INTRODUCTION

Carlo Montemagno became chancellor of Southern Illinois University Carbondale on August 15, 2017. The university had been led by three interim chancellors since June 2014:

- Paul Sarvela, July 2014 until his death in November 2014
- Randy Dunn, November 2014-September 2015 and part of August 2017
- Brad Colwell, October 2015-June 2017

Chancellor Montemagno was charged by the university’s Board of Trustees to lead a rapid transformation of SIU Carbondale in order to address urgent enrollment and financial challenges. The university’s enrollment, which peaked at 24,869 in fall 1991, had declined to 15,987 in fall 2016 and would further decrease to 14,554 in fall 2017. Although most of the decline was gradual, the university saw a precipitous drop of 24 percent between fall 2014 and fall 2017, largely due to a more than 50 percent decline in new freshmen over the same period.

According to its July 2017 Financial Sustainability Plan, the university had also been challenged for a number of years by decreases in state appropriations. The plan states: “The combined forces of declining state revenue and enrollment, along with the uncertainty created by the multi-year state budget impasse, required the university to make four rounds of permanent budget reductions totaling $46 million, or 22.12 percent of its state budget, since 2015.”

Before the chancellor’s arrival, the budget impasse ended when Illinois legislators passed a state budget for the 2018 fiscal year. The new state appropriation was 10 percent lower than the last normal allocation of
$101.6 million. The reduction, combined with the loss of tuition revenue due to declining enrollment, led to a $19 million permanent reduction in the budget for FY18. The university also began the first year of multi-year payback of $38.2 million in unrestricted funds, borrowed from multiple sources, that were used to maintain operations in FY17 due to the lack of a state appropriation.

In addition to enrollment and financial challenges, the university was not systematically using standard tools to assess student feedback, interests and outcomes. The lack of ongoing assessment made it difficult to make strategic decisions related to the continuous improvement of programs and services.

A number of key positions were vacant upon the chancellor’s arrival, including the position of provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs. The position of associate provost for enrollment management had been vacant since 2014 and had not been filled on a full-time basis since 2011.

A number of other positions were held by interim leaders, including the vice chancellors for student affairs and research, the assistant provost for information technology, the director of admissions, and two deans. In addition, the interim associate chancellor for diversity was preparing to complete her temporary commitment to the university.

Overall, when Chancellor Montemagno arrived in 2017, the university had fewer students, fewer financial resources and fewer faculty and staff members than it had in 2014, when the last permanent chancellor was in place. In fact, the declines had begun many years earlier and were exacerbated by the recent budget impasse as well as the lack of continuity and permanence in leadership positions. These complex and intertwined challenges took many years to develop and will take time resolve.

One of the greatest challenges the university faced due to all of these issues is a lack of clear vision, identity and direction that seriously hindered its ability to tell its story to prospective students. It has lacked clear messages, clear enrollment goals and clear strategies to reach them.
Chancellor Montemagno, in his first weeks on campus, conducted a Vision 2025 survey of alumni, friends, community members, faculty, staff and students to assess perceptions about the university’s mission and direction. Nearly 3,000 people responded, confirming confidence in the university’s mission and providing feedback on programs and services that will be relevant in 2025.

In his September 2017 State of the University address, the chancellor announced a number of strategies to revitalize SIU Carbondale and distinguish it from other institutions. He stated that it will require attention on multiple areas – academic programs, research, student services and student life.

In a March 26, 2018, blog post, he said the university needs to “define and communicate what makes us remarkable if we are to stand out to prospective students.”

“We can start by embracing our strengths,” he said. “We are a research university that is small enough to provide personal, hands-on experiences yet offer a breadth of comprehensive programs. We provide every student – not only a few – with outstanding opportunities for experiential learning, from research to creative activities to community service to leadership. And we provide these opportunities early in a student’s academic career.”

The chancellor stated the importance of further building opportunities for personal growth through the revitalization of academic programs and student services.

