

**STATE UNIVERSITIES CIVIL SERVICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE QUARTERLY MEETING**

*Tuesday, July 22, 2025*

*12:30 p.m.*

*Gwendolyn Brooks Library Atrium*

*Chicago State University*

*9501 S. King Dr., Chicago, IL 60628*

**Chair Odom called the meeting to order at 12:36 p.m. on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was present.**

**Present:** Aaron Ketchum, Andy Harpst, Brad Green, Chris Doe, Christa Lawhun, Elizabeth Cheek, Jacqueline Pointer, Jill Odom, John Evans, Layla Campos, Mary Serio, Michael Robinson, Patty Meyer, Shauna Bishop, Tenea Harris

**Absent:** Andrea Hoskinson, Sheryl Jones-Harper

**Guests:** SUCSAC      Jemila Burton, University of Illinois Chicago  
Heidi Skiles, Western Illinois University

SUCSS Office    Liz Borman, HR Representative  
Brett Wawrzynk, HR Representative  
Maggie Miller, Legal Representative  
Gail Schiesser, Executive Director

CSU Staff        Eric Williams, Media Services  
Clarence Jackson, Media Services

General          Nakia Burton  
Ms. Burton

**Installation of New Members and Reading of Oath:**

Heidi Skiles – WIU, Jemila Burton – UIC

**Public Comments:** None

**Review of Correspondence:** None

**Action Item:**

Approval of minutes of April 15 & 16, 2025 Quarterly Meeting

**Motion:** To approve April 15 & 16, 2025 meeting minutes as amended

**Made by:** Shauna Bishop, **Seconded by:** Aaron Ketchum

**Roll Call Vote**

Name	Aye	Nay	Name	Aye	Nay
Aaron Ketchum	X		Jill Odom	X	
Andy Harpst	X		John Evans	X	
Brad Green	X		Layla Campos	X	

Chris Doe	X		Mary Serio	X	
Christa Lawhun	X		Michael Robinson	X	
Elizabeth Cheek	X		Patty Meyer	X	
Heidi Skiles	X		Shauna Bishop	X	
Jacqueline Pointer	X		Sheryl Jones-Harper	X	
Jemila Burton	X		Tenea Harris	X	

### **Motion Carried**

#### **Report of Chair:**

See attached

During discussion, Chair Odom reminded the committee to please attend Merit Board meetings as you're able. The schedule can be found here: [www.sucss.illinois.gov](http://www.sucss.illinois.gov). While attendance is not an official part of our duties, this committee is charged with advising the Merit Board from the employees' perspective.

#### **Report of Executive Committee:**

Chair Pointer recapped activity from the last committee meeting. Survey questions were developed, and they hope to have a draft ready for review on 7/31. Then, they hope to bring it to full committee for our October meeting. An identical survey will be used for all campuses, so please take the survey questions back to your approving authority immediately so that we are ready to proceed with distribution.

*Break 2:45 p.m.-3:04 p.m.*

#### **Report of Legislative Committee:**

See attached

#### **Report of the Election Committee:**

No new activity to report.

#### **SUCSAC Priorities & Topics:**

We continued discussion on the information we want to relay to the Merit Board. As a reminder, we decided to focus on Open & Continuous Testing, Extra-Help appointments, and Salary & Compensation. A few prompts we can use to continue brainstorming these topics; What's the advice that we want to give to the Merit Board and What do they need to know to help them understand concerns and/or requests? We should be able to tell a story about what is happening on our respective campuses. Our committee should be advising on them on resources and processes. We need to educate them, build a personal relationship with them, and continue to connect with them.

*Recess 4:41p.m.*

**STATE UNIVERSITIES CIVIL SERVICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE QUARTERLY MEETING**

*Wednesday, July 23, 2025*

*10:30 a.m.*

*Gwendolyn Brooks Library Atrium*

*Chicago State University*

*9501 S. King Dr., Chicago, IL 60628*

*Reconvene 10:30 a.m.*

**Present:** Aaron Ketchum, Andy Harpst, Chris Doe, Christa Lawhun, Elizabeth Cheek, Heidi Skiles, Jacqueline Pointer, Jemila Burton, Jill Odom, John Evans, Layla Campos, Michael Robinson, Patty Meyer, Shauna Bishop, Tenea Harris

**Absent:** Andrea Hoskinson, Brad Green, Mary Serio, Sheryl Jones-Harper

**Guests:** SUCSAC      Brian Miller, University of Illinois Chicago

SUCSS Office    Maggie Miller, Legal Representative  
Gail Schiesser, Executive Director

**Installation of New Members and Reading of Oath:**

Brian Miller – UIC

**SUCSAC Priorities & Topics continued:**

The employment method should include highlights of positive aspects, an explanation of the problems we are experiencing, and possible solution sets. This becomes much easier when we have developed personal relationships with our respective Merit Board members. This committee has a seat at the table, and we need to use it constructively. In educating them, we need to be sure they understand what open and continuous testing is. Open means fairly available and continuous testing should be done on a schedule, no less than quarterly. One solution posed is that a campus should post for open and continuous testing instead of posting for open positions. We all believe that circumventing the register is an issue that needs to be addressed.

