

Council of Illinois University Senates
Spring Meeting
February 20, 2026
Zoom, 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Senate Chairpersons/Representatives

Present: Angela Bonnell, Illinois State University; Todd Bruns, Eastern Illinois University; Benjamin Creed, Northern Illinois University; Sandra DeGroot, University of Illinois–Chicago; Lynn Fisher, University of Illinois–Springfield; Angela Lyons, University of Illinois–Urbana Champaign; Khalid Meksem, Southern Illinois University–Carbondale; Jason Raynovich, Chicago State University; Jonathan Remo, Southern Illinois University–Carbondale; Jeremy Robinett, Western Illinois University; Josh Sopiartz, Governors State University; Xiwei Wang, Northeastern State University
Absent: Representative from Southern Illinois University–Edwardsville

I. Call to Order

II. Welcome and Introductions

Bonnell welcomed and thanked all for attending. Attendees introduced themselves and shared their backgrounds with their Senates. There was a mix of those who have had longstanding roles as Senate Chairs, some serving for several years, and others relatively new in their positions. All had multiple years of experience on their Senates.

III. Round robin on major issues at institutions

Each of the attendees shared an overview of factors impacting their Universities and Senates. Many were facing similar issues. General topics shared are arranged thematically below.

University Issues

- Finances
 - Challenges associated with longstanding underfunding from the State of Illinois
 - Disappointment with the Governor’s [proposed FY2027 budget](#) (slide 17) for higher education and funding for MAP as shared in the recent State of the State address
 - Disappointment with IBHE’s lack of advocacy
 - Concern that the 2% appropriated to the Illinois public higher education budget currently being withheld will not be released
 - Concern that the lack of funding continues to create financial burden for students via increasing tuition and fees

- Increases in tuition ranging from 1% to 5% and increases in fees
 - Universities are at various stages of approval from their governing boards
- University deficits and struggles to balance budgets
- New budget remodels and budgets calendars
- Structural Reorganization of Academic Units (e.g., reducing the number of Colleges and Departments)
 - Reorganization is creating the need to rebuild infrastructure with student-centered focus
- Experiencing turnover of senior level administrators
 - Creates uncertainty, but also opportunities
 - Varying levels of transparency as positions are replaced
- Need to communicate, educate, and plan with university administration
- Student Metrics
 - Enrollment
 - Big drop in international students; will create long-term challenges and the need to plan
 - Decrease in graduate students
 - Increase with domestic enrollments
 - Retention rates increasing
- Curriculum
 - Working with accrediting bodies
 - Restructuring of academic units (Colleges and Departments); requires input from faculty
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging issues and threats
 - Waiting for more information following the recent Supreme Court decision
- Strategic plans
 - Senates involved with implementation plan and development of tactics
- AI initiatives pervasive in University infrastructure; engagement at different levels with shared governance
- Facilities
 - Undergoing overdue improvements and new construction
 - Delayed [decades old] deferred maintenance causing concerns for safety
 - Sustainability part of planning for new and old buildings
- Personnel
 - Layoffs at some universities
 - Working toward alignment of practices for faculty and staff; trying to mirror pathways of different classifications
 - Low morale

- Faculty research being negatively impacted
 - Cuts in federal research
 - Changes in Indirect Costs
 - FAIR (Financial Accountability in Research) Model (proposed alternative to the current federal indirect cost system)

Shared Governance

- Activities
 - Updating University Constitutions and Senate Bylaws
 - Growing shared governance leadership for the future
 - Adapting and navigating recent University reorganizations and aligning with shared governance practices
 - Operationalizing authority for educational policy
 - Aligning Senate policies with CBAs
 - Determining/recommending members to University search committees
 - Collaborating and connecting with campus community at all levels
 - Administration
 - Faculty
 - Governing Boards
 - Legal Counsels
 - Staff
 - Student government/student organizations
 - Union leadership
 - Revising and recommending educational policies
 - Evaluating and providing mechanisms for commentary for Senior administrators
 - Ensuring transparency in decision-making processes
 - Creating ways to advocate and reward faculty (e.g., free parking or reduced fees at rec centers)
 - Maintaining decorum and civil dialogue; advocating for freedom of speech
- Assessing shared governance
 - Maintaining a cyclical Senate Review to improve process and committee work
 - Ensuring accountability, attendance, engaged participation, and representation of constituents
- Communication
 - Mechanisms to gauge overall feedback; ways to gather data
 - Anonymous polls/surveys

- Creating paths for open dialogue with campus (online forms)
- Informal meetings/coffee
- Town halls with faculty; monthly
- Five-slide overview of activities; keeping it brief with key issues/sound bites; no one is reading long blocks of text
- Improving governance functions
 - Creating training materials
 - Providing templates for agendas
 - Scheduling Fall and Spring meetings with shared governance chairs
 - Sharing ideas for effective meetings
 - Merging committees to lighten load
- Commitment of Senators; it is time intensive; need for
 - Compensation to avoid exploitation of faculty
 - Adequate release time
 - *Four Senate Chairs are librarians and thought it would be worthwhile to discuss their roles together in a future meeting*
 - Budgets for Senates, with funds for travel
 - Accountability
 - Serious times call for serious business with serious senators
 - Recruitment to fill seats; problems meeting quorum

IV. Legislative Issues

Discussion of a call for a resolution to IBHE for the passage of legislation related to the Equitable Public University Funding Formula

Some Senates have been approached to endorse a Senate resolution, others have not. For those who have been approached, there was a discussion of the Senate processes including who drafted the resolution and how the Senate Chairs were or were not involved in the process, and whether the IBHE-FAC representative was included. Some spoke of the need for education on issues for Senators who don't understand the funding realities.

There was a general discussion on the purpose of the resolution that it could serve to pressure the Governor to better support higher education. There is a benefit of solidarity of all Senates endorsing a resolution, but the consensus was that in this case, the common ground was to note higher education funding for public universities in Illinois is inadequate. The State needs to commit to higher ed for the long-term benefit of the State's economy. There is a need to help improve the image of higher education and academia that has been beaten down.

The Council affirmed that these meetings should be a safe place to discuss ideas. The Council provides a valuable function of discussing issues we are facing as leaders in our share governance bodies. The Council meetings serve as a reminder we not alone in our attempts to achieve the shared governance goals at our institutions.

V. National Council of Faculty Senates meetings

Those who have attended in-person meetings of the National Council of Faculty Senates in the past, spoke in support of attending the annual meeting. The 2026 in-person meeting is scheduled on May 21–22 at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. More information will be shared. The NCFCS also has an online webinar scheduled for March 12.

VI. Planning for future meetings of the Council of Illinois University Senates (CIUS)

It was determined that those who attend the National Council of Faculty Senate at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh will work to find a time to meet together, probably Thursday evening.

As has been the past practice, Illinois State University will schedule a virtual meeting of the Council of Illinois University Senates in the fall 2026 and schedule an in-person meeting in Normal in the spring 2027.

VII. Adjourned at 3:59 pm

Notes submitted by A. Bonnell