“Even as we grow enrollment, targeting an optimal size of 18,300 by 2025, we can maintain a personalized approach that makes every student feel like a valued member of our community,” he added. “We can stand out as an institution that
provides an elite, private university experience with a public university cost, a breadth of comprehensive programs that can be matched by few private institutions, and a remarkable student experience that leads to well-rounded graduates prepared to become 21st century leaders.”

The chancellor has identified specific areas that are key to fulfilling the university’s vision and future success; this report outlines steps taken to date to address these areas. It covers:

- Recruitment
- Retention
- Academic programs and administrative structure
- Research
- Other areas

Many of the topics overlap.

**RECRUITMENT**

As noted earlier, the university has been without a full-time position dedicated to enrollment management since 2011. The undergraduate admissions office has had significant staff turnover. It has had one director and three interim directors since 2014 and is currently led by an interim director who also serves as director of financial aid.

Following are recent steps taken to enhance recruitment at the local, regional, national and international levels. Many of these steps happened relatively late in the recruitment cycle due to the time it took to define and implement them. In addition, marketing materials had already been developed, and other revitalization steps were just beginning. For these reasons, the university does not anticipate a significant change in
trends for new student enrollment for fall 2018. However, steps taken now lay the groundwork for fall 2019 and the future.

Earlier outreach strategies: The admissions office has traditionally reached out to both high school juniors and seniors. This year, communications strategies to all underclassmen, including freshman through juniors, have been enhanced. In addition, the office has increased opportunities to bring current high school students from all levels to campus. For example, the university launched a Transportation Center open house that attracted more than 200 students from nine area high schools. More than 134 Chester High School juniors and seniors recently spent a day at Morris Library to learn how to use library resources for research.

Expanded recruitment outreach: At the chancellor’s direction, the admissions office significantly expanded the purchase of names of prospective new freshmen and transfer students and connected with them through targeted digital, email and direct mail strategies. For example, the office contacted 1.254 million prospects for fall 2018 compared with 357,000 prospects in fall 2017. The office is also conducting name searches more frequently and has added in-person recruitment trips to Texas and California, two promising feeder states. In addition, the office is in the process of hiring an additional bilingual admissions counselor to assist with these efforts.

Reinforced community college outreach: The registrar’s office is developing program guides for transfer students to help them better understand how their credits will transfer to SIU. The office is collaborating with academic advising to ensure that advisors are available to meet and advise potential transfer students. In addition, the admissions office is working with community colleges and high schools on dual-enrollment strategies.

Increased outreach to guidance counselors: The admissions office has increased outreach to guidance counselors and reinstated efforts to bring them to campus to discuss the university and its admissions processes. Events this year included a luncheon for
counselors from the Southern Illinois region and a separate event for counselors from St. Louis, Chicago and Indiana.

**Streamlined application and admissions process:** The chancellor approved the implementation of an automated system to admit students who meet requirements and have completed applications. Students now receive their admissions notices sooner, and admissions counselors can spend more time on direct recruitment. Admitted students are also now notified of their scholarship awards along with their formal admission letters rather than receiving a separate letter later from the financial aid office. In addition, the chancellor accelerated the implementation of a new, more user-friendly admissions application.

**College calling campaigns:** The chancellor asked academic colleges to participate in campaigns calling prospective students who had inquired, with the goal of encouraging them to apply, and prospects who applied, with the goal of encouraging them to make SIU Carbondale their college of choice. These collaborative campaigns were in addition to other, ongoing college recruitment efforts.

**Housing scholarships for incoming students:** The university began offering housing scholarships to incoming students as part of their financial aid packages.

**Associate chancellor for enrollment management search:** The vacant enrollment management position was converted to an associate chancellor for enrollment management reporting directly to the chancellor. The chancellor’s office created and advertised a new job description. Given the competitiveness of the market for enrollment management positions and perceptions of the university, the initial pool of candidates was not strong. The search committee elected to take additional time to build the pool with qualified candidates. The committee has now conducted initial interviews and is in the process of inviting finalists to campus.

