

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE

Senate Executive Committee
(Final;Action)

SC.11.09 Senate Statement on the Roles of the Campus and the Chancellor
Approved by the Senate Executive Committee, February 7, 2011

I. What is at stake?

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is a great university. We are proud of our superb record of internationally recognized, award-winning research; of our top-ranked research facilities and libraries; of the high caliber of our students and graduates; and of our strong and vibrant tradition of shared governance.

When the admissions controversy of 2009 revealed patterns of decision-making by the Board and by top-level administrative leaders that depended more on individual relationships than on the judicious and principled processes mandated by our governance documents, the Governor, the newly-charged Board and the academic senates took prompt action to re-examine our practices and to correct those that were wrong.

Those wrongful practices were not reflective of our basic institutional character or of our administrative governance generally. They were fixed, as they needed to be fixed. *Irresponsible and unprofessional practices on the part of individuals do not define the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.* As a top-ranked institution of higher education, and as an institution of honor and integrity, we do not see ourselves, and we are not seen by others, as defined by the admissions scandal.

Because of changes in administrative leadership, in combination with the crisis provoked by the State's noncompliance with its financial commitments to the University, however, our campus and our university are at a crossroads. The decisions we make about how to plan for our immediate and long-term future will ultimately define the nature of our professional home. At the heart of these decisions is the question of the degree to which each campus possesses a distinct identity and mission; and, by extension, how to understand the role of the Chancellors as the Chief Executive Officers of their campuses.

II. "One university" or "university system"?

The University of Illinois *Statutes* and *General Rules* are ambiguous about these questions. The crux of this ambiguity is found in the reference in the *General Rules* to the University's "organic wholeness." One interpretation of this phrase would stress the idea of wholeness, to support the idea of a unitary institution; another would stress the term "organic," focusing on the idea of distinct constituent parts. Similarly, for some purposes leaders emphasize the separateness and distinctiveness of the three campuses; and at other times they refer to them as merely parts of a whole.

Are we three universities, or one? The University Administration's own web site illustrates this basic ambiguity:

<http://www.uillinois.edu/about/mission.cfm>

The University of Illinois is among the preeminent public universities of the nation

<http://www.uillinois.edu/strategicplan/index.cfm>

Develop UIUC into the nation's preeminent public research university.

Develop UIC into the nation's premier urban public research university.

Develop UIS into one of the nation's top five small, public, liberal arts universities.

There are universities that have achieved a high degree of integration around a “one university” model. But those institutions have characteristics quite different from ours, including a clear distinction between a central flagship campus and several smaller regional campuses. The University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Illinois at Springfield understandably do not consider themselves regional branches of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, but distinct, self-sufficient university campuses, co-equal with our own campus from a governance standpoint. *None of the campuses defines itself merely as a piece of a larger whole.*

The existence of the position of a Chancellor on each campus, the emphasis on the distinctiveness, the diverse missions, and the “high degree of delegated authority” of the three campuses to manage their own affairs, are more consistent with how university *systems* operate. While the *General Rules* state the University is not a “system of *totally independent* units,” (our emphasis), it is clear that, over many, many years the University of Illinois has operated as university systems do, with mostly independent campuses and an overall university administration providing important cross-campus services. Indeed, the University Administration’s own home page refers to us as a “system”:

<http://www.uillinois.edu/>
Homepage for the University system. Main campuses in Chicago, Springfield, and Urbana-Champaign.

The Senate recognizes the value of cross-campus cooperation, and the valuable integrative function the university administration can play in coordinating certain services and activities across the campuses. But these can and do exist within multi-campus university systems too. We need to decide collectively which kind of model will work best for us, which is best suited to the realization of our diverse campus and university missions. This question is not settled conclusively by our governing documents, which tend to be ambiguous on these key matters. It cannot and should not be resolved by fiat, and must involve the campus communities, their leadership, and the Senates and the University Senates Conference, as well as the President and the Board of Trustees. *We need to have that conversation.*

III. Chancellor and President

Both the *Statutes* and *General Rules* refer to the Chancellor as the Chief Executive Officer of the campus, and across the country the term “Chancellor” is understood to mean the head of a university campus. A Chief Executive Officer is typically the primary representative of her or his organization, and its public face. A Chief Executive Officer is responsible for decision-making, for planning, and for ensuring the health of an organization. In short, the Chief Executive Officer leads the organization. The fact that each campus has a Chief Executive Officer implies that each campus can be thought of as an organization in its own right, even if that organization also forms a part of a larger entity. The existence of the office of Chancellor on each campus emphasizes the distinctiveness and high degree of self-governance of the campuses. It is, as we have said, a term that denotes university campuses within a system.

However, the governing documents also say that the Chancellor works “under the direction of the President” and “has responsibilities and performs duties delegated by the President.” That language, especially when coupled with the recent decision to add the title of “Vice President,” may be interpreted to suggest that the Chancellor *merely* works for the President, and that the responsibilities of the Chancellor are defined solely by the President. This is incompatible with the Chancellor’s status as Chief Executive Officer.

In other words, the governing documents are in contradiction with themselves and with the patterns of governing practice as they have existed at this institution for many years.

IV. The Senate's Statement on the Role of the Campus and of the Chancellor

1. The Senate is concerned that the status of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as a premier public university may be endangered by a decision-making structure that bypasses local control and oversight and that centralizes control at the University, rather than campus, level. We assert the urgent need for these concerns to be registered and addressed in a conversation that engages all members of our campus community.
2. The Senate believes that any responsibilities the President delegates to the Chancellors are *in addition* to the Statutory responsibilities of the Chancellors as Chief Executive Officers of their campus, not a replacement for them.
3. The Senate also believes that the responsibility for representing our campus in the national organizations of which it is a constituent member is inherent in the Statutory role of the Chancellor as the Chief Executive Officer and leader of the campus, and is neither a delegated responsibility granted by the President, nor one that can be withdrawn.

The Senate further believes that the President's assumption of these responsibilities contradicts a promise that was made when the Vice President/Chancellor issue was being considered, and reaffirmed at the November 18, 2010 meeting of the Board of Trustees, that the role and responsibilities of the Chancellor would not change and that the authority of the Chancellor would not be diminished.

4. At a moment when our campus is engaged in a search for a new Chancellor, it is especially crucial to specify that the leader of our campus will be empowered to act as the public face and representative of our campus in national meetings and in other venues.
5. Finally, the Senate asserts that the current and future greatness of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign depend crucially on a broad degree of self-determination for the campus and on the leadership of a Chancellor who is empowered to act as a Chief Executive Officer in the full sense of that term.
6. This statement shall be forwarded to Robert A. Easter, Interim Vice President and Chancellor of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Michael J. Hogan, President of the University of Illinois; Paula Allen-Meares, Vice President and Chancellor of the University of Illinois at Chicago; Harry L. Berman, Interim Vice President and Chancellor of the University of Illinois at Springfield; University Senates Conference; and the University of Illinois Board of Trustees.

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