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Remarks
University of Illinois Board of Trustees
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I want to thank Chairman Shah, Members of the Board, and President White for the opportunity to speak with you this afternoon. As an alumna of the University of Illinois and the mother of another alumnus, I have a deep appreciation of the fine work you do and the contribution you make to the well-being of the state and its citizens.

I am particularly gratified to be able to discuss with you this afternoon, the **Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success**. In my view, the Public Agenda is the most significant development in Illinois higher education in perhaps a generation. It has the potential to place higher education at the forefront of the state's agenda.

What is the Illinois Public Agenda?

In simple terms, it is a roadmap to the future. It will be a guide for our higher education system, the legislature and Governor.

The Illinois Public Agenda is the product of a thoughtful, deliberative, and collaborative process that yielded a set of goals, recommendations, strategies, and specific action steps that will affect the lives of Illinois residents, and the state's future economic and social well-being, for a generation or more.

We intend for the Public Agenda to change higher education as we've known it. It will drive the Board's policy, budget, and legislative agenda. We anticipate it will alter in meaningful ways the priorities of our colleges and universities. We believe it will have a significant impact on how the General Assembly regards P-20 policy and the allocation of resources.

We cannot do this alone. For this agenda to achieve its potential, we need – and frankly, expect – the full participation and partnership of every college and university in Illinois.

Why we did it.

The short answer is: The General Assembly made us. In the spring 2007 session, the legislature passed House Joint Resolution 69 that directed the IBHE to set up a task force to oversee a major master planning initiative for Illinois higher education and the state.

But the real purpose was two-fold:

First, too many legislators don't get it – they don't understand what is obvious to all of us: higher education matters. It matters to the state's economy and the state treasury, to our workers and employers, to our quality of life and civic engagement and cultural vitality. Higher education matters to the future of Illinois, and the Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success will help more legislators get that.

Second, Illinois is in trouble. The most significant conclusion of Illinois Public Agenda study is that there are *two* states of Illinois – one is well-off, one is struggling; one is highly educated, one is educationally underserved; one is economically vibrant, one is economically stagnant.

Separating these two states of Illinois is a vast and widening **prosperity gap** -- divided by race/ethnicity, income, and geography – which is the direct result of differences in educational attainment.

The State of Illinois simply cannot compete – perhaps not even survive – in the global economy unless we close this gap in educational attainment. Simply put, Illinois needs more people with more education. This responsibility is not only necessary, it's urgent. We need action and we need action now.

We may discuss and debate the best path to closing the prosperity gap, but the bedrock goals that form the superstructure of the Illinois Public Agenda are not debatable and must be met:

- Increase educational attainment,
- Make Illinois 1 of the top 5 states in affordability,
- Increase production of degrees in high-demand workforce areas,
- Integrate the state's superb research into its economic development strategies.

How the Public Agenda was developed.

Let me review briefly how we got to where we are today. A few statistics are revealing:

- The Public Agenda Task Force was comprised of 28 individuals who represented a vast array of higher education constituencies and stakeholders.
- The Task Force held six formal meetings, each at independent colleges and universities.
- There were 34 regional forums at 17 community colleges across the state, attended by nearly 700 stakeholders in higher education.
- The Task Force sponsored hearings at six public universities, including one at the University of Illinois at Springfield.
- The consultants from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) met with every public university president and held briefings for legislators, college and university trustees, business leaders, union representatives, civic officials, plus many other one-on-one sessions with members of the General Assembly.
- The Public Agenda Task Force numbered 28, but the number of people who participated in the meetings, forums, hearings, and sent comments via e-mail or through the special website portal was close to 1,000.

The point is that this planning process was open, transparent, and collaborative. We not only listened to the voices of a variety of

stakeholders, we heard what they had to say, and the document embraced by the IBHE changed significantly over the course of the process as we incorporated the suggestions and recommendations we received.

On November 21, the Public Agenda Task Force voted unanimously to adopt the Public Agenda and on December 8 the Board of Higher Education approved it.

What now?

I believe the development of the Public Agenda is a significant accomplishment. It represents the concerted effort of all stakeholders to understand the challenges and opportunities facing Illinois, and to chart a common course for meeting them.

But this is not enough. Unless the Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success becomes a living, dynamic part of everything we do in higher education, we will have failed. And the State of Illinois will continue to languish in a spiral of educational mediocrity and economic stagnation. As the consultants from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems told the Board of Higher Education last December: “If you are spending your time . . . on things other than the Public Agenda, then you are on the wrong agenda.”