**Enhanced outreach to graduate students:** A new interim director of the graduate school is increasing attendance at graduate
fairs and developing a funding proposal that would support programs and faculty members in recruitment efforts. Efforts focusing on international graduate school recruitment in collaboration with the Center for International Education include webcasts, implementation of an app to text international graduate students at no cost, and reinvigoration of the Cooperative International Recruiting Collaboration.

**Expanded international recruitment initiatives:** Based on a memorandum of understanding signed in spring 2017, SIU is working with Pandit Deen Dayal Petroleum University in Gujarat, India, to bring larger cohorts of undergraduate students to SIU. The university is also working on a new MOU with Manipal University in Karnataka and renewing MOUs with Osmania University and Jawaharlal Technological University, both in Hyderabad, India, to recruit graduate students in engineering. The Center for International Education is also increasing outreach in China.

**Revamped marketing messages and strategies:** The university is completely revamping all of its student recruitment marketing materials with updated messages and design. New materials will project greater energy and excitement and focus on both academic programs and campus life. In addition, targeted materials highlighting groups of academic programs are being developed to replace the one-size-fits-all approach used in the past. New digital advertising initiatives also target prospective students by program interest. SIU’s social media platforms are expanding to include more messages and stories targeting prospective students and families.

**RETENTION**

In 2014, the university implemented what was intended to be a two-year, rolling plan to improve retention rates. The plan established goals and addressed advising, student engagement, registration and other areas. It included targeted strategies for freshmen, students of color, and students who were undecided or underprepared. The results of the first year of the plan showed progress, and some of the strategies are in place today. However, the plan has not been updated
and the focus it provided on retention has not been sustained.

Retaining students through graduation is a critical component of overall enrollment and relates to all aspects of student life – from academic programs and experiences to student services and campus life. Currently, 27 percent of freshmen who enroll at SIU graduate in four years, while 44 percent graduate in six years. Chancellor Montemagno has proposed goals of 55 and 65 percent, respectively, by 2025.

Following are steps currently underway.

**Updated retention plan:** The chancellor has charged the provost’s office to work with deans and others across campus to revisit the 2014-16 retention plan, identifying what worked, what should be revived, and what should be added.

**Centralized academic advisement:** The provost’s office centralized academic advisement in order to better serve students across campus while maintaining the one-on-one relationships with students and faculty that are important to student success. Advisors now have on-line training modules to stay up-to-date on a range of issues.

**Improved course scheduling:** The registrar’s office is implementing a Student Education Planner to support advisement of students, allow for automatic registration of students into courses, and support long-term scheduling of classes based on predicted enrollment data. The planner will help students get into courses to support on-time graduation.

**Increased academic support:** The Center for Learning and Support Services is now offering academic coaching and has increased tutoring opportunities, academic workshops and group study sessions. It has also added walk-in tutoring in several campus locations for select math and science courses.

**Ongoing and new college-level strategies:** The academic colleges have ongoing initiatives focused on retaining students that include student-to-student mentoring, instructional workshops, academically
focused registered student organizations, college-based early warning systems that complement the university’s overall system, community partnerships, career planning information and support, emergency scholarships, guest lecturers and visiting artists, and more. The provost’s office has been asked to work with deans to continue to refine and build these efforts.

**Realigned student support and engagement initiatives:** The university has realigned units of what was formerly University College in order to better serve students through increased collaboration and synergy. The core curriculum, exploratory student advisement and UCOL 101 (now University 101) office remained in academic affairs. Services such as the Achieve program, disability support services, career services and service learning and volunteerism are now in student affairs.

**Updated student fee structure:** The chancellor proposed and the Board of Trustees approved a new fee structure in which students are charged one general student fee. This approach will reduce confusion about fees among students and families and simplify the internal billing process.