*Break 11:40 a.m.-11:53 a.m.*

We reviewed the SUCSS website and were directed to the black navigation bar at the top of the page. We spent time reviewing the Rules/Procedures tab. It would be beneficial for us to familiarize ourselves with the contents. It was suggested that we review/update our Membership Manual. We were also shown how to find Quarterly Employee Reports, which will be useful in supporting any information we deliver to the Merit Board.

*Lunch 12:38 p.m.-1:32 p.m.*

Historically, this body has viewed compensation as a campus issue and out of our realm of responsibility. But we can certainly address equal and/or fair pay concerns with the Merit Board. The salary & compensation discussion is a difficult one to approach and must be approached with wider lens. We want the MB to know we are not competitive, and we need market studies to show that. We are also limiting opportunities for fitness and merit by undercompensating employees which leads to reputational loss for

university jobs. One suggestion was to offer tiered pay increases instead of applying approved increases campus-wide. State appropriations need to be distributed more appropriately, more equitably. Some employees are not making a living wage, so we need to advocate for them. We need to be mindful of our words and the meaning behind them. The message we want to portray should come from a space of positivity and appreciation for what we currently have but also presenting concerns we have and the possible solutions we propose.

### **2025 Quarterly Meeting Schedule**

- October Quarterly Meeting with Council of Councils
    - Governor's State University
- 10/22 – 10/24

Sheryl Jones-Harper was absent, but Chair Odom reminded the group to encourage their respective councils to register. The link has been corrected and sent again, so please register. Also, she reminded everyone to reserve lodging sooner rather than later.

**Motion to Adjourn: Christa Lawhun    Seconded by: Jacqueline Pointer**

*A roll call vote was taken, and all were in favor.*

*Adjourned @ 2:37 p.m.*

**Respectfully submitted,**

*Tenea Harris*

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Tenea Harris  
Secretary

*Jill C. Odom*

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Jill Odom  
Chair

**STATE UNIVERSITIES CIVIL SERVICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE QUARTERLY MEETING**

*Tuesday, April 15, 2025*

*12:30 p.m.*

*Wolfram Research Building*

*100 Trade Centre Drive, Suite 303, Champaign, Illinois, 61820*

To: Employee Advisory Committee  
From: Jill Odom  
Chair/Employee Advisory Committee  
Date: January 22, 2025  
Subject: Chair Report

The last Merit Board meeting occurred on Tuesday, October 15, 2024, at 1:00pm. There was a meeting scheduled for February 6<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm, however, that was canceled, and the next meeting of the Merit Board will take place on Tuesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> at 1:00. As has been the practice for several years now, the Merit Board will meet both in-person and remotely. There will be several in-person meeting locations to accommodate the needs of the Merit Board members and adherence to OMA requirements.

Since the Merit Board has not met since my last report to this committee, I do not have any updates with regards to the Merit Board. Instead, I would like to take this opportunity to speak about a couple of other topics.

The first relates to the meetings of this committee. Over the past several years we have worked to revise our Constitution & Bylaws to allow for remote meetings for our standing, special, and ad hoc meetings. This has worked quite well for our committee in being able to conduct our business in an efficient and expeditious manner. We have also revised our Bylaws to include language that will allow us to meet in multiple locations for our quarterly meetings so long as we have a quorum of committee members physically present. We as a committee have chosen to continue to meet in one physical location for our quarterly meetings, however, I believe the time has come for us to revisit this discussion. We all remember how difficult the pandemic was, however, it did reveal our ability to meet remotely and still conduct business. Given the budget situation that our universities find themselves in now and expectations for reduced resources over the next few years, there had been discussion surrounding our continued decision to meet in one location rather than remotely or in multiple physical locations. We will discuss this further later on in our agenda but I wanted to get this on the table so you can begin formulating your thoughts.

The second topic that I wanted to speak to is regarding each of our purposes and concerns as they related to being a member of this committee. I'm sure when each of you chose to run for election as a representative you had some specific ideas about what you could offer to the committee and what you would like to help achieve. As we move forward, it is imperative that we create a specific and detailed plan for specific items or topics that we would like to address and present to the Merit Board. Our role is to be advisory to the Merit Board and this should be in a proactive manner rather than reactive. If we want a seat at the table and we want our voices

to be heard then we need to share our thoughts, concerns, and solutions with the Merit Board and take advantage of the opportunity we have before us with Merit Board. We can be of great value and our efforts will be appreciated, we only have to stand up and be part of the process. As always, I want to let each of you know that I truly value your opinions and your commitment to this committee. I know we have a great deal to offer and look forward to what we can all accomplish together.

