

The Last Word. . .



Philip Rock

The leadership of the Illinois Board of Higher Education has changed. Philip Rock, the chair of the Board of Higher Education, from 1999 to 2002 passed the gavel to Steven Lesnik, a Chicago area business executive, who was appointed by Governor George Ryan. Lesnik, who has served on the Board since August 2000.

When Rock took the leadership his goals were to target quality, accountability, cost, and access to higher education. He was concerned about why students weren't finishing in four years. He also commented, "We seem to have minority students starting in higher education but our record of retaining them is less than perfect."

During Rock's tenure the Illinois Commitment to Citizens was produced in response to a survey of employers, students, opinion leaders, and residents. The Illinois Century Network resulted in more opportuni-

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ties for online and distance learning.

Lesnik said, "I am honored to succeed Phil Rock who served the board and higher education so ably." Lesnik said he looks forward to carrying out the vision of the Illinois Commitment. "That vision has driven the decision making over the last several years and has resulted in Illinois being widely regarded as a leading state for higher education."

"We have a new executive director, Dan LaVista, and we will help him get into the saddle as comfortably as he can."

He said, "Now, we face difficult financial times, both for the state and for higher education, and we must be diligent in ensuring that vital programs and services are sustained without undue cost increases that could price a college degree beyond the means of some families."

Lesnik said that he has been on the board since 2000, "actually I am one of the greener members. This board is



Steven Lesnik

one of the most dedicated, sincere, hardworking boards that I have experienced in 40 years of doing public service. This is a board that does its homework, that cares, and that is connected and engaged with staff, and is committed."

Lesnik has a deep commitment to public service. "When I was a young reporter, I covered municipal affairs in southern Connecticut. What struck me was how unengaged people were in civic affairs: how few people attended very important local decision making meetings and activities. I vowed then that I wouldn't be that kind of apathetic citizen."

Lesnik speaks dynamically that everyone should devote time to civic affairs, charities, and make a contribution to society. "Among successful businessmen, it is generous to write a check, but writing a check does not serve society the same way as providing your time, insights, and the benefits of your experiences. It is participation that makes democracy work."

Lesnik is CEO of KemperLesnik Organization and has more than 30 years of experience in communications, marketing, and sports management. One of his first clients was the PGA TOUR and Lesnik has an ongoing association with golf courses. In the current issue of Golf, Inc. he was ranked among "the most powerful people in golf."

After graduating from Brown University, he began his career as a journalist in 1963 with the Stanford Advocate. He has served as a visiting lecturer at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. He is a national trustee of Boys and Girls Clubs of America and was a board member for the Illinois Math and Science Academy. slesnik@kempersports.com