**New housing scholarships:** Returning students have been offered housing scholarships to live in on-campus residence halls.

**Improved orientation:** To support both recruitment and retention, the university’s orientation program has been fully upgraded. Partnerships with on-campus departments and community organizations have been increased to better introduce students to SIU Carbondale. New, family-focused webinars are being developed to keep families informed of campus initiatives, activities and resources.
**Increased diversity initiatives:** The Student Multicultural Resource Center was relocated to the first floor of the Student Services Building, increasing visibility, traffic, walk-in assistance and referrals for students with academic and social concerns. Many first-generation minority and transitioning students seek out the services of the center. Mentorship programs have been established for pre-nursing students with the assistance of the Med Prep program as well as tutoring for at risk students. Support for diverse registered student organizations has been increased.

**Enhanced career services:** A new director and employer relations coordinator have been hired to better serve students and match them with corporate opportunities. Through collaboration with academic units, Career Services collects the first destination data (formally called placement data) of all graduating students each semester. This data is used for recruitment, national reports, and accreditation reports for academic units.

In addition, Career Services has implemented a new program called Handshake and is working collaboratively with each college to streamline the internship and externship process.

**Improved Graduate School communication:** The Graduate School is developing a series of workshops to provide support for graduate students throughout the year. In addition, it is coordinating communication to offices that serve graduate students in order to help all offices better and more consistently serve students.

**Increased student engagement:** To increase student engagement and create a fun, high-energy atmosphere on campus, the university has revitalized the Dawg Pound, a student spirit group supporting athletics, and purchased a “super fan” app to track attendance and provide incentives for involvement. Homecoming activities for students have been expanded. A new series, “SIU Presents,” will bring major concerts to the SIU Arena and stadium as well as Shryock Auditorium. The first event featuring Ice Cube is April 28. The university
is also working with fraternities and sororities to explore the return of campus housing for Greek organizations. In addition, Recreational Sports and Services is working with students to create a new e-sports program on campus.

**Increased student/alumni interaction:**
The Alumni Association and Student Affairs are collaborating on expanding the intern/extern program for students and opportunities for alumni to return to campus as guest speakers.

**Enhanced residence life:** The university has announced plans to consolidate students on the west side of campus in order to increase engagement. Living-learning communities for students with shared interests are being updated to meet student needs. University Housing is implementing programming in residence halls to reflect current student needs in areas such as health and wellness and academic support. Housing has also developed early warning intervention programs led by peer advocates. Changes to the dining program reflect a diversified dining menu, including special options for international students; monthly theme meals; and the ability for those participating in the residential dining plan to use funds for Student Center dining options.

**New honor code:** Students are leading the development of a new honor code that reflects the values that every SIU Carbondale student should embrace.

**ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE**
SIU’s academic programs and structure have remained much the same as they were in the ‘70s and ‘80s, but the higher education marketplace and needs of students have changed significantly.

Chancellor Montemagno, in his State of the University Address, indicated that he believes restructured academic programs are critical to both the recruitment and retention of students as well as the ability to reinvest resources in programs and people. He has said that a new academic structure will provide opportunities for collaboration among students and faculty by better
connecting programs that relate to each other. In addition, new programs in high demand areas such as sustainability and the reinforcement of strong and essential programs are important to enrollment and research growth.

“The biggest limitation in our ability to change has been bureaucratic, artificial boundaries created by the way we count effort and resources,” he said in an October 19, 2017, address on revitalizing academic programs.

In a November 17, 2017, follow-up address, he added: “Our current structure is holding us back. In many departments, we have too few faculty to fulfill all of the required service responsibilities. Budget cuts have pushed many chairs into responsibilities once undertaken by others. Miniscule budgets feed duplicate efforts across multiple departments. We are spending too much time and money on administration and not enough time on teaching and research. Adding to this challenge are outdated ways that our departments function, limiting innovation and collaboration, particularly around efforts to create multidisciplinary programs, team teach and co-mentor students.”