Thank you, Jill Odom

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April 15, 2025

Executive Committee Chair Report

The Executive Committee of the State Universities Civil Service Employee Advisory Committee met on January 23, 2025, at the State Universities Civil Service System Office. During the meeting we elected Christa Lawhun as Executive Committee Secretary and Andy Harpst was elected as Parliamentarian.

Updates were provided on the proposed changes to the SUCSAC Constitution and Bylaws Article C Section 1 1.4. An explanation for the changes to the C&B was presented to provide context for the need of amendment.

The Executive Committee members proposed recommendations for the Merit Board to take action on as well as potential topics to report. At the campus level, we heard that some employees have experienced difficulties obtaining their Seniority information form HR and subjectivity related to credential assessment concerning comp-qual's.

Executive and Legislative will work together to compile legal statutes and laws that the Universities must comply with as a reference document to be added to the Membership Manual. This document will also include the regulatory agencies and information on the recourse if noncompliance is discovered. Additional content will include a list of State Representatives/Legislatures for each Campus.

Chair Odom encouraged members to share any reporting topics to be included in the report to the Merit Board. Anyone can attend the Merit Board in person or at one of the meeting locations. The position statement for the Residency Requirement was discussed and minor revisions were reviewed for clarity. Further discussion was tabled for the full body to determine if EAC will continue the conversation with DER and/or refine and reaffirm the existing position statement and submit it to the Merit Board. It was agreed that the data provided by DER did not justify an amendment to the Rule of Three. The Position statement will be shared with the Merid Boad and EAC is open to further discussion with DER. Additional discussions were tabled for the full body.

It is recommended to express workplace concerns that are non-civil service related at your respective University Borad of Trustees meetings. The Board may be able to influence leadership and affect change on your campus.

Thank you,  
Jacqueline Pointer

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*Tuesday, April 15, 2025*

*12:30 p.m.*

*Wolfram Research Building*

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Legislation as of 4/14/25:

HB0026 - Amends Open Meetings Act - An open or closed meeting subject to the Act may be conducted by audio or video conference, without the physical presence of a quorum of the members, if the National Weather Service has determined that all or part of the jurisdiction of the public body is located within an area that is subject to a severe weather alert on the day of the meeting. Re-referred to Rules Committee 3/21/25.

HB1046 - Amends IL Pension Code - With regard to police officers, firefighters, and similar public safety employees, removes Tier 2 limitations on the amount of salary for annuity purposes; provides that the automatic annual increases to a retirement pension or survivor pension are calculated under the Tier 1 formulas; and provides that the amount of and eligibility for a retirement annuity are calculated under the Tier 1 provisions. To be effective immediately. Re-referred to Rules Committee 3/21/25.

HB1149 (Formerly HB5873) - Higher Ed-Firefighter Credit - Creates the Educational Credit for Firefighting Experience Act. Provides that before July 1, 2027, each institution of higher ed awards academic credit for firefighter training considered applicable to the requirements of a student's certificate or degree program for any individual who is enrolled in the institution of higher ed and who has completed a firefighting training course or program that meets certain requirements. Passed House 4/8/25. Senate Assignments 4/9/25.

HB1206 - Higher Ed Student Assistance Act amendment - IL Student Assistance Commission shall establish the Returning Police Officers Loan Repayment Assistance Program to assist police officers who have left law enforcement with repayment of student loans and in order to help place officers into areas of the State that are the most under-staffed and in need of additional officers. Provides that each award under the Program shall be equal to \$6,000 per year for up to 5 years or until the applicant's student loans are paid off, whichever is sooner. Provides that an applicant has one year from the date that the first student loan assistance payment is received to begin work in a shortage area. Provides that those applicants currently working in shortage areas are eligible for the Program, but those who left law enforcement due to reasons other than retirement or a permanent disability shall be given priority for the Program. Effective July 1, 2026. Re-referred to Rules Committee 3/21/25.

HB1433 - Educational Credit for Election Judges Act - Each institution of higher ed may adopt a policy to aware academic credit or a non-credit alternative for election judges. Re-referred to Rules Committee 3/21/25.



HB1581 - Adequate and Equitable Public University Funding Act - Provides that all general operating expenses for public universities shall be distributed by the Board of Higher Education through a funding formula for eligible public institutions and shall be administered by the Board. Effective Immediately. Re-referred to Rules Committee 3/21/25.

HB2332 - Amends Pension Code - Provides that a Tier 2 member who has at least 20 years of service in this system as a police officer or firefighter is entitled to a retirement annuity upon written application on or after the attainment of age 55 (instead of age 60) if a specified rule is applicable to the participant. Provides that the changes apply retroactively to January 1, 2011. Re-referred to Rules Committee 4/11/25.