So, here is what we're doing:

The Public Agenda is driving our budget. The budget recommendations the Board approved in January link virtually all higher education spending to the four goals of the Public Agenda. For instance:

- **Goal 1:** P-20 data systems, the College and Career Readiness Program, the P-20 Council.
- **Goal 2:** Increased MAP funding, dual-credit grants
- **Goal 3:** High-need healthcare grants, baccalaureate completion grants, adult education programs
- **Goal 4:** Research matching grants, an initiative very dear to research institutions such as the U of I.

As we build the 2011 higher ed budget, we intend to refine this process to ensure that institutions are making state priorities their campus priorities as well. If what we are funding does not advance the Public Agenda goals, then why should we fund it?

The Public Agenda is driving our legislative agenda.

- **Goal 1:** SB 1828 – Comprehensive P-20 Longitudinal Data System
- **Goal 2:**
 - HB 150 – 21st Century Scholars Program, an early intervention effort to entice middle school students to take a rigorous high school curriculum.

- HB 1079 – Dual Credit Quality Act to ensure programs for students to get high school and college credit meet collegiate academic standards
- HJR 54 – requires a study on college affordability and an approach to higher education funding that considers state funding, financial aid, and institutional tuition and fees.
- **Goal 3:** SB 1883 – baccalaureate completion grants

The Public Agenda is driving policy initiatives.

- High School to College Report – a new feedback report that shows high schools how their students are doing in college.
- The American Diploma Project (ADP) – an initiative aimed at aligning academic standards between the K-12 system and higher education.
- Expanding the College and Career Readiness Pilot to diagnose student academic shortcomings while still in high school to reduce the need for remediation once they get to college.
- Funding and startup of P-20 Council
- Strengthening school leader standards
- Financial aid for adult learners
- STEM initiatives – IMSA new field offices for professional development

The Public Agenda is even driving the Board of Higher Education meeting agenda and format.

- We have changed our meeting agenda to ensure we concentrate our time and energy on matters relating to the Public Agenda.
- We also have restructured the agenda to include an in-depth discussion of major Public Agenda issues at each of our meetings.
 - In April, the Board invited Pat Callan, President of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, to speak on ways to connect higher ed funding to the goals of the Public Agenda.
 - In June, the Board will hear from Pam Tate, President and CEO of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) regarding the need to strengthen programs for adult learners, another key strategy of the Public Agenda.

Those are some of the things we're doing. What are you doing?

I was gratified to learn that the University is doing quite a lot that relates to the Illinois Public Agenda, and I congratulate you and the chancellors of the three U of I campuses for your efforts to bring the Public Agenda to life in Urbana-Champaign, Springfield, and Chicago.

I am impressed with your initiatives to improve educational attainment through partnerships with community colleges, the engagement with Chicago Public Schools, the outreach to rural communities. I applaud your assistance for students of limited means to make a University of Illinois degree accessible regardless of financial wherewithal. I appreciate your creative use of technology to expand access and increase degree production in high-need occupational fields. And I value your distinction as one of the great research universities in the nation, indeed the world. I thank you for all of those efforts.

Your response to the Public Agenda is what I would expect of a great university. It is what we at the Board of Higher Education would expect of the University of Illinois.

So, I would like to ask you for more. I respectfully ask that you go beyond the impressive roster of activities and initiatives you are already doing and accept a challenge that the University of Illinois is uniquely able and well-positioned to do: take leadership.

I am asking that you make the Illinois Public Agenda the University of Illinois Public Agenda.

I am asking that you demonstrate to your sister public institutions, to the broader higher education community, and to the General Assembly and Governor . . .

. . . that you regard the Public Agenda as the most significant, viable and urgent path to prosperity for the state and its citizens; . . .

. . . that you consider the great divide between the one Illinois and the other Illinois unacceptable and show us that you are prepared to marshal the University's mighty resources to achieve a unified, prosperous One Illinois; . . .

. . . that institutions that are unwilling to help the state move ahead through the Public Agenda risk being left behind because they will become irrelevant to the state's needs and unimportant to the state's progress.

This is a great University. I am personally proud of my University of Illinois degree. I'm pleased to have a higher education policymaking role in a state that boasts a University of such stature and prestige.

So, my challenge to you today is to spread that greatness around. Put that greatness to work with your leadership, your reputation, your example, your resources, and your actions.

The Illinois Public Agenda is our roadmap to the future. The road may be long, and it certainly will be difficult, but the journey is vital to create a prosperous Illinois where all residents can benefit from a vibrant higher education system. Please join us – please help lead us – on this journey.