Dr. Montemagno has stated that the solution is to eliminate the primary obstacles for multidisciplinary interaction – the financial and administrative structure associated with departments. By merging departments into broader, integrated academic schools, the university can create
an overall administrative structure that is more nimble, more efficient and allows better delivery of resources to support innovative thinking. The result, he has said, will lead to greater faculty ownership and responsibility for academic programs.

Following are steps taken to date to revitalize SIU Carbondale's academic programs and structure. This brief overview supplements extensive information provided on the chancellor.siu.edu/vision2025 website.

**Academic reorganization:** The chancellor has engaged the campus community in the development of a proposed new academic structure that realigns programs into schools and colleges and creates a new college structure. The proposal is being reviewed through a complex process in compliance with university and state policy and collective bargaining agreements. This process is currently underway.

**Core curriculum:** The chancellor has said that he believes all students should graduate with strong communication skills, a multidisciplinary foundation, cultural competency, leadership skills and emotional intelligence. The Core Curriculum Executive Committee has taken up the chancellor’s charge to revise the core curriculum. The committee is developing a set of learning outcomes that uniquely identify Saluki graduates and are aligned with the institution’s mission; the curriculum is being redesigned to help achieve these outcomes. It has adopted the “degree qualifications profile” approach to the assessment of student learning within the core curriculum. At the request of the chancellor, the Diversity Council has developed recommendations for incorporating cultural competency for every student into the core curriculum and university operations. Recommendations, which are currently being reviewed by the chancellor, address diversity curriculum and pedagogy as well as the creation of a culture of diversity and inclusion.
RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY

Historically, SIU Carbondale has attracted $70 million to $80 million in funding for externally sponsored projects annually. In the 2017 fiscal year, SIU Carbondale’s external research funding was $46 million. There are many reasons for this decline, including the loss of top research faculty, the state budget impasse and an increased focus on federal funding for multi-disciplinary research rather than on state-funded pass-through contracts that ultimately cost SIU Carbondale internal monies to implement.

Academic reorganization is intended to rebuild, hone and enhance SIU’s research profile by creating cross-disciplinary research opportunities that address key societal needs in areas such as the environment and agriculture, health and social justice, human systems and data, as well as cultural communication. The goals are to build SIU Carbondale’s research portfolio, external funding and reputation and to earn classification as a Carnegie Research I institution.

Steps taken to enhance research and creative activity to date include:

Established research priorities: An ad hoc group led by the interim vice chancellor for research has assessed the university’s research strengths and identified eight to ten potential core research areas on which the university might focus. Factors assessed include existing infrastructure, capacity for external funding and enrollment, economic contributions to the region and required investments. A preliminary report is under development and will be shared with the university community for input.

Increased undergraduate research and creative opportunities: The research office has created new undergraduate fellowships to support research and creative activities with support from a donor. In addition, several new externally funded programs for research scholarships from the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health have been awarded to provide research experiences. Existing programs such as the McNair Scholar program have been successfully renewed.
New research and learning makerspace: The university is currently exploring the creation of a highly visible and accessible makerspace that will allow students to collaboratively create and explore ideas and projects on campus that will lead to new research. Makerspaces are design and fabrication hubs where students and faculty create new technology and develop research ideas.

Technology transfer and innovation: The Dunn-Richmond Research Park and Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research are developing new programs to advance and commercialize research. The second class of faculty has graduated from Operation Mousetrap, a semester-long program to train researchers to translate their research to business. The university celebrated the issuance of its 100th patent in fall 2017 and is increasing incentives for the development of intellectual property with high impact in the marketplace.

Carnegie RI task force: The interim vice chancellor for research is collecting data and devising administrative strategies for making investments that will allow the university to reach the highest Carnegie status for research. This status is important because it increases the reputation of the institution, attracts students, helps recruit faculty and leads to new funding opportunities.