HB2466 - Amends Higher Education Student Assistance Act - Removes provision specifically excluding academic programs for incarcerated students.

**House Floor Amendment No. 1**

Replaces everything after the enacting clause. Amends the Higher Education Student Assistance Act. In the definitions of "institution of higher learning", "qualified institution", and "institution", provides that the exclusion of academic programs for incarcerated students does not apply to the monetary award program. Effective July 1, 2026. Passed House 4/10/25.

HB2920 - Amends IL Pension Code - Would create a deferred Retirement option plane (DROP) for SURS participants. Would allow a participant who is eligible to retire to continue in active service for up to 5 years while having their monthly retirement annuity deposits into a special account. Re-referred to Rules Committee 3/21/25.

***Per SUAA, since similar to other bills for Police and Firefighters, SUAA was encouraged to wait with this bill. Continued discussions are expected.***

HB3046 - University Civil Service Employee Rights - Nothing in Act prevents provisions that enhance employee rights. Passed House 4/8/25. Referred to Senate Assignments 4/9/25.

HB3062 - State University Civil Service Exams - Removes residency requirement for applicants.

**House Floor Amendment No. 1**

Replaces everything after the enacting clause. Amends the State Universities Civil Service Act. Removes language requiring applicants taking examinations under the State Universities Civil Service System to be citizens of or residents in the State. Provides that preference shall be given to applicants who are citizens of or residents in the State; however, if, after 6 months, no qualified State residents have filled the position, the position may be filled by any qualified candidate without requiring an additional posting on behalf of the university or other State entity. Provides that if a qualified candidate is chosen who is not a State resident, that candidate shall have 12 months to establish residency within the State or within 60 miles of the facility located within the State at which the candidate will be employed. Passed House 4/10/25.

HB3194 - Amends State Universities IL Pension Code - Provides that a survivors insurance beneficiary or the personal representative of the

estate of a deceased survivors insurance beneficiary or the personal representative of a survivors insurance beneficiary who is under a legal disability may waive the right to receive survivorship benefits, provided written notice of the waiver is given by the beneficiary or representative to the Board of Trustees within 6 months after the System notified that person of the benefits payable upon the death (instead of 6 months after the death) of the participant or annuitant and before any payment is made pursuant to an application filed by such person. Effective immediately. Re-referred to Rules Committee 4/11/25.

HB3522 - Public University Direct Admission Program Act - Beginning with the 2027-2028 academic year, the IBHE, in collaboration with the Illinois Community College Board, the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, and the State Board of Education, shall establish and administer a direct admission program. Requires each public university in the direct admission program to identify and provide its grade point average standards for general admission for first time admission and for transfer students to the Illinois Student Assistance Commission by March 1 of each year. Provides that, beginning July 1, 2026 and each July 1 thereafter, the Illinois Student Assistance Commission shall use data collected from school districts to determine which students meet the standards for general admission and provide the data to the Board of Higher Education. Provides that, beginning with the 2027-2028 academic year, the IBHE, in collaboration with the Illinois Student Assistance Commission and the State Board of Education, shall develop, in consultation with the University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a preselection outreach campaign to encourage qualifying State high school juniors and seniors to apply to the University of Illinois at Chicago or the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Requires a school board to provide access to high school student directory information and each student's email address and grade point average to the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, and each public institution of higher education for the purpose of informing students of educational and career opportunities. Passed House 4/7/25. Senate Assignments 4/8/25.

HB3709 - Amends Public Higher Ed Act - Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, each public institution of higher ed with student health services shall provide enrolled students with access to health care professionals authorized under State law to prescribe contraception. If the institution's student health services include a pharmacy, the pharmacy on campus shall dispense contraception to enrolled students who wish to fill their prescriptions at the university pharmacy. Each institution with student health services shall provide enrolled students with access to health care professionals authorized under State law to prescribe medication abortion. An institution that dispenses medication abortion from the university pharmacy shall enter into a referral agreement with a tertiary care facility with OBGYN services in the event of complication from medication abortion or suspected complicated pregnancy prior to dispensing medication abortion. Effective immediately. Passed House 4/8/25. Senate Assignments 4/9/25.

HB3717 - Amends Public Community College Act - Would implement Governor's plan to have community colleges offer four-year bachelor's degree programs. Re-referred to Rules Committee 3/21/25.

*Per SUAA, several universities have concerns that expanding the number of institutions offering bachelor's degrees could collapse the existing programs at these universities, thus driving down the student base and ultimately making them nonoperational. Rep. Stuart, who chairs the Higher Education Committee, also expressed concerns that the bill could have ruinous effects on schools such as Northeastern Illinois University and Chicago State University that serve largely minority student populations. A spokesperson for Governor Pritzker said there was still time to negotiate a bill that would satisfy the concerns of lawmakers and universities.*