard at work on, is also an issue for us."

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Edwardsville leaders say they've been good partners with **Carbondale** but aren't seeing that reciprocated now as they challenge what they call an outdated funding distribution. Last year, SIUE leaders approved loaning up to \$35 million from its reserves to the **Carbondale** campus while the Legislature remained deadlocked over the budget.

Carbondale eventually only loaned \$16 million and paid it back after the state approved a budget. Johnathan Flowers, president of **Carbondale's** Graduate and Professional Student Council and an outspoken critic of the administration there, said the loan at the time felt like a sign of things to come.

"Edwardsville has been **planning** strategically for its future, and **Carbondale** has been unable to do that," Flowers said.

Montemagno's administration is working on a restructuring of academic programs and other elements of campus life under a **plan** called "Vision 2025." Whether the two campuses are part of the same system by that time and what effect the split has on Montemagno's **plans** is anyone's guess.

Plans remain tentative for the **Board** of Trustees to hire an external consultant to examine the funding distribution, even as the Legislature considers rendering the process moot. Democratic state Rep. Jay Hoffman of Swansea, sponsor of the bill to split the campuses, said he thinks both campuses would benefit from having their own **board** of trustees.

"They could focus on the strengths of the individual campuses and provide better governance for both," Hoffman said.

But Hoffman didn't shirk from describing the relationship between Edwardsville and **Carbondale** as one full of "parochial disputes where one campus (Edwardsville) is suffering at the expense of the other."

The legislative proposal awaits action **in** the Rules Committee. The Legislature's spring session ends May 31. Hoffman said the bill could be revisited **in** the fall if no action is taken this term.

The bill is House Bill 5861.

Graphic

Students wait **in** their seats during the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Nursing Spring Commencement ceremony, Friday, May 4, 2018, **in** Edwardsville. Photo by Nikos Frazier, nfrazier@post-dispatch.com Students can be seen walking around campus **in** the reflections of windows of the student center on Friday, April 27, 2018, on the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Enrollment at SIUE has seen steady growth over time and is **in** a position to eventually overtake **Carbondale**. Photo by Laurie Skrivan, lskrivan@post-dispatch.com Mathematics professor Marcus Agustin prepares to leave his office inside the student fitness center to teach an afternoon stat class on Friday, April 27, 2018, on the at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville campus. Agustin and other faculty have been relocated into the gym facility for four years while waiting for construction on new classrooms and offices to be finished. The process was supposed to take two years, but Illinois state budget cuts doubled the time frame. Photo by Laurie Skrivan, lskrivan@post-dispatch.com Melissa Grosenheider, 32, rearranges her summer schedule **in** front of the student center on Friday, April 27, 2018, on the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville campus. Enrollment at SIUE has seen steady growth over time and is **in** a position to eventually overtake **Carbondale**. Photo by Laurie Skrivan, lskrivan@post-dispatch.com Students (sitting from left to right) Brandon Bishop, 19, Tabias Moore, 19, and Robert Craig, 20, socialize with friends **in** the quadrangle between classes on Friday, April 27, 2018, on the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville campus. Enrollment at SIUE has seen steady growth over time and is **in** a position to eventually overtake **Carbondale**. Photo by Laurie Skrivan, lskrivan@post-dispatch.com Sign on SIUC campus. Dr. Randy Pembroke became the ninth chancellor **in** Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's history on Aug. 1, 2016. (handout photo) Carlo

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Montemagno, a professor of engineering, became chancellor of SIU **Carbondale** on Aug. 15, 2017. (handout photo) Mathematics professor Marcus Agustin prepares to leave his office inside the student fitness center to teach an afternoon stat class on Friday, April 27, 2018 on the at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville campus. Agustin and other faculty have been relocated into the gym facility for four years while waiting for construction on new classrooms and offices to be finished. The process was supposed to take two years, but Illinois state budget cuts doubled the time frame. Photo by Laurie Skrivan, lskrivan@post-dispatch.com Meghan Lashmett(center) poses for photos for her mom, Traci Lashmett(right) and grandmother, Karol Brown, **in** front of an Southern Illinois University Edwardsville sign after the SIUe School of Nursing Spring Commencement ceremony, Friday, May 4, 2018, **in** Edwardsville. Photo by Nikos Frazier, nfrazier@post-dispatch.com

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