OTHER AREAS

Following are steps taken in other areas.

Personnel: Following are key personnel actions taken since August 2017 (including some referenced elsewhere in this report):

- Recommended appointment of interim provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs
- Appointed vice chancellor for student affairs
- Appointed interim associate chancellor for diversity
- Launched search for associate chancellor for enrollment management
- Appointed an interim dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences and acting dean of the School of Law
- Appointed interim director of the Graduate School

**Facilities:** A group of faculty and staff made up of individuals from colleges, administrative offices and housing has been convened to study the strategic and efficient use of space on campus. The review includes classrooms, laboratories, studios and other facilities that support the academic mission as well as administrative offices and campus housing.

**Development and Alumni Relations:**
Since August 1, 2017, the SIU Foundation has received 23 gifts of $100,000 or more, including four of $1 million or more. The Forever SIU campaign has attracted a total of $16.6 million since August 1. As of March 31, 2018, the foundation has received $22.5 million in new gifts and pledges for FY18 compared to $15.2 million at the same time the previous year. The 2018 Day of Giving exceeded the previous year by 39 percent; the national average increase is 30 percent. The development office has implemented a new electronic tool that allows staff to see donor data in a dashboard that is updated nightly. The SIU Alumni Association added new events in St. Louis, Memphis and Chicago; increased collaboration with Student Affairs and developed additional engagement opportunities for alumni with Undergraduate Admissions, Career Services, and New Student Programs; and developed an alumni ‘heat map’ to demonstrate concentrations of SIU alumni and target strategic initiatives within these areas.

**Communication and input:** The university has grown its social media communications efforts by integrating them with other communications activities. The chancellor has personally increased engagement
through his own social media accounts, including a chancellor’s blog. He has also held more than 100 meetings with campus and community groups. He received nearly 3,000 responses to a survey about the university’s future from faculty, staff, students, alumni, friends and community members. In addition, he has received hundreds of emails and other messages from individuals and groups providing input on the reorganization and other issues.

Community outreach: The chancellor has established a business roundtable of industry and civic leaders from the greater southern Illinois region to foster collaboration and stronger ties between the university and the region. Additionally, the chancellor has been an active participant in Chamber of Commerce board meetings, where he interacts with business leaders who are fully invested in the success of the university. He also interacts frequently with the city’s mayor and city manager. The university is collaborating with the city, Chamber of Commerce and Carbondale Tourism to create joint events that bring exposure to the university, the community and the region. Examples include a planned cultural festival, taco fest weekend and family-oriented fall festival. The chancellor reopened the University Museum to benefit both the community and the university. He has spoken to numerous community organizations in the region about his vision for the university.

Athletics: The chancellor has begun looking more closely at the department’s operations and business model to address its budget deficit and ensure it is investing its limited dollars to get the most impact. He has also been intentional about rekindling student support for SIU athletics through student-centered events and activities.
A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY

This report focuses primarily on new initiatives dedicated to the revitalization of SIU Carbondale and aligned with the university’s vision. It is not all-inclusive but is intended to provide a snapshot of ongoing efforts across many areas of the campus.

The report reflects the work of many individuals across campus who are committed to the future of the university. The chancellor is grateful for the work and input of the entire campus community.

Challenges facing the university have developed over many years, and it will take time and continued, collaborative work to fulfill the university’s vision for 2025. The university’s strategy is comprehensive, addressing academic programs, research, student services and campus life.

With an unwavering focus on a developing its distinctive strengths, SIU Carbondale is revitalizing itself to recruit and retain new generations of successful Salukis. In turn, the university will add to the region’s economic vitality and develop new knowledge that will address state, national and global issues.

To repeat what the chancellor has stated: “We can stand out as an institution that provides an elite, private university experience with a public university cost, a breadth of comprehensive programs that can be matched by few private institutions, and a remarkable student experience that leads to well-rounded graduates prepared to become 21st century leaders.”